

THE TRIAL of the ACCUSANTS

A PLAY



DAN CHIMA AMADI

THE TRIAL
OF THE
MILITANTS

A PLAY

DAN CHIMA AMADI

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

<i>Batula</i>	President of Ifesen, an African country, impulsive and proud.
<i>Chimere</i>	Wife of Batula, vain, insecure, is the First Lady
<i>Chief Justice Kapa</i>	Chief Justice of Ifesen
<i>Mr. Faruq</i>	Chief of Police
<i>Mr. Ramula Bone</i>	Secretary to the State Government
<i>Mr. Festus Aonika</i>	AIDF DL- CAMP (ADC)
<i>Mr. Adia</i>	A Justice of Ifesen
<i>Professor Batum Ho</i>	Minister of Petroleum Resources
<i>Mr. Tobintea Oba</i>	Company Executive, later Minister
<i>Barrister Lamepe</i>	A prominent Ifesen lawyer
<i>Mr. Loma Gokorin</i>	Ordnery of Batula
<i>Mr. Long</i>	Managing Director of Alpha Oil and a white man
<i>Ketinder</i>	Friend of the First Lady
<i>Theresa</i>	House maid of the First Lady
<i>Resaliar</i>	Maid of the First Lady
<i>Nacka</i>	Wife of Mr. Oba
<i>Stranger</i>	Bearer of good news
<i>Okunle</i>	} Common People
<i>Adebale</i>	
<i>Felicar</i>	Campus queen and mistress of Batula
<i>Azemenpe</i>	Soothsayer
<i>Ekene Williams</i>	The Poet
<i>Mena</i>	Lawyer and Liberator
<i>Muna</i>	Registrar
<i>Ibrahim Daga</i>	Defence Council
<i>Raymond Brainich</i>	Prosecuting Officer
	Guards, Policemen, Militants and Soldiers with guns

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to
Onyebuchi and Goodluck Amadi
With Love

ACT 1 SCENE 1

The setting is an office. The President, Batula comes on stage in high spirit. He sits down, then stands and paces about. He is later joined by his Aide De-Camp.

Batula: I am a leader. A President and the Commander -in- Chief of the armed forces of the country. I need no challenge and none is in sight. It was a great battle! I won it on principle and in practice. How many elections have you run for and won? Urine has never been easy. If it were easy, a hen would have been able to pass it. By virtue of an arranged election, I am what I am today. If the old order is not sacked, how would the new thrive? Order proceeds from the barrel of a gun. Once in authority, I hold power, ordering all as I please. Everything is at my behest. Do not challenge me. Do you dare? How can you call me to question when you have none to ask? The only question you have is who holds the key to the Armory and I keep it. *(He dangles the key, pacing around the stage in majesty and triumph).*

Batula: *(Turning to the ADC)* When I won the election, didn't you see the former president running about calling a press conference? His wife ran about too mobilizing the women! The psychedelic

queen! And when I instituted a public inquiry to probe him, he was all nerves. That did it and the end of his press conferences. The former president ran and I followed in hot pursuit. *(He laughs loudly)* Did you hear the former big mouth begging for mercy?

ADC: Yes, I heard him. You proved yourself a worthier man. He was no better than a ram caught eating yam in a ban.

Batula: He plundered the treasury. Did he not know the people would revolt? My God! The misdeeds of a prince rank high unto the high heavens.

ADC: You have proved the people's voice.

Batula: The Senate President..

ADC: You were wise my leader. You defeated the Senate President also.

Batula: Yes, with my own schemes. I brought him down. In his potly belly how could he do an effective campaign? I know how to seize the potly victim even before the lark stirs. The boys ran after him and he resigned.

ADC: And the Vice President you also removed.

Batula: I routed him. I put a wedge in the wheels of the machine of his campaign and he came tumbling down.

ADC: In height you are mighty *(gesticulating)*
In speech you have a golden voice
which rings as the day drums.
Providence was right in choosing you
my leader... *(ADC continues to drab at me, unknown to him that Batula watches me aghast)*

Batula: Shut your mouth ADC; before you tell
me in your poetry! The leopard has
been caught. But there are still lions
abroad, the legion preying on the
regime. And here you are, talking
over foot.

ADC: *(Standing at attention)*
Yesss-Sir!

Batula: Will you now rejoice?
When you have just gone into battle.
Now has the real battle begun!

(Backstage noise is heard, like commotion. The men begin to make noise. Batula is alarmed)

Batula: What craves so hysterically
freedom?

ADC: The militants!

Batula: There they go!
Have you now seen?
Remember during a mutiny,
The bolts are the force of law.
Push them all back,
Right to the innermost.

(There are more shouts for freedom)

- Batula:* Beat them all down with your truncheon. Once each on the head. Yes on their heads. Spare none, from the least to the greatest. If they revolt, be then bolder.
(*The ADC begins to hurry his men*)
Charge like a furious bull.
- Batula:* Quick! Quick I say!
- ADC:* What of the complainants?
- Batula:* Detain them all. -
The accused and their accusers are alike!
Their activities are injurious to the state.
Moreover, this is an emergency.
- ADC:* The instruction is understood sir!
- Batula:* Let it be executed.
No instruction is understood until it is executed and obeyed to the last letter.

-----*Lights fade*-----

ACT 1 SCENE 2

(In a living room of Mr. & Mrs. Chidubem; named Obi and Nneka)

Nneka: Frankly, after all these years, I have come to believe that crime is a staff with which you walk.

Obi: Can you imagine the jackal laughing loudly while he was pronouncing terms of imprisonment on me?

Nneka: You were paying the price, the wage for your folly. The judge was at liberty to be jocular.

Obi: Eh-eh? Happy that I would celebrate a greater part of the year in jail?

Nneka: Yes for reflection.

Obi: Only a villain smiles when folks weep.

Nneka: I could sense the direction of the case.
I knew you would be the last to be free.
No one saw you cry anyway.
I was your weeping duck.

Obi: Could I? Be a judge and a convict, all at the same time?

I didn't decide the case. If I were a judge; naturally, I couldn't have found myself guilty.

- Nneka:* You will be a judge, decide a case against you?
- Obi:* Not that. Something ominous was in it. The case was like a plague, it grew malignant. In fact, nobody wanted to help.
- Nneka:* The deed attracted a pernicious rage. Your acts were cowardly and effeminate.
- Obi:* Say that again and I'll cut your face!
- Nneka:* Go on. Strike me. Home Mongrel.
- Obi:* That I will surely do. You must drive me. Yes until I become a Mollycoddle. Have you no love, no soothing phrase, no affection for a wounded pride?
- Nneka:* Not when you remain an amalgam of pride and obstinacy.
- Obi:* Run on then. Go naked with a mad man.
- Nneka:* You know I am not a moralist. I only said ... what a good wife should have said.
- Obi:* The people didn't find me guilty. The Judge did. Didn't he?
The audience knew I was innocent.

Nneka: There he goes again.
The audience knew you were Paul and Barnabas! What kind of innocence, when the court and all the witness testified against you?

Obi: They were paid to do so.
Ever marked a case so one sided?

Nneka: The Judge said it was proved beyond all reasonable doubts.

Obi: *(Laughs)* The unreasonable judge did your say?

Nneka: And if I mean the house-keep money even in jail, they must be correct.

Obi: Better fold now. Some men have gone to prison, though they have options of fine. Do you know? I now regret.
Prison is a haven of peace and free meals; especially freedom from termagants.

Nneka: I see, the way then...
(A rap comes on the door and a neatly kept man in suit walks in. His bearing conceals someone important, representing ambassador or such dignitary)

Stranger: Greetings from the state.

Best wishes from our new President to you.

Obi: More to you good stranger. You are welcome. Take a seat. Say, what can I do for you?

Stranger: The new President and Commander-in-Chief has invited you to his cabinet. You will serve with him, will you not?

Obi: You are mistaken.
Let me make bare my portfolio.
I am Obi, a company manager.

Stranger: That we know already.
My message is not misdirected.

Obi: Me? A joke you mean? Young man, this is not April.

Let me draw your ears a while. Royal foolery is an art I detest. Tell your master or whosoever you represent; Obi won't be caught on cobwebs. Such activities enliven only imbeciles. A teething child does not need camel meat. The fibre will wound his gums.

Stranger: Wastage is a bad practice, man.
Words must be accorded their place.

Obi: Young man, I am a man of little patience. See, I have long hands

- (stretches them out)* You are too near to make jest. If you do, you will be sorry.
- Stranger: Will you then give an innocent man a smack? An Ambassador with good news!
- Obi: Good news?
- Stranger: Yes, sweeter than honey.
- Obi: Keep your honey *(cynically)*
We do with what we have in our kitchen.
- Stranger: You decline then?
- Obi: What about?
- Stranger: To form part of the government man...
The government, you are a Minister man, read *(gives him a letter)* only if you consent.
- Obi: A Ministerial appointment.
Minister! Now I salute you my God.
First, that is an end to all my adversaries. Tell His Excellency... I will ruminate over it... No. Tell him I have accepted. Yes, I am happy, elated. I shall be one of the cells, in fact, the nucleus of the body.

Stranger: Remember, keep away from the press.
Our number one enemy! No leaks to the
nosy press.

Obi: There will be none.

(Obi hugs his wife and begins to practice how to be important, deliver lectures, give press interviews and conduct himself. The whole process is muted.)

----- (Lights fade on them) -----

ACT 1 SCENE 3

(The President enters his office. He keeps his cap and paper on the table and sinks heavily into a chair, slowly!) The ADC peeps and then withdraws. In the ante room, a girl is waiting for Batula.

Batula: *(He picks the phone)* See me ADC.

ADC: *(Enters)* My leader!

Batula: What is urgent?

ADC: Nothing. A few files. Only a few. They can wait while you rest.

Batula: Rest? With the Southern revolt?

ADC: All is now calm my leader. *(Batula keeps quiet, then later smiles. The ADC waits a few seconds and then withdraws. Later he re-enters)*

ADC: The lady is still waiting my leader.

Batula: Which one is that?

ADC: The beauty queen. The campus queen.

Batula: Oh- bring her. *(ADC enters with the lady)*

Batula: My queen! Come and sit by me
(ADC withdraws)

Carl: No, I cannot. I have waited for you for three long hours! Yet no word from you! What kind of love is that?

