

YAYA AND THE GOLDEN THRONE

By
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YAYA AND THE GOLDEN THRONE

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YAYA AND THE GOLDEN THRONE

I dedicate this script to the dedicated and talented students in the School of Theatre and Dance at Stephen F. Austin State University, to every artist who dares to act upon their dreams, my loving husband for your unwavering support, my BFF, Damon for believing in me from the beginning and all of my teachers who poured into me.

YAYA AND THE GOLDEN THRONE

YAYA AND THE GOLDEN THRONE had its premiere workshop at the Atlanta Black Theatre Festival in Atlanta, GA in 2022. Directed by Damon Price, the company featured as follows:

YaYa.....Jody Ann Henry
King Alake/ Elder 1/Assassin 2...David Rucker, III
Thema.....Tosin Taiwo
Oni/Elder 4.....Kay Benjamin
Nsia.....LaSada “Sai Sai” Lloyd
Baako/Elder 2.....Andre Hankerson
Kobina/Assassin 1.....Jason Louder
Olumide/Elder 3.....Peggy Neely-Harris

YAYA AND THE GOLDEN THRONE had additional workshops at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, TX, in 2024 featuring the following cast:

YaYa.....Akeria Lewis
Esan/Emir.....Alyssa Harris
King Alake/ Attah/Tayo/ BabatundeOsvaldo Matute
Thema.....Sapph Haywood
Nsia/Oni Ashland Anderson
Baako/ Sulayman /Oba.....Erik Colbert
Kobina/Soldier 1/Assassin 2.....Joshua Jameson
Olumide/ Dogara/Assassin 1Joseph Olawaiye

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CAST: 12 M 6 W

All characters are Black or of African descent and are to be portrayed by actors who physically present as such. Doubling is

YAYA	20's, she is a fierce fighter, passionate and extremely intelligent.
ESAN	20's, she is a thinker, a planner, a strategist.
KING	60's, powerful and towering. Appears as a ghost.
ATTAH	40-60's, a clans leader on the king's council
THEMA	30-40's, a surrogate mother to YaYa.
ONI	80's, YaYa's grandmother and mother of the king.
SULAYMAN	80's, a clans leader on the king's council
NSIA	20's, YaYa's best friend and confidant.
BAAKO	20's, childhood friend of YaYa and Nsia's brother.
EMIR	50's, a clans leader on the king's council.
KOBINA	50's, Nsia's father and highest ranking military leader.
OLUMIDE	100's, part trickster, witch and oracle. Any gender.
DOGARA	40-50's, a clans leader on the king's council.
BABATUNDE	30's, bodyguard and apprentice to Olumide.
OBA	Teens or up, a messenger, any gender, any age.
ASSASSIN 1	40's, any gender.
ASSASSIN 2	20's, any gender
TAYO	7-10yrs, the son of Kobina and Thema.

TIME: 1901

PLACE: Various locales within an African Kingdom.

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ACT 1

SCENE 1: To Find a Witch

A tempest rages as the sounds of war in 1901 Africa rage loudly. The silhouette of the performers can be seen. They are in a battle. The battle subsides and gives way to...A dark field with sparse trees and high grass. Enter YAYA and NSIA.

NSIA. Yaya, are you sure this is the spot?

YAYA. I can barely see in front of my face.

BAAKO. *(From offstage.)* Nsia! YaYa! Wait up! *(BAAKO enters.)*

YAYA. Quiet! All that noise will wake the dead.

BAAKO. Sorry, YaYa.

NSIA. *(Peering into the dark.)* We must be crazy to be roaming the hillside looking for a witch!

BAAKO. *(Nervous.)* Aye. When we saw Olumide was not at home, we should have went on our way. But no, no, no we had to come out here on the darkest part of the hillside...a hillside that is probably swarming with lions.

YAYA. The king has been taken and our regiments cannot hold the enemy at bay for very long. Maybe the witch Olumide can tell me what is to come or even better show me a way to help our people.

NSIA. You are the daughter of a king, you should not be roaming the countryside at night looking for a witch.