- Batula:* It is the affairs of the state. I cannot let it crumble, because of a woman's love.
- Girl:* (Frowning) Even mine? A beauty queen! You don't love me Batula.
- Batula:* I do. I cannot have more desire for a woman! Come, sit. *(Indicates a chair)*
- Girl:* No. I cannot. *(Remains standing)*
- Batula:* Then go. Out of my office! You waited for three hours! Is it for this show?
- Girl:* (Begins to sob) I know you do not love me. You merely pretend to be in love.
- Batula:* (Lets her weep for a while)
It is not true I do not love you. Who else own our world but you women? Do not cry my dear. *(Strokes her hair)*
This long hair! I am endeared by it. Wait for me. Let us go to the guest house. Today is yours *(He takes her hand and lifts her up)* My love...
- Girl:* You stroke my hair when my brother is in jail.
- Batula:* Which one is that?
- Girl:* The freedom fighter.

Batula: You call a militant a freedom fighter? When they are fighting an elected government, don't you know they deserve to die?

Girl: You propose to send my people away from the water fronts and fishing. Is it the reward for our voting for you?

Batula: Terrorists are hibernating there. Militants claim they are freedom fighters. I cannot watch them blow up all installations.

Girl: If he withdraws from the creeks, will you send him to the bank?

Batula: Does he have the necessary certificates?

Girl: He can get it at any time. Even I have a school certificate result, a diploma and a degree from a university prepared at Kakawa Street.

Batula: (Against) You have killed the country. So you can now prepare a certificate of any level with computer?

Girl: Is it news to you? You haven't seen anything yet. I can enter a bank account and transfer some money from rich customers to poor ones with my computer soft ware.

- Batula:* Eh eh? How did you know all these?
You are an enemy of the country.
- Girl:* No Sir!
- Batula:* I will arrest you for economic sabotage
and kill your brother for terrorism.
- Girl:* You said you loved me.
- Batula:* I will kill your first and love you later.
- Girl:* But you rigged election, Your
Excellency. You know you did not win
the election that put you in the
government house.
- Batula:* We are in the process of electoral
reforms. My election is the last to be
rigged in this country.
- Girl:* Please, Sir.
- Batula:* I will kill you in the room.
Come....
- Girl:* Please.... *(They struggle as lights fade).*

ACT 1 SCENE 4

(It is in a village square; a car stops and two well dressed men disembark, one of them a white man. The people begin to murmur as soon as they enter the gathering. The spokesman raises a microphone and soon all hushed, listen)

Spokesman: Our visitors are here. Can we hear them? Can everyone get seated? The Chairman and the Managing Director of Alpha Oil are here. They will address us now.

Mr. Long: Citizens of Ifesen, I greet you. People of Ifesen, greetings from our overseas partners and best wishes. We have come to explain to you what we have been doing to ameliorate the environmental degradation in your communities. As I am talking to you now, our company has paid \$10b US Dollars to your government and we have sponsored scholarships for over 1, 000 children of Ifesen. We have paid N300 Million to so many village heads and politicians and we still hope to do more. Money comes from oil, but it is not inexhaustible. We are doing our best and though it is not enough, we hope it will improve in the near future.

Your oil is inexhaustible. Right now the country has over 500 billion metric tons of crude and gas. The reserve will last for another 200 years. There is no way your child and your children's children will lack. We need your co-operation for the oil workers to continue to explore oil. We cannot do the impossible but we shall live above average. Your children are working with us. By that they can feed their families and their dependants. In the next few years, we hope to increase our workforce from 35 percent river workers to 45 percent. The global economic meltdown is affecting all businesses all over the world. But we have given our best to cushion its effect. I shall now pause to take a few questions.

Spokesman: Questions from the floor. Let it be brief and to the point please.

First person: *(As he moves to ask questions, gunshots are heard and masked men enter the group and all scatter in all directions. More shots are heard before the lights fade)*

ACT 2 SCENE 1

The meeting of the Supreme Executive Council (SEC) is currently on at the Executive Council Chambers at the presidency. It is the highest organ of the government. They sit around in a circle while the position of Batula is clearly visible. There are murmurings until Batula raises the gavel and brings it down suddenly. Silence descends on the hall as all eyes are fixed on him.

Batula: The meeting will continue. The recess is necessary for members to confer. I shall now bring up the issue of ideology. Is there no need to set out a day for sanitation for the country?

SSG: Your Excellency, nothing can be more auspicious. A day need be set aside for environmental sanitation.

Prof. Ihu: Yes, Your Excellency. In addition, we need to plant more flowers. As the Minister of Environment, it has my highest blessing.

Batula: But what of the job for the youths?

SSG: The youths cannot be given jobs until they stop militancy. The new regime cannot give the youths the impression that it is weak.

- Batula:* How then do we contain them?
- Prof. Ita:* First, we have to encourage them to form co-operative societies then we make some money available for them to access the loans without collaterals.
- Batula:* Can the government afford new wage structure for now with the increasing drop in foreign exchange earnings?
- Prof. Ita:* I believe we have to stop the trade unions. Teachers particularly should be kept in their place. If you increase their pay, they will be swollen headed. I am a teacher and I know this.
- SSG:* Your Excellency, you should aspire to warm yourself to the hearts of the people. Government should erect billboards all over the country so that you can be better known. We can call it the current image. Take different postures and this will sell you to the people. Then, we need to spend a great deal of money on publicity of the government programmes. Your photographs should be everywhere.
- Batula:* What of the issue of power, roads, electricity and food?

SSG: Your Excellency, we met all these on ground. Let us first endear Your Excellency to the hearts of the people. Let government plant more flowers all over the country. This will at least endear the government to the tourists and foreign powers. The next is to knock down all the illegal structures. All the illegal structures are hide-outs to kidnappers and terrorists. So they need to be brought down fast. At least, that will give the impression that the government is performing.

Batula: I am indeed concerned about the state of our universities. Let us find a way to counter the brain-drain in our ivory towers.

SSG: Brain-drains exist in all spheres of our national life. People are leaving the country, not because the situation is too hard but for other business. Americans, Britons and Canadians come here. Does that mean the situation in their country is bad? People move around all over the world. Your Excellency, we must make a distinction between press propaganda and the actual situation on ground.

Batula: Yes, yes. The press! I read the other day in our dailies that our people now feed from the dust bins. Can you imagine that level of unpatriotism? Instead of presenting our country in positive light, the press paints the country black. What do you suggest we do with such unpatriotic journalists?

SSG: The jail-houses are there. The police should prosecute them.

Batula: From now, I am for the press. If the press does not want to be responsible, I shall make them the most responsible in the whole of Africa.

Members: *(Clapping and ovation)*

Batula: Professor Ita and the Minister of Education shall address a press conference after this. We have the most educated black people in the world. We have what it takes to win and continue to win elections. Whether the people vote or not, we shall win. They have to be sensitized that it is in their interest not to distract the government. And they must be told in strong terms that the government cannot tolerate strikes anymore, particularly at the educational

sector. All teachers must return to school and that has to be immediate. Am I forgetting anything?

SSG: Yes Sir, the issue of militants.

Batula: Yes. Yes. From now onward, it is shooting on sight for anyone tampering with our vital installations. The State Task Force must be warned to live up to its responsibility or be disbanded or retired. It is death penalty for anyone tampering with our installations.

Prof. Hu: About the oil companies, Your Excellency, must they continue with gas flaring? You did not mention the issue of oil spillage and the ministry that will collect the money on behalf of the government.

Batula: It falls under your portfolio Prof. You collect it or your ministry will collect it and channel it to the federal government. Finally, I want my photograph in every state, local government and federal government roads. I want all to see we have had a change of baton. I want to change the face of the country. I want absolute peace and tranquility in the land. SSG,

task the Chief of Police to within six months stop the rising wave of crime, kidnapping, robbery and cultism in our institutions of higher learning. Is it clear?

SSG: Yes, Sir.

Batula: (Stands) The meeting stands adjourned.
(National Anthem and Batula leaves).

ACT 2 SCENE 2

The First Lady, Chinyere is in her room. While lights fade on Batula and his mistress, the lights reveal her room. She stands before the mirror and takes a full admiration of herself. Then sits before the mirror and crosses her leg.

Chinyere: I am a First Lady. Before men I blaze a trail, a record of firsts: yet in the home I am last. A lame last.
(She hears a sound, and then she listens)

Chinyere: Theresa! Theresa!

Theresa: *(From the kitchen)* Maa! *(Eating)*
Did you call, Your Excellency?

Chinyere: Yes. A thousand times! Where have you been?

Theresa: Within Madam.

Chinyere: Was that noise announcing the entrance of His Excellency, my husband?

Theresa: No, it was the noise of those on parade.

Chinyere: You have been watching them this early morning!
You have turned the parade ground into an opera? What then will you watch during the National Day?
Every Sunday you watch soap opera!
Daily you sit before the television.

Don't you know the television enslaves?

(Theresa remains quiet. Chinyere looks her over)

Looks at her fingers!

You are growing into a mighty lady.

Not in my house!

Do you want to take my husband?

(Chinyere keeps quiet when the maid begins to cry.)

Do not cry Theresa!

Remember you are a maid.

A maid is like a slave without rights and property.

A maid who aspires too high calls the attention of the First Lady! Now, no more, wipe your tears.

(Chinyere lowers her head, obviously regretting she berated the maid for no just cause.)

Chinyere: When my husband returns,
Tell him I am not well.
Tell him I did not sleep the whole night,
not a wink.

Theresa: Yes, Madam

Chinyere: When he asks you why, say you do not know.

Theresa: Yes madam.

-----*(Exits and Lights fade)*-----

ACT 2 SCENE 3

(It is in the bedroom of Batula and his wife Chinyere. He is dressing up. He pulls his boots and sits on the bed to put it on. Chinyere enters and sits beside him. After an interval she places her hand on his back. Batula gets up and her hand drops. Chinyere begins to show an unhappy face. He observes her mood and sits beside her again.)

Batula: *(Rising)* You sulk. Don't you?

Chinyere: Meaning? Only for this once, have you as my husband I now sulk?

Batula: Your demands on my time are without moderation. There are urgent matters of the state. The cabinet is to be focused. There must be no mistakes, for all my life.

Chinyere: You will relax your bone, Batula.

Batula: Only when I have given form to the revolution.

Chinyere: Will you forget to include Mr. Aramasin in the team?