BAAKO. Anything could be lurking in the shadows. *(Squeals)* Ah! Did you hear that?!

YAYA/NSIA. Quiet Baako!

YAYA. *(Almost to herself.)* The golden throne is at risk. We are facing an

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enemy who has sworn to destroy us and every direct descendant of the throne. Even if I have to go to war...I would, I would fight.

BAAKO. *(Sitting.)* The Elders will never let a princess fight.

YAYA. We all should fight! Or at least be given the choice. *(To NSIA)* And since the great general, your father-

BAAKO. *Our* father, General Kobina. The most powerful man in our kingdom just below King Alake himself.

BAAKO/NSIA. *(Joking/Mocking.)* And for whom we have the upmost respect. *(They laugh.)*

YAYA. Very funny but if only Kobina would let women join the regiment. To fight for our ourselves and our people. With or without the support of the general. I will find a way. *(They turn upstage and OLUMIDE is revealed. Standing near her is BABATUNDE. Olumide is sitting, standing or possibly levitating. Whatever it is, it is magical and YaYa, Nsia and Baako are mesmerized. Babatunde stands nearby in guard mode.)*

NSIA. *(Looking at YaYa and Baako.)* YaYa? Baako? *(To the witch.)* What have you done to them that they will not speak? They are frozen like statues. Ma, we do not mean any harm. The Princess YaYa stands before you. *(Pleading.)* She seeks your council.

OLUMIDE. The smell of blood is in the air and the night is ripe for adventure. *(Olumide snaps at Yaya. The magic is over. She and Baako come to. He laughs.)*

Come closer girl. *(YaYa starts to him.)*

BAAKO/NSIA. Careful YaYa!

OLUMIDE. It is not me she should fear. *(To YaYa.)* Come closer. Yes. *(Inspecting her.)* So very pretty and strong. Hips made for ushering in dynasties. Your eyes, your eyes are...like diamonds. Amazing! Babatunde, don't just stand there. Find a seat for the princess. She has come a long way.

YAYA. Thank you, sir.

OLUMIDE. It is nothing. A simple courtesy that ripples. Stumbling forward to the future and even the past. *(Olumide stares out as if in a trance and then-)* Ah! Yes, excuse me. Ask me your questions princess.

YAYA. My father! Please, tell me about my father! Tell me that he will be saved and how we will win this war!

OLUMIDE. *(Laughing.)* Ambitious girl. That thing there around your neck.

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Give it to me.

YAYA. But it's my father's.

OLUMIDE. Give it me. I will use it to connect with things unseen.

Baba...fetch. *(Babatunde steps toward Yaya with a bowl or platter. YaYa lays it in the bowl and he passes it to Olumide. Olumide begins a summoning ritual. It is serious, magical, ancient and a little scary.)*

OLUMIDE. You shall be mother to all but barer of none. A dark choice you must make or the throne you will not take. Death will have more than his share, The queen you shall be, should you dare. Daughters born free, a kingdom saved, A queen ascended by a kingly grave.

BAAKO. *(Scared.)* Did she say grave? Is someone dying?

NSIA. Shhhhhh.

YAYA. *(Standing.)* Olumide, auntie, I don't understand.

OLUMIDE. *(To Nsia.)* Now you, yes you, step forward dear...for you Your heart's desire you will dispossess, To save the kingdom...an act of selflessness. Sibling bonds united and true, an unexpected way through. *(To YAYA.)* Princess YaYa shall be this nation's first and fiercest queen and it is through your reign that generations of peace will exist for generations to come. *(The magic is gone. The necklace falls to the ground. We are back to reality. Olumide is weakened and Babatunde assists her. YaYa sits confused and stunned as Baako comforts her. Nsia stands guard.)*

BABATUNDE. Auntie. There, there now.

OLUMIDE. *(Tired.)* Get away from me. I am fine. *(To YaYa.)* What are you still doing here? Go home gal.

NSIA. You have played us for the fool auntie.

OLUMIDE. Look at me gal. I never play.

NSIA. No, right, we are the fools for coming to you.