Batula: No, I won't forget.

Chinyere: Batula, what of Mrs. Igbailola, National President of Women Society?

Batula: She is in the team.

Chinyere: In what capacity?

- Batula:* The council will deliberate on that.
- Chinyere:* You are number one, sometimes you must put your foot down.
- Batula:* Just wait when the time comes.
- Chinyere:* How many magazines will you spare?
- Batula:* The purely national ones.
- Chinyere:* What do you mean by the purely national ones?
- Batula:* When did you last hear the word? I believe there are no ambiguities about its semantics.
- Chinyere:* May I not compliment your activities?
- Batula:* Really? Except that you whimper like a restless partridge.
- Chinyere:* Oh! Batula! You will consider them?
- Batula:* Certainly.
- Chinyere:* Kiss me for once.
- Batula:* *(He kisses her)*
- Chinyere:* No, I want you to send fire down my spine.
- Batula:* How well formed you are. *(He kisses her again, longingly this time)*
- Chinyere:* Let me lie on your broad shoulders.

- Batula:* Chinyere, please, not after all that.
- Chinyere:* You will make me lose my modesty, perking and begging for your love.
- Batula:* My affection is bucket full. You have not found me wanting.
- Chinyere:* Your love exchange is as thrifty as mushroom in a dry season.
- Batula:* Stresses of passion make it odious, repulsive to serious minds.
- Chinyere:* In your case, you are haughty and aloof.
- Batula:* Woman, there is no room for jest.
- Chinyere:* I know it. Always, you will never have time for me. Don't you ever know I am human?
- Batula:* Nothing can be more evident.
- Chinyere:* Except that I must wither like a flower in a forest.
- Batula:* No flower wastes in any thicket. It must be plucked at its own time or dropping sprouts for a new turn replenishing the vegetation. Darling, can't you see? I am only busy.
- Chinyere:* Always busy-busy-busy.

I see.... (Biting her thumb) Okay go on with your work.

(Chinyere takes to her heels and disappears into the silence of the night. Batula hesitates as to what to do then follows in hot pursuit)

-----Lights Fade-----

ACT 2 SCENE 4

Batula is in his office. He takes a pen and minutes on a file, then pauses. He reads over the file again, turning over the pages. The ADC knocks and enters. Batula looks up after a while.

ADC: The Chief Justice will like to see you,
Your Excellency.

Batula: Is it about the law reforms?

ADC: I don't know, Your Excellency.

Batula: Tell him he cannot see me now.

ADC: Yes, Sir! *(Turning)*

Batula: Let him wait. I shall see him Does he not know the importance of separation of powers? The Chief Justice should do his bit. Let me do mine.

ADC: I think he wants to confer with you on important legal matters.

Batula: Important legal matters? I know it cannot be. It is always about pay rise and better condition of service for judges and magistrates.

ADC: Am I to usher him in then?

Batula: Now? No. Ask him first if he is about to retire. Judges have no advice until the eve of the valedictory speech.

ADC: *(Turning)* Yes, Sir!

Batula: Ask him. Ask him again. Judges have nothing to do except to cover their heads. Then they cover their ears in the attempt. They cannot hear the plea of the people.

ADC: I shall ask him to wait.

Batula: Wait is the word. Let him wait as cases wait in our courts. In all courts, cases are pending!

ADC: *(Exits)*

Batula: *(Continues to read his file. After an interval, he picks up the intercom)* See me ADC.

ADC: *(Enters)* I am here, Your Excellency.

Batula: Is the Chief Justice still there?

ADC: Yes, Sir!

Batula: He has not gone?

ADC: He is still here.

Batula: And waiting patiently?

ADC: Yes, Sir! Waiting patiently, Sir.

Batula: What did the Chief Justice say was his wish?

ADC: Nothing Sir! He continues to lower his head. His mood is sober and reflective. He is waiting patiently.

Batula: You've not answered my question. What did he say?

ADC: Nothing. He is just waiting on the command of Your Excellency.

Batula: Bring him in.

ADC: (Exits)

Batula: (Soliloquising) Judges? They are my greatest fear. Didn't you hear what the ADC said? He is waiting. The learned men, yet they must be feared. Patient men always triumph in the end. Judges are too patient. Justice rolls out because they watch her wheels.

ADC: (Enters, followed by the Chief Justice)

Batula: (Stands up and shakes the Chief Justice)
Our honourable Justice! How do you do? Sit please. The pressing matters of the state kept me from seeing you. Your file is before me. I am in love with the judiciary. Do you have a fresh request? I have endorsed your proposal for a law reform.

Chief Justice: A mighty step forward, Your Excellency. Our present request is on the tribunals.

Batula: Ah-aa, the tribunals! They are important for the speedy dispensation of justice.

Chief Justice: They are, Your Excellency. Yet they are now too many. They are ousting the regular courts!

Batula: The regular courts! How many are they? I don't understand you, Chief Justice. We have appointed more judges in all the states. Yet cases are piling in our courts! What do you want me to do? Fold my arms? The tribunals are palliatives. They cannot take the position of regular courts.

Chief Justice: They are aiding the rolling out of decrees.

Batula: You cannot talk of tribunals without laws to interpret.

Chief Justice: You are right, Your Excellency! Let us reduce the tribunals so as to bring an end to decrees, by reviewing them.

Batula: How do we dispose of urgent cases---
- like drug cases and---eh-- revolts?

- Chief Justice:* Through the civil courts.
- Batula:* *(Emphatically)* No. Was that why you came?
- Chief Justice:* Yes.
- Batula:* You came because of this? Then put it in writing. When did we begin to run the government over tea?
- Chief Justice:* *(Standing)* The file will come to your table.
- Batula:* *(Keeps a solemn face. The Chief Justice senses that he has been dismissed)*
- Chief Justice:* *(Exits)*
- Batula:* Instead of the Chief Justice to be up and doing by attending to cases piling in our courts, he allows his manhood to grow cold. *(Picks the phone)* ADC, see me.
- ADC:* *(Enters)* Sir!
- Batula:* From now on, I cannot entertain this kind of frivolous request from the Chief Justice.
- ADC:* Yes Sir!
- Batula:* Issue a directive to the Judicial Service Commission to retire old,

indolent judges. Let them spare the Chief Justice yet.

ADC: Yes Sir!

Batula: But make sure he does not see me until sent for.

ADC: Yes, Sir!

Batula: Now go back to your office.

ADC: *(Exits ADC. Batula stands and begins to pace about in his office. After a while he uses intercom to call the ADC)*

Batula: What about my photographs you sent to the press?

ADC: Done, Your Excellency.

Batula: What of the dredging of the rivers and the lake? Has the file been sent to my office?

ADC: Yes, Sir!

Batula: I want Marum River dredged quickly.

ADC: What of pipe borne water, electricity, roads and food?

Batula: We need a tourist sight first. That is our first target. We can pump water into the river if it does not flow and use flying boats so that our tourists

can have a sight comparable to those in Britain, America, France and Germany.

ADC: Your Excellency, most of the roads are bad, the taps are dry, and where will the tourists pass through to behold the glorious sight?

Batula: You are not intelligent ADC. This is an African country. When you make the tourists suffer to see a good sight, they will run home to tell their home governments to give us aid to develop the sight. They will take pictures and publish them. Have you not seen the creeks? The militants are fighting. It is good they are fighting. Foreign nations are seeing them. The next thing is aid. How can they complain of environmental degradation? Oil pollution helps the mosquitoes not to breed. We cannot disrupt the oil exploration. It is only when our external reserves rise that we can be respected by the foreign powers.

ADC: Sir, the roads, sir.

Batula: Shut up ADC. I have had a terrible day. Go bring the campus queen.

ADC: Yes, Sir! (*Lights dim*)

(On the other side of the stage is Chinyere, the First Lady is at the corner of her bedroom. She is obviously unable to sleep and this is reflected in her despair. She is in a night gown with her right palm under her chin. Intermittently she sighs)

Chinyere: How I feel ... This is our lot. The least of women is the want of men. To what do they care for? Neither do I know. Will I feel their desire? Feeling wanted casts shadows of doubts of the future. Lying bare one feels wasted. I loath naïve, complacent men. Bravery is the sword through which deep affections are won. This seed is in my husband tangible. It is a shame to gloss over this. A sagacious woman enkindles it in her man.

(Chinyere covers her face in her palms. Theresa enters. She stands for a while then goes nearer)

Theresa: Madam Kehinde is here to see you, ma.

Chinyere: *(Raising her face)* Usher her in. *(Theresa ushers her in then withdraws)*

- Kehinde:* What is the problem, Your Excellency?
Is it about the king and his queens?
- Chinyere:* What else can be the matter?
- Kehinde:* That you may love him you must be
ruined by longing?
- Chinyere:* No, just weeping over his pride.
- Kehinde:* You must then wear his vice?
- Chinyere:* If he must not care, will he also be off-
hand with me?
- Kehinde:* What is your protest? You are the First
Lady of this nation.
- Chinyere:* That the force which attracted me may
not prove my ruin.
- Kehinde:* He dotes on you, doesn't he? You are
the envy and pride of your friends.
- Chinyere:* Am I? Sometimes I feel worthless,
while he carries on with his haughty
ways.
- Kehinde:* It is his position, the office, our
expectation.
- Chinyere:* Must he lose his humanity, affection
and love?
- Kehinde:* You worry too much, Your Excellency,
don't you?

- Chinyere: With those girls fussy over him, will he care for me, his wife?
- Kehinde: What a fool we sometimes are, Your Excellency. It is not your career. Just your great beauty.
- Chinyere: *(Smiles)* Am I really beautiful? Sometimes I feel ordinary. A lady no man wants to date.
- Kehinde: Permit me, Your Excellency to visit my sick mother. I might not be able to join your entourage today.
- Chinyere: Please do Give her all my love. Thanks for your advice. Thank you. *(Exit Kehinde)*
- (Chinyere imprisons her palms between her thighs then lowers her head).*
- Chinyere: Yes I love him, I am his. A fine fertile woman, for a fine firm man.
- (After a while, Chinyere raises her head then she calls one of her maids)*
- Chinyere: Rosaline! Rosaline!
- Rosaline: *(She rushes in)* Madam did you call?
- Chinyere: Yes. Why do you always stay at the back of the house when I need you?
- Rosaline: Madam, it is to give you time to breath.