OLUMIDE. You might take a more sensible tone or else you may be turned into a donkey to suit the ass you are showing. *(Babatunde steps forward aggressively in defense of Olumide.)*

BAAKO. *(To Nsia but referring to Babatunde.)* Or be ripped apart and fed to lions. *(To Olumide.)* We meant no harm, ma'am.

OLUMIDE. Nsia, the magic exists. It cares not if you believe. Does the grass need your belief? Does the air you breathe? Foolish gal.

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YAYA. *(Regaining her composure.)* How can I be queen when my father is king? What about your prophecy tells of my father?

OLUMIDE. *(To Babatunde.)* My flask, son. *(Babatunde gives her a flask. She drinks.)*

YAYA. Auntie please. What about my father? *(Olumide and Babatunde go to exit. Then Olumide turns to them.)*

OLUMIDE. King Alake will come to you when you are not looking for him. He will then make himself known and what you must do. Move along princess. I will see you again soon enough. *(They disappear. Magic. OR Olumide simply turns to Babatunde and says "Take me in. I feel a chill in the air.")*

BAAKO. Aye! Did you see that?!

NSIA. Did you hear?

BAAKO. Yes, she said something about...I really do not know. All I could hear was my heart beating in my throat.

YAYA. *(To herself.)* How? How is that even possible? Me queen? I never thought.

NSIA. *(To Baako.)* Look at her. So lost in thought. I wonder what she is thinking.

BAAKO. *(Loudly.)* What are you thinking? *(Nsia swats at Baako.)*

YAYA. I am thinking about my father because if I am queen, does that mean he is-

NSIA. Do not let your mind have such thoughts. She told you the king would come to you when you were not looking! For now we go home.

BAAKO. Yes we must hurry back to the village. If not we will miss the meeting of the elders.

YAYA. The Elders are meeting to decide whether or not fight to bring the the king, my father home. We must not delay. I can only imagine what those old jackals are planning. *(YaYa, Nsia and Baako cross down center as the next moment materializes around them. Lights shift as the ELDERS enter. They bring benches, stools, mats, etc. to sit on for this important meeting.)*

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SCENE 2: A Meeting of the Elders

The Elders are in a heated exchange with leaders from the various clans. YaYa and Nsia have faded to the back of the crowd and are listening intently. They are now joined by ESAN, YaYa's sister, KOBINA, the general and his wife THEMA.

ATTAH. *(Standing.)* The people will not relent!

EMIR. Of course but we must have a plan!

DOGARA. We must exercise caution. Other clans have tried and their losses were devastating.

ATTAH. We must stand up to these invaders. They cannot go unchecked.

KOBINA. Our king has been abducted. At all costs we must protect the golden throne. If the throne is lost-

VARIOUS. *(Overlapping.)* It would be the end of us! Do not say it! We must strike now! We cannot continue this war! Kobina what say you?!

ATTAH. How can we be certain of our next move? We know not where they have taken the king.

DOGARA. Rumors swirl. Some say he is here or others there.

SULAYMAN. I was told he is being held captive in Seychelles Islands!

VARIOUS. *(Overlapping)* I heard that too. Me too. That would be a dangerous journey.

KOBINA. We must take care not to take action on unconfirmed rumors. It could very well be a plot by the enemy. Something they leaked to set a trap for any would be rescuers. *(More chaos and disagreement.)*

DOGARA. Kobina is correct. I have seen it with my own eyes the pointless deaths that result from a rush to action.

EMIR. But they have gone too far!

ATTAH. *(Agreeing.)* Kidnapping our king and insisting on having the golden throne in exchange!

EMIR. Preposterous!

KOBINA. By tradition, he who possess the throne is the king. To get our king back but lose the throne - there would be no kingdom for him to rule. *(More chaos but agreement.)*

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YAYA. (*Shouting over the noise.*) Our kingdom is more than a golden throne! Our kingdom consists of her people.

DOGARA. We must exercise caution. Respectfully, daughter you do not know-

YAYA. I say we take a few small boats to the Seychelles and we bring my father - our king home! Every second we waste could mean his death.

ATTAH. YaYa, this is not wise daughter. The island is highly guarded.

EMIR. This shall require more strategy than stealth.

DOGARA. The elder is right we must be cautious. We cannot charge in like angry elephants!

KOBINA. YaYa, the elder's are correct. There is no proof that his highness is on that island. In due time we will-

YAYA. I cannot stand by while death hangs over his head and you are paralyzed into inaction in the name of caution!

THEMA. Be still daughter!

KOBINA. (*Insulted.*) Inaction? We are here. We are planning.

YAYA. We are doing nothing! We have warriors do we not? I can lead them if needed. I am not afraid. I am as much a warrior as any man. (*The Elders are shocked.*)

THEMA. YaYa, no.

ATTAH. Ignorant girl!

DOGARA. The impudence!

KOBINA. Elders, the princess' belief in her abilities as a warrior is not unfounded. She is well trained. I know because I trained her myself. She is easily the most skilled female in the kingdom. However, she is untried in battle and this is no job for a woman.

SULAYMAN. (*Sucking his teeth.*) Tsk tsk tsk. The girl is frightened and understandably so. So frightened that she speaks like a crazy woman.

EMIR. The girl is disrespectful and should keep quiet like her sweet doll of a sister, the princess Esan there.

YAYA. I am no doll.

ATTAH. Ah, the disrespect!

DOGARA. Somebody get me a stick!

KOBINA. No, no, no. Everyone please. Elders... YaYa, let's not let our

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emotions get the better of us.

YAYA. *(Circling the Elders.)* Your king has been taken, a war wages and this council sits on their hands. Paralyzed like a spider's prey.

DOGARA. Where is that stick!?

ATTAH. Be quiet child or you and every woman present shall be removed.

KOBINA. Indeed! You may be the daughter of the king but you are not a member of this council!

THEMA. We all should exhibit proper decorum and allow for cooler heads to prevail.

KOBINA. My beautiful wife is correct. The fact is we cannot divert our forces now. They would surely come for the golden throne if they knew it was not adequately protected.

EMIR. Ndiyo! It is a ploy to get their hands on the golden throne.

ATTAH. Ndiyo!

YAYA. Kobina this is unacceptable. You have a duty to your king! Not to a throne.

KOBINA. *(Firm, almost combative.)* I have a duty to the survival of our people! The king, your father, would agree with me if he were here. The throne represents our legacy and to lose it would mean the end of our dynasty. A leader that puts his desires before the people is no leader at all princess.

VARIOUS. Well said Kobina! Ndiyo! Ignorant girl! Give up the throne? Never! *(Disagreement and chaos ensue. Sulayman taps his cane to the floor. The room comes to a hush.)*

SULAYMAN. Surely, we all can see how deep the princess' love is for her father, our beloved and most respected king. Yes, her willingness to jump into the fray is noble. *(Beat.)* I have listened to all of you and as the eldest member of the king's council I believe we must defer to the wisdom of our warrior general, Kobina. We must vote, of course but we know the way we must vote. I am afraid Princess Yaya, no matter how passionate your pleas, that your judgement is clouded by the love you have for your father. This council dare not put one man above the future of its people. Even a king.

ATTAH. Well said elder! We must protect our citizens, no matter what.

YAYA. More like protect your own hides!

SULAYMAN. Daughter, the stability of the golden throne is of utmost

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importance. **ATTAH.** We must assure the throne and thereby ensure a new king. Should one be needed. You must marry princess.

YAYA. *(To Thema.)* I should marry? Do you hear them, Esan? Sister? Listen to these...men! They speak as if our father is no more. *(To the Elders.)* Will you truly do nothing? *(To Thema)* Auntie Thema shall you bring another child into this world where girl children must eat like beggars even at the table that was made for them?

KOBINA. Enough princess! You embarrass the king and yourself with these outbursts.

THEMA. *(Cradling her stomach.)* YaYa...dear...walk me home. I must get home to Tayo.

SULAYMAN. It is time to take a vote.

DOGARA. Elder Sulayman is right, we must vote. What say you Elder Attah??

ATTAH. Ndiyo! Vote, we should. Elder Emir?