- Chinyere:* You should be near. How would I see you when I need you?
- Rosaline:* Call Madam.
- Chinyere:* When I called, where you were?
- Rosaline:* Inside.
- Chinyere:* Chicken-hearted. But you are clever. Always with the right answers. Where is Theresa?
- Rosaline:* Inside the kitchen, madam.
- Chinyere:* Now, come. Sit. I know you are intelligent and clever.
- Rosaline:* Madam, I can stand.
- Chinyere:* Sit for once. Near me, yes.
- Rosaline:* (*Sits beside the First Lady*)
- Chinyere:* Tell me dear Rose, how many young ladies have you seen visiting His Excellency?
- Rosaline:* None, Madam.
- Chinyere:* None? What of the fair one in mini skirt?
- Rosaline:* (*Thinks*) Yes, only that one.
- Chinyere:* Yet you said none.
- Rosaline:* Yes, you know they only visit the office.
- Chinyere:* Yes I know. Who ushers them in?
- Rosaline:* The ADC, madam.
- Chinyere:* Do you remember any of them come often?

- Rosaline:* Yes, only one, the campus queen. But the orderly said she came to deliver a job application letter.
- Chinyere:* Every time? A job application? How can someone in school begin to apply for a job?
- Rosaline:* It could be for a brother or a sister.
- Chinyere:* Yet you said she came often?
- Rosaline:* Yes, maybe to follow up the application.
- Chinyere:* Can you remember how she looks.
- Rosaline:* Gorgeous. Really pretty.
- Chinyere:* Gorgeous? Every girl is pretty to you. Do you know the meaning of a beautiful woman? Don't you ever find fault?
- Rosaline:* Except that her legs are too straight like that of a horse?
- Chinyere:* A horse? Eh heh! Good!
- Rosaline:* And a slender waistline. Only the powder on her face makes her look beautiful.
- Chinyere:* *(Sits quietly thinking)*
- Rosaline:* Did anyone tell you madam of any girl who visits often? I shall keep an eye on His Excellency's office.

Chinyere: No one said anything. Just tell me honestly what you feel.

Rosaline: *(Nods)*

Chinyere: Keep an eye on His Excellency's office. I don't want him disturbed by harlots. Am I not always at home?

Rosaline: You are.

Chinyere: Oh... No... At least you know I am beautiful, if not, at least I can make myself look good. Am I not appealing?

Rosaline: In truth, madam, you are a paragon. Honestly you are. Every woman would attest to this.

Chinyere: Go to my room... inside the chamber. See you arrange everything. Tell no one I asked you of these trifles.

Rosaline: Yes, madam. *(Rose goes in to help)*

Chinyere: Theresa! Theresa! *(Rushes in)*
Did you hear what the newspapers were saying about me?

Theresa: *(Surprised)* No! *(With her arms across her breasts)*

Chinyere: One of them reported I was the ugliest woman in the world.

- Theresa: You? Madam, they know you are the most beautiful woman in the world. The editor should be arrested.
- Chinyere: Not yet. I am still investigating. Surely he shall be punished.
- Theresa: Yes, madam.
- Chinyere: But tell me, Theresa, I am worried that the report is influencing my husband.
- Theresa: *(Surprised again)* He still looks loving to me, madam.
- Chinyere: You think so?
- Theresa: Honestly, I do, madam.
- Chinyere: I am going to bed Theresa. Wake me up in an hour. My head aches.

(Then Chinyere rises and walks out of the stage).

-----*Lights fade*-----

ACT 3 SCENE 2

(Chinyere and Kehinde enter the stage. A scene is created that they are returning from a function and are about to enter the State House. They are smiling and are followed by several other women. Chinyere is royally dressed and she walks with dignity).

Kehinde: Thunderbolt! A bang! A hit! Those are my words for your address, Your Excellency.

First Woman: Splendid! Even the President was nodding.

Chinyere: A nod, yes. Men will always nod. Yet, will it prevent them from enslaving women?

Kehinde: Now you've done it, Your Excellency. It was Beijing revisited.

Second Woman: All we ask is empowerment in this country.

Chinyere: I am against women sitting in rags and ashes just because they have lost husbands! Imagine for someone you might not have loved!

Kehinde: Not even adorning or shaving your hair for a year!

First Woman: Adroitly delivered! (*Chinyere stops and so do the other women. Chinyere turns to Kehinde*)

Chinyere: When is the meeting of the executives of the Special Council of Women Society?

Kehinde: 14th of June.

Chinyere: Remind me of that date. We must ask the state chapters to submit their reports on the workshop on Women Support Programme.

Kehinde: Yes, Your Excellency.

Second Woman: What is the wish of Your Excellency on the few appointments of women to key positions in government?

Chinyere: Include that also. We need to remind the President.

Kehinde: Are we meeting after this, Your Excellency?

Chinyere: No, we disperse from here. I will like to thank you all for your support. Let everyone carry the news to her family.
(*She tugs Kehinde by the wrist*) Please see me to my chamber

Kehinde: Yes, Your Excellency.
(*Exeunt other women*)

Chinyere: We are over with public show. Am loosing my husband. Do you know I rarely see him?

(Taking Kehinde along to a chair in her room)

Kehinde: Is it not his duty? I know he is very busy.

Chinyere: If he is so busy, how does he have the time for the army of women trooping to his office?

Kehinde: There can be other reasons why they visit. The duties of a president are many.

Chinyere: There must be someone who does not understand he needs privacy and time for his family. That person does not have understanding. If not, then there must be someone who does all the connection. All the link ups.

Kehinde: Do you want me to keep an eye on the ADC?

Chinyere: Precisely that! We cannot wait until the house crumbles before we begin to refurbish it.

Kehinde: Yes, Your Excellency.

- Chinyere:* Not only that. Let us find a way. Let us turn him round. Do we need to wait until a man deserts before we act?
- Kehinde:* I have other means, Your Excellency.
- Chinyere:* What is it? Which ways?
- Kehinde:* Love potion they call it.
- Chinyere:* (Thinks) Did they not say it could make a man mad?
- Kehinde:* No, it wins back an estranged love.
- Chinyere:* Let me know the means and the route to the place. Be quick about it, please.
- Kehinde:* You have already won this battle if you consent.
- Chinyere:* Consent?
- Kehinde:* This must be a night affair. You know your position.
- Chinyere:* Yes. How shall we escape from the public and the press?
- Kehinde:* We move with the driver up to a point, and then we walk into the village.
- Chinyere:* We shall be safe, no attacks?
- Kehinde:* None. Who would ever believe you would come to such a place?

Chinyere: We shall give this utmost secrecy. What if I enter alone? We must not be seen together in such a place.

Kehinde: As you wish, Your Excellency.

Chinyere: Do we do it this night? We cannot waste time further.

Kehinde: Yes.

Chinyere: Now let me walk you to the gate. *(They begin to walk)*

-----*Lights fade.*-----

ACT 3 SCENE 3

(The President is about to address a press conference at the Executive Council Chambers. The setting is a hall where a table is well positioned with a national flag. The audience is whispering, while two of the citizens Obanla and Atobatele are slightly away from the people discussing)

Obanla: I must have reverie in the day light
where I harvest my thoughts.

Atobatele: Really? Every man would only yours is
day dream.

Obanla: Shall I then sell my sackcloth and then
celebrate the new moon? Suppose the
young shoot, acts like the mother plant?

Atobatele: I have faith in the regime.

Obanla: Every frost melts and dies. No! Never!
That will be a shame.

Atobatele: Shame! Shame!

Obanla: You cry shame, shame, like a weevil in a
sack of cereals. Don't you know how to
act?

Atobatele: How does a weevil in a sack of cereals
cry?

Obanla: That is an abuse.

Atobatele: Abuse did you say?

Obanla: Yes, an abuse.

Atobatele: Then you are spurning. Do you always need to fight?

Obanla: *(In demonstration)* See this? I only need to brandish this fist; your jaw-bones will run asunder.

Atobatele: Boast! Okay. Let us go couple our bones.

Obanla: To wrestle? You are a woman.

Atobatele: The great lightening flashes, though does not destroy the pot of heaven. No one floors a cat.

Obanla: There is one virtue in you, servility.

Atobatele: Every civil servant indeed is a liegeman.

Obanla: You must sprawl to be appointed?

Atobatele: Did you see me campaign for one?

Obanla: What is your mission here?

Atobatele: Observe our leader myself. Pick holes in his address.

Obanla: Government slave you are.

Atobatele: You again? *(He attempts to hit)*

(The President is ushered in with songs and clapping. He is surrounded by his bodyguards, while some journalists hustle around to interview him)

Batula: Duty, sacrifices are all that we need. We need food and shelter. Alas, we are an idle nation, a pleasure seeking lot. Fellow citizens, we must wear a new look.

Atobatele: Yes, Your Excellency. There is one word for the new order, more freedom.

Batula: Freedom is the privilege of every body after the citizens obey.

Atobatele: Will they then be made slaves?

Batula: Slaves? No indeed! We shall make them free.

Atobatele: Let them be free our leader. Freedom is the answer.

(There is noise within, gradually building up to persistent clamouring. Batula is agitated, visibly shaken)

Batula: Minister for Security see to that. A little freedom, a little imprisonment will do. Now lock up the gates. See that none of the prisoners escapes. We shall no more encourage rebellion. Our country is tortured and battered. We must begin to stabilize. Our benevolence must not be abused. The interest of the state takes precedence over all other interests.

- Obaala:* (Moving closer) My Leader, the press...
They will boil and explode.
- Batula:* Not any more. The schism is over. We
have a mature press after the revolution.
- Journalists:* (Flashes of camera) Yes, Your Excellency,
many repots indicate some journalists
are in goal already. How true?
- Batula:* Blatant falsehood! Only a few are being
interrogated. Only the offending few.
How can we arrest many journalists
without the world knowing? The press
knows it is the Fourth Estate of the
realm.
- Journalists:* Will the detention of journalists bring
peace to our country?
- Batula:* There must be order. No government
functions well when it is unguardedly
attacked and pummeled by the press.
- Journalists:* Will more women be appointed?
- Batula:* Yes! Yes!
- Journalists:* How many to each state?
- Batula:* Five each. Many are being considered,
only five will be appointed for each
state.

Journalists: What are your views, Sir, on religious intolerance?

Batula: Yes! Yes! As a matter of national policy every citizen is entitled to holy pilgrimage. (*Clapping and acation*)

Journalists: What is the ideology of your government?

Batula: Concretised consciousness.

Journalists: Where will it lean towards? Socialism, Capitalism, Welfarism or Confucianism?

Batula: Yes! Yes! An ideology serves for all ages. We have considered Pan AFRICANISM. (*Clapping and acation*)

Journalists: Will your government review the constitution?

Batula: No, No, No such thing. That will mean re-writing our whole life. Nobody writes the history of his life fully except he commences the autobiography after his death.

Journalists: When shall we return to full democracy?

Batula: (*Thinks before answering*) When the people are educated, properly

emancipated and civilized. By the way,
is this not democracy?

*(Soft music within signals the end of this conference.
National Anthem is played to mark the exit of Batula).*

----- Lights fade-----

ACT 3 SCENE 4

(It is in a shrine. The soothsayer, old is busy with his wares. Chinyere slips in unannounced. After a while, he looks up)

Soothsayer: And what can I do for my daughter?

Chinyere: See this leotard; is it not unfit for any decent being even a woman, mother of children? Tell me. *(She shows him a piece of cloth)*

Soothsayer: Certainly, this can only be for Iggede dance. You cannot be clad in it. Whoever was in that must be a prey of a wild animal.

Chinyere: My husband's mistress was that prey my lord!

Soothsayer: *(Surprised)* Then she survived? She could not have been the spoil of a lion. *(Demonstrating)* It would have crushed her in its molars. She must have faced a callow gorilla.

Chinyere: No beast attacked her, my lord. This is the best garment of the mistress of my husband torn to shred by my lascivious husband. I have tried to understand him, the man that is my husband. My worry is to win him to my breast, but no. His appetite for women is as insatiable as a parched land. Now let maggots and weeds grow over our marriage.

- Soothsayer:* Calm down my daughter, there is regret in vileness.
- Chinyere:* There are elements of hypocrisy in patience.
- Soothsayer:* Don't think wildly my child. Every casket has a price.
- Chinyere:* No casket my lord is more precious than the ornament it contains.
- Soothsayer:* True.
- Chinyere:* That is why it is a polý for robbers.
- Soothsayer:* Don't bandy words with me. Tell me why you are here.
- Chinyere:* To save my marriage.
- Soothsayer:* You must be careful my daughter. A marriage blessed with children should be protected.
- Chinyere:* I want to save my marriage.
- Soothsayer:* You are on the right track, my daughter.
- Chinyere:* First, can you divine for me?
- Soothsayer:* (*Begins to practice his trade; suddenly he stops*) Part and be bonded. Did I hear him say?
- Chinyere:* What do you mean by part and be bonded?
- Soothsayer:* You doubt the gods?

- Chinyere:* I do not. I cannot see my way through your statements.
- Soothsayer:* You dare? (*Threatening*) Flouting the directive of a god leads to disaster
- Chinyere:* I know my lord. I am sorry.
- Soothsayer:* Then you must listen and be quiet.
- Chinyere:* Whatever you say, my lord.
- Soothsayer:* Mark it. Not my word. Save me from the gods. Your heart intent before you came has been screened.
- Chinyere:* I see.
- Soothsayer:* Yes. Your husband may part today ultimately with the lady you want him to be separated from but they will reconcile.
- Chinyere:* Is there no ceremony, no ritual, nothing to forestall a possible reconciliation?
- Soothsayer:* A lot. There are stages. Only a part is frightful.
- Chinyere:* I am all ears. I will perform the rites.
- Soothsayer:* You must sacrifice a goat, bring a white cockerel, a three month old tortoise with an alligator. All must be bundled, wrapped in a white cloth, then thrown into Oshaba River. After you will come for the final part.

- Clunyere:* What is this frightful part, the one you call the last rite?
- Soothsayer:* You will bath alone unnoticed at the great Ase River in the deadness of the night.
- Clunyere:* Heavens! Alone?
- Soothsayer:* Yes, alone.
- Clunyere:* Can I be accompanied by my brother?
- Soothsayer:* No. You must be alone. You will part with your first husband. The second is only the fruit of the first. It is your first husband that is sponsoring the lady in question to hurt you and to protest your leaving him to marry another man.
- Clunyere:* Really? A second husband?
I do not understand, my lord.
- Soothsayer:* Do not be alarmed my child. You are from the river, my beloved. A princess of the great Ase River!
- Clunyere:* Then I am trapped. Every arm is laid against me. Tell me my lord where it happened, a spirit married to a lady in the flesh?
- Soothsayer:* You are doubting again?
- Clunyere:* No. There are reasons why I need seek explanations.

Soothsayer: You are deep my child. Your life circle runs endlessly like water poured into a bottomless well.

Chinyere: Do not be offended my lord. I know I do not feel normal ...but these consecutive marriages, I do not think I understand it.

Soothsayer: You will not. Who ever did? Certain stages of your life have been made opaque. Without the benefit of a third eye; your sight is a virulent mess. In all, you have married fifteen times, seven times to different men in this town. The rest of your marriages were across the scattered deities and kindreds in all the neighbouring villages called Alafe. You are a priestess worshipped by your kinds.

Chinyere: My kind? Worshipped? That is for a god. I do not remember strange relationship I consorted.

Soothsayer: Nobody lives the circle and understands it. It is like beholding faceless faces. Chinyere, mark it from today, your life is an endless ribbon of regeneration.

Chinyere: Tell me my lord, am I always back, a woman and dazzling and beautiful and courted?

Soothsayer: As a beloved of the gods you are the beginning, the end of their artistry.

Chinyere: O noble gods! May your names be carved in gold.

Soothsayer: The truth is what I convey.

Chinyere: This reverie will enliven any being
(*aside*)

Soothsayer: The goods are care free with their gifts.
Some are endowed in excess, while
others' shares are in paltry sums. Who
can explain the bounty of the gods? This
mystery is the very essence of our
reverence.

Chinyere: Why then won't my earthly husband
adore me?

Soothsayer: Because he is ignorant of your worth.
Then the husband of the other woman
sends her to corrupt his thoughts.

Chinyere: You must make him love me and be so
obsessed about it like a rabid dog.

Soothsayer: That is a cheap enterprise only you will
promise not to worry yourself any
longer. Then carry on with the rite.

Chinyere: That I will do.

Soothsayer: Give me a solemn promise. Be bound on
oath.

Chinyere: May the great Ase Mountain strike me
dead if I deviate from the course.

Soothsayer: So you have sworn and let it be as you
have said it. So be it then. Come to me
again in a fortnight. Relate with your
husband as if nothing happened.

Chinyere: What will be his reaction?

Soothsayer: You will lead him as a shepherd directs his flocks.

Chinyere: He will do my bidding?

Soothsayer: Without question.

Chinyere: I will bring the items for the holocaust on the fortnight for the sacrifice.

Soothsayer: As you please my daughter.

(He continues with his business while Chinyere rises and exits)

-----Lights fade-----

ACT 4 SCENE 1

(Chinyere in her royal robes as First Lady is being attended to by her maids at the State House. Soon, Obi the Minister joins her.)

Obi: Your Excellency, this will not do. This man's activities are treasonous. Must the parrot be allowed to drab on?

Chinyere: Which of them now? Give me his name.

Obi: Williams the poet.

Chinyere: *(In surprise)* That interloper again? Not after his last venom.

Obi: Wait until you have heard from him.

Chinyere: *(Demonstrating)* He must sweep us off the State House. What else will assuage his literacy thirst?

Obi: A few more days in prison is all he needs.

Chinyere: By all means let him proceed *(pointing)*

Obi: Will he go to jail during the national day celebration?

Chinyere: What do you think you are suggesting? Let him be put away. First, read me that offensive portion.

Obi: Your Excellency, the whole poem is seditious. His pleasure is the peril of the state.

Chinyere: Let me hear him.

Obi: (*Fetches his reading glasses and reads*)
Lonely! Lonely soul
As I bow low as in mourning
Trudge upon the city life,
then with wedge and curve of a Punjab
in haste.
The trots now in union with each effort
scalding, piercing, uncertain
Lonely, love is the soul.

Chinyere: (*interrupting*) Mark that. The man is of Indian descent.

Obi: Yes, Your Excellency. He is from the city of Punjab in Pakistan.

Chinyere: He must be deported. First, as an illegal alien and secondly, as an intruder.

Obi: Listen to this, Your Excellency.

Chinyere: Read it. Go on.

Obi: (*Continuing*)
Will the crowd ever listen? Never!
As the ocean rushes high
Wolfing on the airy tide,
all glassy, green, blue and ashy
As termite in shard,
fare without harmony.
Like men often in wanton cares
blush at the extremities of the ocean.

Chinyere: Note the rhetoric. That will make the citizens chant war songs.

Obi: Hear him again. Hear this last stanza.
"When the blast of the xylophone calls
As herald for the morning
Even still, I lay sick
Asking, will it ever become?
No more will you envelop me
Like sand buried at the bottom of the
lagoon
In stench and in want
O Zion, lend me your bosom.

Chinyere: No! No more! That is enough. Zion is not a woman. It cannot lend him any bosom.
(Batula rushes in; he is full of all the urgency of the state. His secretary is on his trail)

Batula: You must send the letters today. Wake up the world with our call. We need more attendance, more guests during the National Day Celebration.

Secretary: Yes, Your Excellency.

Batula Commence that *(Turns to Obi)*
Aha-ah Mr. Minister, you are yet to brief me on the activities of your ministry.

Obi: An urgent one calls for Your Excellency's immediate attention

Batula: *(Commands)* Bring it quick!

Obi: See this.

Batula: *(Reads with attention , shakes his head)*
I am the head of government. I am the state, and the state is I. Whatever that

has been written against the leader, rubs mud on the state. Bring him before me.

Obi: Orderly, bring him before the president
(*Pointing at his right*)

Orderly: (*He arraigns a fat, well bearded poet*)

Batula: This cannot be a poet. He is not poor and in tatters. Young fellow, are you truly a poet?

Poet: I am more than a poet. With my publications, I deserve better treatment.

Batula: Why am I always under your attack?

Obi: Your Excellency, the poet is an illegal alien from the city of Punjab in Pakistan.

Poet: That is preposterous! Warn him! Your Excellency, he is making me nervous.