EMIR. Of course!

YAYA. Our focus needs to be on saving my father!...saving your king!

THEMA. YaYa, enough!

DOGARA. The lions shall not be deterred by the fly.

ATTAH. *(Laughing.)* Shoo fly! Shoo!

YAYA. You should all be ashamed! This will not stand. History will judge you as cowards and traitors to the throne!

ATTAH. You are being foolish daughter!

YAYA. I am not your daughter! *(YaYa exits. Followed by Nsia and Esan. Lights fade as the Elders vote.)*

SCENE 3: A Plan

As they exit Scene 2. The world of the Elder's dissolves in the manner that it appeared. Enter YaYa followed by Nsia and Esan.

ESAN. I had been looking for you all morning and then you show up to the council just to make a scene?

YAYA. Esan, sister, let me explain-

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ESAN. Explain what? We were supposed to be meeting to organize a strategy on how to handle the Elders?

YAYA. I know.

ESAN. My plan was to soften General Kobina before the meeting to see if we could turn him to our side.

NSIA. Esan, I tried to tell her-

ESAN. And you! The best friend, of course you were with her.

YAYA. Enough Esan. I went to see Olumide.

ESAN. Ah? The witch?! YaYa are you crazy? *(Beat. Formal. Tense.)* Nsia, may I have a moment with the princess?

NSIA. Esan you should know that YaYa-

ESAN. Nsia, may I have a moment alone with my sister?

NSIA. Of course, princess. *(To YaYa.)* I will see you soon sister. *(Nsia exits.)*

YAYA. I know what you are about to say-

ESAN. Father would kill you for visiting that witch! No good can come from it.

YAYA. Esan, listen-!

ESAN. There is absolutely nothing you can say that can justify this.

YAYA. She said I will be queen.

ESAN. She said...wait, Queen?

YAYA. Yes.

ESAN. How?

YAYA. I do not know.

ESAN. Wait. If you are queen, where is father?

YAYA. I do not know. There is no way that I can become queen without a king, correct?

ESAN. But if you are the queen, you could bypass the elders to find father. True?

YAYA. I suppose.

ESAN. You are sure that is what she said? Queen?

YAYA. Yes. I am sure of it.

ESAN. *(Thinking.)* You could do it. You could even change the archaic law that requires a woman be married in order to reign.

YAYA. I could.

ESAN. We would just have to find you a husband. *(Beat.)* What about

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Baako?

YAYA. What of him?

ESAN. He is perfect.

YAYA. He is my friend.

ESAN. And easily controlled.

YAYA. Esan, why do you speak that way? I have known Baako since we were children.

ESAN. Then you name another candidate that suits your needs!

YAYA. *(Coming around to the idea.)* I would rather marry a friend, if I were to marry.

ESAN. I know. I am confident Baako would be perfect.

YAYA. But wait. Even the king cannot go to war without the support of the Elders.

ESAN. What if the elders were no more?

YAYA. But how? I could never rule in peace if I was accused of-

ESAN. Then we have to make sure that you get what you need. There is no reason we cannot have a king that is pliable and council that is no longer exists. I know you sister, you would be a benevolent and kind queen. You would change the course of life for all the girls of our village and all of our territories...for the whole of Africa! General Kobina has often touted that the casualties of war are not the burden of the victor. The elders would be just the casualties of our civil war!

YAYA. But how sister? How could we ever?

ESAN. You leave the planning up to me.

YAYA. I don't know. Maybe this is not the way? Maybe there is some other way we need to think of. Or will we be like them?

ESAN. You will rule a nation. This is the moment. This is your time to take that power and breathe in the rare air.

YAYA. But if we fail?

ESAN. We fail! Courage sister and stiffen up your back as strong as a bow with an eager arrow. You will convince Baako to marry you and we will have a wondrous ceremony that ends in the death of anyone who should stand in our way.

YAYA. Esan, I love you my sister and I trust you dearly but hurting our

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people we love is not the way. It is not my way. I will marry but I will not *(almost whispering)* murder anyone.