Batula: You nervous?

Poet: A writer criticizes his society. The criticism is against your policy, none is directed at your person. Only when I write articles do I stand charged. In any case, I am being tried for my poems and not for my prose.

Batula: Why must you incite my people with complicated poems?

Poet: None is on politics. Philosophy fascinates me.

Batula: I stand for the good of the people. You will go to prison for sedition.

- Poet:* That is no threat, Your Excellency. It has been my abode.
- Batula:* Yes, yes. This is correct. This time, you will face banishment to Punjab.
- Poet:* I belong here. This is my country.
- Batula:* This cannot be your country because you write against her.
- Poet:* Where do I belong?
- Batula:* The wider universe! You are a free national of the world. *
- Poet:* There is nothing like that.
- Batula:* It is my verdict, the people's decision.
- Poet:* No court has been constituted.
- Batula:* No other tribunal is necessary. I am the point of reference, the final arbiter, the last court of appeal.
- Poet:* (*Protesting*) I am innocent. The world will hear of this.
- Batula:* Go to jail first, then banishment. You cannot undo the state. Will the state be ruined by one man? No! See personally that he is deported. Let him leave today, tonight. Our rule must guide every citizen.
- ADC:* Come! (*He begins to drag the poet away and lights fade on them*).

ACT 4 SCENE 2

(A group of militants with their heads covered are conferring. Soon they break into a song which they sing with a passion. Then they begin to dance with their guns raised. After the dance, their guns are strapped across their shoulders as one of them braces up and addresses the others).

First Militant: Order. War is War.

Others: War is War.

First Militant: Peace is justice

Others: Order is peace.

First Militant: Let every one be seated.

Others: *(They sit and stop murmuring)*

First Militant: Can you asses the situation?

Second Militant: We govern the creeks. Government rides the road. This night they shall know we have a right to the roads too.

First Militants: Commando One, what is in the offing?

Third Militant: No ship will near the high seas. Nothing will happen offshore.

First Militant: Commando Two, what can you say?

Fourth Militant: We emphasise resource control. But the ship we loaded has taken off. Money will roll in tomorrow.

First Militant: Commando Three, what of the kidnap matter?

Fifth Militant: The conference was cancelled and the high official did not turn up. We are proceeding to his village where he has gone to take a chieftaincy title.

First Militant: Commando Four, anything yet coming from the airport?

Sixth Militant: All flights have been cancelled. Even the weather is against the mission.

First Militant: Trace him to the office. Close all channels. Bring him dead or alive.

Sixth Militant: O.k. Boss.

First Militant: Now cordon off the river. Bring the worshippers for usual interview.

Others: *(They stand and move towards the river).*

First Militant: Disarm. No guns at the river. Only women and fanatics are there. Bring them here.

Others: Yes, Sir! *(They disarm and move towards the river. The leader himself sits and puts his arm aside).*

-----*Lights fade*-----

ACT 4 SCENE 3

(It is near a river at night. Two citizens have plastic kettles ready to fetch water. They discuss before they later sight Chinyere naked, bathing. On stage however, a director is at liberty to appropriate)

First Guard: The surest way to meet God is to die in a holy war.

Second Guard: We must not necessarily die in war. We can make heaven through good works.

First Guard: What is good works? A good profession you mean?

Second Guard: No. Alms giving, fasting, constant prayer.

First Guard: Like Pala the angel who is also a rogue?

Second Guard: Don't judge. God bequeaths justice.

First Guard: Suppose we increase our fasting period?

Second Guard: You want to disobey the prophet?

Second guard: *(Holding him by the hand)*
I have a feeling, my friend; it strikes me hollow, though; our prophet is not the only prophet.

First Guard: What blasphemy! Who will not curse you hearing such impudence?

Second Guard: Do you know?

First Guard: That what?

- Second Guard:* There are too many prophets condemning the world?
- First Guard:* Name them.
- Second Guard:* Why do you want me to name them?
- First Guard:* Wait. I hear some rustles in the river.
- Second Guard:* The mermaid is defying mankind.
- First Guard:* The mermaid again? No, a wild beast is basking in the deadness of the night.
- Second Guard:* Splashing water like rain in a forest.
- First Guard:* See also a lantern: for the moth to splatter and flutter?
- Second Guard:* A generous deed! Such a being could smell out human flesh in a ten kilometer radius.
- Second Guard:* In my opinion, the mermaid is too daring. It should be captured and displayed, a laughing stock for humanity.
- First Guard:* Come, let us see..... *(They move nearer the river)*
- Second guard:* What a feast of flesh! *(In whispers)* So comely.
- First Guard:* How I wish I have the river as my eternal habitation.
- Second Guard:* Fool! You will live with a beast?
- First Guard:* Listen. I hear some church songs booming in the neighborhood.

Second Guard: (The song grows louder) Come let us hide and see the reactions of the mammy water.

First Guard: Don't you know? It will varnish! (A band of young men rush towards the river in white robes. One of them grabs Chinyere and inadvertently rapes her in between her wails and cries)

Second Guard: I heard the maiden cry out she was the wife of the leader.

First Guard: Yes. But what was she doing outside so late?

Second Guard: Feeling free again.

First Guard: Before we are ground with the chaff, let us leave this scene.

Second Guard: And report it, too.

First Guard: You want to be accused of complicity?

Second Guard: Do you ever learn anything? That will exonerate us.

First Guard: From what?

(A group of policemen pounce on them and arrest them)

First Policemen: You are robbers. Bring all your loot.

Second Policemen: We have neither looted nor are we robbers.

First Policemen: I heard a young lady wailing, when you seized her goods.

First Guard: There was nothing of the sort. We observed some young men ravage her body.

Second Policemen: You did? They must be your friends. You watched the orgy, derived pleasures in it.

First Guard: Honestly, we are framed.

First Policemen: Bind them. Bring them to the station.
(They are handcuffed and taken away).

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-----*Lights fade.*-----

ACT 4 SCENE 4

(Batula is in the office at the State House. Suddenly he rises and begins to pace about. The ADC looks in and shakes his head. Batula observes him.)

Batula: Is the Chief of Police here, ADC?

ADC: No sir. But I have sent for him. He is now at the gate. Should I send him in as soon as he arrives?

Batula: You want to wait until he comes? You fool. Go immediately to the gate and bring him.

ADC: Yes, Sir!

Batula: Now be gone.

ADC: *(Exits)*

Batula: The police arrested my wife! How dare them. But why did she go there? Let us put all that away for the moment. Should I just cut off her head or should she just disappear? What a shame. Big shame. A Big Bearded Shame! She was angry with my campus queens. Why should such a thing worry a house wife when she is adequately provided for?

ADC: *(Enters).* The Chief of Police is here, Sir!

Batula: Bring him in! Immediately!

Chief of Police: *(Enters).* Greetings, Sir! *(Shaking)*

Batula: You arrested my wife. How dare you?

Chief of Police: It was in error, Your Excellency. No one thought she would be found in such a place. We were after the militants.

Batula: Always doing the wrong things in the name of errors. You kill in error and you shoot in error. When will you put away this robot called Mr. Error? Now listen! I don't want this case to see the light of day. Make sure no newspaper reports it. Let there be no rumour. Let there be no tale. But the militants you must quickly prosecute. They came there because they wanted to blow up vital installations. So ensure you blow up their plans. They came there to plan. They have been planning. Make sure the court does not grant them bail. Tell the Chief Justice that. Get a court order and remand them in prison custody. Then post your men to that river. Make it a military zone. We cannot tolerate night prayers in a river. What is wrong in praying in the churches? Are the churches not too many already? What have their prayers yielded except more armed robbers, militants, and kidnappers?

Chief of Police: Yes, Sir!

Batula: Now you can go.

Chief of Police: (Exits)

ADC: (Enters). The Chief Justice is here to see you, Sir.

Batula: What for? I have asked him to remand the militants in prison. Bring him in so that I can tell him to his face.

ADC: Yes, Sir. (*Exit ADC and later re-enters with Chief Justice*). Well Chief Justice! You see the level the militants have gone? They have now resorted to prayers. How can people who carry guns to terrorise the people have the conscience to pray to God? They are only praying to the devil. Now teach them a lesson by putting them in prison custody. No bail. No relatives. No friends. Only solitary confinement. No newspapers. No meat. No fish. For every request, the answer is No! I have said it. Let no court contravene it. Let there be no appeal or any human rights nonsense. No lawyer is permitted to see them. Is that clear Chief Justice? Either the order is obeyed or you are in the streets in search of a job. Which one do you choose?

Chief Justice: Your Excellency, I understand the position of government. But this is a bailable offence. The human rights lawyers are already besieging the courts. What explanation can we offer in a democracy?

Batula: How do you dialogue with militants? Why is it that you can hear the human rights lawyers but cannot see the ruthlessness of the militants? They do

not deserve the conventional method of hearing petitions. So put them away.

Chief Justice: My hands are tied. My phones are perpetually ringing.

Batula: The detention of the militants or your job. Take one.

Chief Justice: (*Worried, his head is lowered*) I shall think about it. Can I go now and see you later?

Batula: Yes, but with the news that the boys are in prison.

Chief Justice: I shall be back. (*Exits*)

Batula: The law is an ass. Beat it. Eat it. Do whatever you want. The ass will obey. Climb it, it will carry you anywhere you want to go. Ass. Beast.

-----(*Lights fade*).-----

ACT 5 SCENE 1

(In a hall where Lawyers and judges are meeting in the Chief Justice Chambers. The Chief Justice is presiding).

Chief Justice: The country is in turmoil. What do you suggest the Bar and the Bench should do?

Barrister Famope: The nation has reached a cross-road. The judges must meet and challenge executive supremacy. The bench must interpret the law as it is. The judges cannot be afraid anymore. If a judge is afraid of being sacked by the executive, what business has a policeman to confront armed robbers? Still, why should a soldier go on a peace mission where he could die for a cause, he does not know anything about or believe in it?

Members: *(Clapping and ovation)*

Chief Justice: What do we do about all those in detention?

Justice Adio: The executive cannot insist that they must remain in detention. It is either that they are released or they are charged to court.

Chief Justice: What if there is arm twisting? What if the executive arm insists?

Justice Adio: If the executive arm insists, then we have no option than to boycott the courts.

Chief justice: Is that the opinion of the house?

All: Yes. *

Chief justice: And if the executive uses the big stick, what shall we do?

All: We move to the streets.

*(The lights fade with them chanting.
On the other side of the stage is Batula
in his office).*

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ACT 5 SCENE 2

(It is in the State House. Batula sits and later stands. He smokes for a long time shaking his head and sighing. He then begins to shed tears. Intermittently he wipes his face with a white handkerchief. He picks up the phone.)

Batula: ADC, bring her in.

ADC: *(Enters with Chinyere and then withdraws)*

Batula: *(Looks at Chinyere for a long time)*
What did I do to deserve all this?

Chinyere: *(Sees a chair and goes and sits down.)*

Batula: I have three questions. I have asked one though which makes it four. One, why did you go there? Two, who took you there? Have you ever found me wanting as a man?

Chinyere: *(Mute)*

Batula: You have no answer? You must know you have made me a laughing stock in a country I rule. I need these answers to navigate my way. You see your folly?

Chinyere: *(Mute)* My folly? You left me and started running after the campus queens. Shouldn't a reasonable human being find answers to his problems?

Batula: Have you now found it?

Chinyere: *(Mute)*

Batula: Have you ever caught me with any of the girls?

- Chinyere:* What were they trooping in and out of your office for?
- Batula:* In other words you anchored your conclusion on their visits to my office? Don't you know the position I occupy ?
- Chinyere:* You should have given me an explanation if nothing was going on.
- Batula:* Did you complain and no explanation was given?
- Chinyere:* The whole thing was as clear as day light. I did my investigation and found out that a particular mannequin was after your heart.
- Batula:* After my heart? What kind of nonsense are you saying? You want to hold me for an action which you conjured up? I cannot understand your level of reasoning. So, if this case comes up in court this is what you will say?
- Chinyere:* I have been arraigned, have I not?
- Bayula:* Before the court sits, hear the verdict. You will move from here to where you will pay fully for your folly.
- Chinyere:* No mercy, no show of understanding?
- Batula:* With what face will you face the world?
- Chinyere:* Who has never committed an offence before?
- Batula:* There is no offence except when trapped under the law.
- Chinyere:* Can I ask you some questions?

- Batula:* I hope I can answer but ask.
- Chinyere:* What will become of my children?
- Batula:* Next.
- Chinyere:* Have you forgotten all our years together? Should it just come to an end?
- Batula:* Next.
- Chinyere:* What will become of the programmes that I have set up?
- Batula:* Next.
- Chinyere:* (Mute)
- Batula:* After making yourself a laughing stock you are asking what will become of your programme, your children and our life together. What do you want to become of them?
- Chinyere:* One cannot make amends?
- Batula:* You have debased your womanhood. You have sold your dignity and now you talk of programmes.
- Chinyere:* I was set-up.
- Batula:* By who? You went there of your own volition.
- Chinyere:* Can't someone make a mistake?
- Batula:* Yes one can. But what under the sun made you to go there? Imagine yourself being found in such a place. A First Lady being found in the company of militants, and on top of that naked, bathing? For what? You have no shame? A native doctor told you to go there.

have you no mind of your own? And worshipers took advantage of you.

Chinyere: *(Begins to cry)*

Batula: You have no shame, no sense, no value. I don't want to see you again. *(Picks up the phone)* ADC, see me.

ADC: *(Enters)* What is your will my leader.

Batula: Away with her.

ADC: *(Begins to drag her along)* Come madam.

-----*Lights fade.*-----

ACT 5 SCENE 3

(It is in a court room. The militants are seated, waiting. After a while, the Chief Justice enters. A young man enters the court room and whispers something to the court Bailiff who in turn walks up to the Chief Justice)

Chief Justice: This court reserves the right to continue or discontinue this case only on the order of the Attorney General of the Federation. He represents the State. In the interim, my court shall rise to consider the request made by trying to see justice, true justice. We shall stand for a few minutes.

Bailiff: Court! *(The Chief Justice leaves the courtroom. Soon he re-enters)*

Chief Justice: Ruling! In a democracy, there are three arms of government: The Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary. These arms are deemed and seen to be independent arms of the State. The Executive has made known its intention for this court to discard formal procedures, precedents and convention by sitting in camera; at its turn and wish. By its very nature and my experience, the law is an ass. Thirty five years is enough to sample all its beastly

sides, determine all its roles in judgment; pronounce it senseless before humanity. Nothing else is the law. Admittedly, there are focal points, important areas of overlap. However, interdependence does not create room for unwarranted interference. Notice of discontinuance is better, where all chapters are closed. On that very note, after weighing carefully the case, the Executive arm is overruled. This court shall continue to sit as by tradition in public.

Prosecution: May it please my lord, to note the facts of this case. The person of the president is to be ridiculed. Let the court not give void orders, else the judiciary itself may be ridiculed.

Chief Justice: Serve me a notice of withdrawal to effect a discontinuation. Nothing causes a court to retract after a ruling. My experience has not seen such, not even now in my court. So, on my orders I shall rise to sit again and in public.

Prosecution: My lord, with all due respect, this is an abuse of the court, a war on the Executive's directive.

Chief Justice: May I remind you of my position, the place of contempt of court in the rule of law?

Prosecution: I want it on record my lord my objections to the direction of this court's proceeding.

Chief Justice: It shall be reflected in your copy of the proceedings. And I now rise.

Bailiff: Court! *(The Chief Justice leaves the courtroom)* Lights fade on them.

(On the other side, Batula is seen sitting in his office. He is evidently furious when he listens to a radio announcement that the court will continue to sit in public. He inhales his cigarette while he paces around in his office. Soon his Orderly enters).

Batula: Run on now. Bring me the impudent Chief Justice!
(Batula continues to pace around, smoking. He charges towards the door as the Chief Justice enters)

Batula: For that public outplay, you are fired. You deserve no benefit. In disgrace you shall go. Justice Kalio will preside over it. *(The Orderly looks in to find out the cause of Batula's high voice)*

Chief Justice: Did Your Excellency read the full text of my ruling? No Judge sits in my court. I preside there. Any Judge in there at your instance is a disgrace to the Judiciary.

Batula: You are defrocked. Up, get out. Leave. This minute.....Instantly I say!
(The Chief Justice storms of the room. Batula sits and pulls hard at his cigarette.)

Batula: ADC! ADC! *(In no time the ADC appears while Batula pulls hard at his cigarette. Light dims on Batula while placard carrying audience appears. They move around the stage shouting "No more killings! Put an end to Hunger! Give us food". Then the audience disappears)*

Batula: Who are those carrying placards?

ADC: The unruly citizens, the market women. They are protesting against your regime.

Batula: *(Annoyed)* And what have you been doing?

ADC: I have sent a troop to arrest them.

Batula: Arrest? You arrest at a time of mutiny? Shoot them! All of them! Let blood flow in the streets as a river descends a hill.

ADC: What of the students?

Batula: I don't want to see or hear about them. Pull the trigger in their midst. Pull hard until they all come down like grasses mowed down by a bulldozer.

ADC: Yes Sir!

Batula: Do it! Great is blood. Greater still is the will. All are at a leader's command.

ADC: We shall kill many too soon, Mr. President! Exercise caution. Grant me indulgence and I shall quell this uproar!

Batula: It is no uproar! It is insurrection! Plain mutiny! Nothing brings down a rebellion faster than blood. The kind payment by the authors!

ADC: What of your wife, our First lady?

Batula: You still call her my wife after all she has done? That whore! That ape! That scavenger! Up! Get set! She shall cease to live as fast as she became the First lady!

ADC: Let the Chief Justice live, Mr. President!

Batula: No. Put him in prison first. I have more stakes but he shall have more pains.

ADC: Why do you seek their end, Mr. President?

Batula: I take no life. They opted to pass through the guillotine, into an abyss that justly atones for their evil. Why do they oppose when I plead!

ADC: Every leader must be patient, underscore the pains of envy in order to succeed.

Batula: I have told you I am on my knees. Am I proud? Daily I plead for their support. Why do they challenge a man with arms?

ADC: Arms are shields my leader. But they are also double edged swords. They kill their bearers too.

Batula: How many have I killed? None. You make me feel guilty for running the state. Remember the citizens need to fear their leader.

ADC: Mr. President, they are too afraid. Too frightened to obey. They hide instead. Is that love or hate?

Batula: It is neither. It is plain hypocrisy. The citizens! I do not mean all of them. Only a handful fuels the hatred from abroad.

That is why I advise we put them in goal as soon as they emerge. In no time, we shall have rid the nation of trouble makers.

ADC: Some of them could be ignored. Sometimes we need our own propaganda to counter their propaganda.

Batula: Yes. You are right if it were so. True. It is statesmanship to practice propaganda against propaganda. Rumour against rumour. Lies against lies. But what do you do when it is mutiny against a government? It is no more a kid's glove. You need bigger armour. That is why we use the cells and the guns. What of...*(The sound of a gun is heard behind the stage. Batula quickly takes cover. The ADC tip-toes outside to find out the cause. Batula remains under cover until the ADC comes back to tell him the danger is over.)*

ADC: The mob action has been quelled. I phoned the Chief of Army Staff and he shelled and they took to their heels. The jelly-fishes! Up Sir! Resume your duties. The ill-will cannot overwhelm us.

(Batula remains under cover until the ADC taps him on the shoulder). Rise my leader!

Batula: *(Looking around)* Look at that! Do you counter that with propaganda? Force needs force. Might needs might and the greater of the two supersedes. Leave this case to me. I have long been a man of war! I was trained at Sand Hurst and India. I know more about war than you will ever accomplish in your career?

ADC: Yes Sir! Your credentials, Sir, are impressive.

Batula: Get my pistol. Load the pump action and be set with yours. I die shamefully if I die like a coward.

ADC: Yes Sir!

Batula: Then stand behind me and learn. You are beginning to sound like one of the bands of opposition. You should be a shield and support. Not act like a jack riper! *(The ADC salutes while Batula turns and walks away).*

-----*Light fades on them*-----

ACT 5 SCENE 4

(It is along a road, a corner behind the residence of the president. The Orderly stops and looks around. Then he sees Theresa running away with a bag, the Orderly points a gun at her).

Orderly: *(Shouting)* Stop there! Don't move!

Theresa: *(Stops, panting).*

Orderly: Where are you going? Are you escaping with my master's belongings? *(He puts back his pistol inside the holster)*

Theresa: No. I stole no one's good.