ESAN. Sister there is nothing I would want more than a peaceful transition.

YAYA. There will be no transition. Our father is alive. I have to believe that.

ESAN. Of course sister. I must go now. There is much to do. *(She starts to exit.)* Please think about what I said.

YAYA. Of course sister.

ESAN. How much do you want to bet that Nsia is still within ear shot?

YAYA. Esan, do not be rude. *(Calling off.)* Nsia! You may return now. *(Nsia enters.)*

ESAN. *(To YaYa.)* See. *(To Nsia, as she walks way.)* Nsia.

NSIA. Esan. *(Esan exits.)* What is her problem this time?

YAYA. *(Sitting.)* She is only teasing you. She means no harm, really.

NSIA. *(Sitting next to YaYa.)* Esan does not worry me. But you? I do worry about you.

YAYA. Me? Why me?

NSIA. Do you remember the first thing you said to me? I was seven years old and I was crying because the boy I liked said I was ugly. Do you remember what you said?

YAYA. I told you if you kept crying like that you would make him correct. You were always such an ugly crier. *(They laugh.)*

NSIA. No! You did not say that!

YAYA. I said, he clearly cannot see because you look like a Nubian flower.

NSIA. Yes and I stopped crying and we were best friends ever since. You know I would do anything for you sister? How can I help?

YAYA. Convince your father to go after the king. If General Kobina says go, they will all follow.

NSIA. I have tried YaYa. He will not budge. He says there are security measures in place that I would not understand. He says to trust him as I always have.

YAYA. Do you trust Kobina?

NSIA. YaYa he is my father, of course I trust him.

YAYA. *(Tense.)* You love your father and that has clouded your judgement.

NSIA. *(Equally tense.)* Just as your love has clouded yours. *(Beat.)* My father loves the king.

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YAYA. I feel...helpless. (*A noise is heard.*)

YAYA. Who is there?! (*Baako jumps from behind.*)

BAAKO. Raaaahhhh! (*YaYa and Nsia scream. Nsia's scream is quite elongated.*)

YAYA. Not funny Baako. (*Baako laughs.*)

NSIA. Not funny at all. Thank the gods you did not end up with a fist to the nose.

BAAKO. For those screams, it would have been worth it.

NSIA. You did not scare me. I screamed because YaYa screamed.

BAAKO. If you say so. (*To YaYa.*) Any word on the king?

YAYA. Nothing. My father has no one he can depend on.

BAAKO. They are all dodos! Sorry, Nsia but *your* father should insist that they really do something.

NSIA. I cannot control *our* father brother. And I certainly cannot control the elders. I wish I can do something YaYa. I do.

YAYA. I know. I am sorry.

BAAKO. What did your auntie say?

YAYA. Thema? She was just as bad as the rest.

BAAKO. Well what do you want to do sister?

NSIA. I am sure there is a plan already bouncing around in your head.

YAYA. Yes but not here. My Oni always says that secrets travel on the backs of the wind.

BAAKO. I do not buy into old mysticisms. Besides, no one can hear us here. Although Nsia probably woke the dead with those screams.

NSIA. Dear brother Baako?

BAAKO. What?

NSIA. Shut up!

BAAKO. So nasty, so rude.

NSIA. You seemed plenty into mysticism when we visited Olumide.

BAAKO. Shhh. I heard if you say his name three times in a row he will appear...Olumide...Olumide-

NSIA. Can you please be quiet. YaYa what is the plan?

YAYA. I can only get the elders to take me seriously if I am queen. To be queen, I would need a husband.

NSIA. Where would you find a suitable candidate so quickly?

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BAAKO. *(Agreeing and oblivious.)* Truly very quickly. *(Nsia and Yaya are looking at each other.)*

YAYA. This is true! He needs to be one that would agree to being led by me his new queen.

BAAKO. *(Whole heartedly agreeing.)* It will be very difficult to find someone to do this on such short notice. *(YaYa and Nsia both look at him.)*
What are you two looking at?

YAYA. In name only. You would support me in changing that archaic law and obtaining the resources to secure my father safely home.