Orderly: Then where are you going?

Theresa: Running for my dear life!

Orderly: Now go back! You must get the permit of the leader!

Theresa: Please.

Orderly: Now go back. Another word and I will blow off your brains. *(He draws his pistol)*

Theresa: *(Scared)* Please. There is danger. Let me escape.

Orderly: No. Come. *(He seizes her wrist)*
Follow me. *(He drags her along)*

Theresa: Now let us make a deal.

Orderly: *(Stopping)* What is it?

Theresa: *(Shyly)* I will do whatever you want.

Orderly: (Smiling) Whatever you said?

Theresa: (Nods)

Orderly: Will you be my wife?

Theresa: I've made a commitment to someone.

Orderly: Renounce him or we go back.

Theresa: Please.

Orderly: Do you then agree?

Theresa: (Reluctantly) Yes.

Orderly: Follow me. (He holds her by the side).

Theresa: Do you know the president is threatening to kill my madam?

Orderly: For what she did.

Theresa: Is it enough?

Orderly: Come let me lead you out of danger.
(They begin to walk)

Second Soldier: Stop you two! Where are you going?

Orderly: Have you not heard, Sir, of this ill-wind blowing against our country?

Second Soldier: (Coming nearer) No. What is it?

Orderly: The president exchanged harsh words with the Chief Justice and he has now sacked him.

Second Soldier: True? That is news indeed!

Orderly: He has even put him in a cell.

- Second Soldier:* That is a national disgrace. Imagine such acts displayed before the whole world.
- Third Soldiers:* It is a shame indeed! A preparatory move for a formal trial!
- Second Soldier:* One doesn't expect the Chief Justice's removal, and throwing him in jail mocks the other arm of government.
- Third Soldier:* The Judiciary should rise in protest.
- Orderly:* The Atepa Vice-Chancellor has called a meeting of all the university V-Cs, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Committee.
- Second Soldier:* Better.
- Third Soldier:* Only we hope it will not lead to civil unrest.
- Second Soldier:* Let anarchy reign! We reject such tyranny.
- Third Soldier:* The labor unions are posing for a national protest march. The country is boiling.
- Second Soldier:* Better. Let her blaze!
- Third Soldier:* Listen, I heard students are barricading the campus gate.
- First Soldier:* Let them demonstrate. This may drive some sense into him.
- Third Soldier:* Here comes Kehinde the friend of the First Lady.

- Kehinde:* (*Kehinde is moody*) Greeting! Will you also watch while the nation crumbles?
- Second Soldier:* What else will soldiers do?
- Kehinde:* You ask what you can do. A lot. Send a delegation to the president to spare the life of my friend.
- Third Soldier:* He cannot toy with her life.
- Kehinde:* Already he has executed the young men who perpetrated the act. He has also threatened to execute Chinyere before night fall tomorrow.
- Second Soldier:* That will be cold bloody murder.
- Kehinde:* He is bent on chopping off her head. All my pleas have not dissuaded him.
- Third Soldier:* Will her death unto what has taken place?
- Second Soldier:* I have not seen anything of the sort.
- First Soldier:* But why did she do it?
- Kehinde:* Remember she was performing a ritual. Taking a doctor's prescription!
- Third Soldier:* That is superstition.
- Kehinde:* She was helpless, eager to keep her marriage.
- Second Soldier:* A wrong medication for a normal ailment.

- Kehinde:* Under the circumstance, she appeared tied to an ill-fated course.
- Third Soldier:* I am against dancing to a wrong tune. Everybody likes music, but we must not lose our waist in it.
- Kehinde:* Everybody blames Chinyere. Nobody wants to review her case.
- Second Soldier:* A herbalist is a bad doctor. His prescriptions are overdose.
- Third Soldier:* What nonsense you say.
- Kehinde:* Whatever happens, she deserves to live. Her crime does not carry a death penalty.
- Second Soldier:* What does the law say?
- First Soldier:* (Concerned) She could be divorced.
- Third Soldier:* That is a sounder punishment.
- Kehinde:* (Breaks down crying) My friend has a right to life. Nobody will kill her.
- Second Soldier:* (Consoling) Nobody will kill her? But his tribunal has found her guilty. And she has been placed in a death cell.
- First Soldier:* To threaten and frighten her perhaps.
- Second Soldier:* And bring her female pride to submission.
- Kehinde:* Oh male chauvinism!
- Third Soldier:* Our leader is a movie-maker.

- Kehinde:* With a gold brutal soul.
- Second Soldier:* Sometimes a leader needs to be firm to effect justice. Our man must not however over-do it.
- Kehinde:* He does not indulge in trifles. Every word of his carries a matched action. He will kill Chinyere. I saw sweat water down his face, while I pleaded. His eye balls were blood shot; deadly with rage. The cremated end of his cigarette was kept alive- the stub was burning his fingers.
- Third Soldier:* The picture of a man whose pride has been wounded.
- Kehinde:* Plead for her. *(sobbing)* Let him not kill her please.
- Second Soldier:* *(With his palm holding his rifle)* He dares not.
- Orderly:* See the servant. Look! Theresa! *(The servant enters.)*
- Servant:* Madam, Oga don kill our madam. He say make them shoot am. They shoot am and I saw her dead body.
- Kehinde:* *(Inconsolable wailing)*
- Second Soldier:* Does he dare?
- Servant:* Go see. Dem they bury am now.
- Third Soldier:* What did the leader say?
- Servant:* I no fit understand him big grammar. I quote am say... "Yes

bring to a happy end the source of my woes". I beg, wetin that one be?

Second Soldier: Okay young lady, we understand him. Now you can go.

Servant: How I for do as madam no dey?

Kehinde: Don't worry. Everything will be alright soon.

Third Soldier: Now, on your way young man. You won't rustle the plumes of a purkle-pin when it is laid for dinner.

Servant: *(Hesitates)* Oga, dey cry like small pikin. Even self, I pity am.

Second Soldier: I understand. *(Turning to the other soldiers)* The pupil dilates only after an irritation. What do you think?

Third Soldier: Come let us go and see for ourselves. Man, lead the way.

-----*Lights fade*-----

ACT 6 SCENE 1

(A scene for civil anarchy is created. Soldiers are carrying arms and some are fighting. Shootings are also heard. The commotion goes on for a while until the lights fade on them. The stage bare, reveals two soldiers with dust over them discussing.)

Soldier 1: War is death. Nobody wins or loses a war.

Soldier 2: War sours every relationship.

Soldier 1: Especially if it is one over a woman.

Soldier 2: That is the most despicable kind.

Soldier 1: Then, why are we fighting?

Soldier 2: Where is the president? (Looks around)

Soldier 1: I learnt many of our colleagues have fallen at the Romila Barracks.

Soldier 2: The captain who made the broadcast has fallen.

Soldier 1: A most worthy hero! Killed?

Soldier 2: He must be given a post humous award for his gallantry.

Soldier 1: If his man wins.

Soldier 2: Look, that corporal has gone to the war front.

Soldier 3: (Saluting) A bad war Sir! It is a bad war.

Soldier 1: Which party is in control?

- Soldier 3:* None obviously, Sir! Exchange of fire continues to shake the earth to its foundation.
- Soldier 2:* *(Looking around)* Can you make out the whereabouts of the leader?
- Soldier 3:* He is at the front himself. He has taken over the command of the army.
- Soldier 2:* That is too risky.
- Soldier 1:* Though we are soldiers, I don't think I know the direction of this war.
- Soldier 3:* Let me educate you, Sir, let me explain.
- Soldier 1:* Don't send me to a school corporal. Explain.
- Soldier 3:* Yes, Sir! The war now is between two parties. The President on one hand, while the lawyer who defended the militants has taken an opposition stand is on the other.
- Soldier 1:* He took command of the Army?
- Soldier 3:* His supporters in the army are fighting on his behalf.
- Soldier 2:* You mean he has left his wig and gown and is now fighting?
- Soldier 3:* Yes. He now leads an army.
- Soldier 1:* The undoing of every nation.
(More exchange of fire works are heard)
- Soldier 2:* That sounds like a fiercer battle. The war has lost character.

Soldier 3: Bloody enterprise! It is a sorry sight.
(A great shot splits the pence of the stage;
the discussing soldiers quickly take cover.)

-----Light fades on them-----

(The stage is dark. Light suddenly comes up revealing Batula and the lawyer, each fully dressed in his professional attire-fighting. The war tilts to either side.)

Lawyer: Put down the crown. Face me like a man.

Batula: We are fighting man and man. Wolf and wolf.

Lawyer: I put it to you that you are a cold bloody murderer.

Batula: The crown sits on my head. Your utterances mock the state, make vile and jest of honour.

Lawyer: There is no honour left. Nothing is left but an empty shell. A carcass for fun now remains.

Batula: A man of democracy..... Now fights harder against the enemies of the state .

Lawyer: Justice sits on judgment over evil. Today you will die. (Lawyer assassinates Batula)

(A victory song is heard as some soldiers march in with the body of Batula. Silence overcomes the soldiers while a dirge follows for the fallen leader)

Lawyer:

We face down in our quests, waiting for our survival. We have a duty to every citizen. No flood rises above the fountain of a river. Such wetness is only for a while. The falls of a river are for a life time, making a windy meandering journey into the deep blue sea. Where does the sea derive its source? What even of the ocean? Shall we then say, the end sees its way only in darkness?
(Light dims)

-----End-----

ABOUT THE AUTHOR |||



Dan Chima Amadi hails from Aku in Igbo Etiti Local Government Area of Enugu State. He took degrees in English from Universities of Jos (B.A) and Nigeria (M.A) and is currently pursuing a doctorate in English in Abia State University, Utyru. Apart from numerous articles published in several journals and contributions in books, he is the author of the following published

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ABOUT THE BOOK |||

The Trial of the Militants is the story of Batula, an impulsive and insensitive African President who comes to power through a massively rigged election. He tries to consolidate his hold on power but the forces against him are immense. The rise of terrorism in his country and his attempt to put down opposition, insurgency and sabotage bring him into conflict with the Judiciary of his country. The trial of the militants which he encourages while freeing his own wife Chinyere, The First Lady is the last straw that breaks the camel's back. In a sense, The trial of the militants is also the trial of Batula in Ifesen and the triumph of the rule of law.