NSIA. Think about it brother. You could be king. Can you imagine how proud father will be? The general's son, now king? His heart would beat out of his chest.

YAYA. What do you say Baako?

BAAKO. I need some time to think.

YAYA. Of course. I understand.

BAAKO. Okay. I will do it.

NSIA. That is amazing!

YAYA. I am speechless. What can I say?

BAAKO. No need to say anything. With all sincerity it would be my honor to serve the king and my future queen this way.

YAYA. I think I'm going to spend sometime under the stars tonight. *(Baako starts to exit.)*

BAAKO. I will see you in the morning. *(Nsia stops Baako.)*

NSIA. I can stay. We both can.

BAAKO. Oh no, the ground is bad for my back.

YAYA. If you do not mind, I would like to be alone.

NSIA. We do not mind staying. Do we Baako?

BAAKO. You expect me to sleep on the hard ground? All night? *(Beat.)* If that is YaYa's wish of course but she said go-

YAYA. Please go Baako. It is fine.

BAAKO. *(Quickly.)* See, she is fine. I am fine. You are fine, yes? Everyone is fine. *(Preparing to leave. To YaYa.)* You be careful out here. The lions have all migrated, mostly, so you should be fine.

NSIA. Why would you say something like that?

BAAKO. Oh, I did not mean any harm. *(As he exits talking to himself.)* I'm

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sure the lion probably never eats people. Well rarely, I did hear about this one time...

NSIA. *(Gesture.)* Love you my sister.

YAYA. *(Returns the Gesture.)* Love you too my best. *(Nsia exits. Alone, YaYa sits and looks over the tall grass planes. Olumide appears with Babatunde.)*

OLUMIDE. Lovely breeze, eh?

YAYA. What are you doing here?

OLUMIDE. I could ask the same of you. Not wise to be out here all alone.

YAYA. I came to be alone to think.

OLUMIDE. So many choices. Is that not nice Baba?

BABATUNDE. Eh?

OLUMIDE. The girl, she has choices.

BABATUNDE. That's nice.

OLUMIDE. It is nice Baba but the gal does not know what to do! Do you! Let an old woman do you a favor. A view into your future and your past might make the wheels turn more smoothly. *(Olumide begins to laugh she takes her stick and begins to stir/summon another vision. Her magic takes form as it did when we first met her. A mist like fog or even a rain envelopes YaYa. The King appears. A storm builds throughout the monologue.)*

THE KING. YaYa, my daughter, I remember how as children you and your mother would run along the river banks that led to the high grass on the hill. I can hear your little voice saying, "I am the gazelle and mother, you are the lion. Catch me!" And you would run as fast as your little legs could carry you. You were so short I could just see the top of your braided bun peaking over the tips of tall grass. I remember that it was a bright day and the sky was so very clear. I can still hear your giggles and see how the wind made the grass sway. I remember your mother's smile. But after that I-I am lost. Memories are dim or gone altogether. I am no longer tethered to you or to the earth. I have been betrayed daughter. My protectors turned my captors. Treason most high! A king's life stolen by those he trusted most. Ah - the memories of their treachery are dim and hard to see. *(A tableau or imagery of the Elders is revealed.)* My most revered turned by the enemy? Were they bolstered by another? Someone I trusted? So dim, just flashes of anger and fear. *(Kobina is revealed through flashes of light or through the haze.)*

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Betrayal...a betrayal of the most high! *(Beat.)* It is cold here daughter. I am alone. A honorable man, I was not. I remember that but I should not be in this darkness alone. Those betrayers sent me here! Avenge me. Avenge your father. Blood for blood! Daughter, do not lose the throne. Do not lose it. Do not lose. *(King Alake fades away.)*

YAYA. Papa! Father! Don't leave me! *(He is gone. Pause.)* Papa?

OLUMIDE. Bad dream?

YAYA. Did you know?

OLUMIDE. Know what gal?

YAYA. Did you know the Elders and Kobina murdered my father?

OLUMIDE. Ooooooh, is that what you saw in your nightmare girl?

YAYA. Yes.

OLUMIDE. King Alake, hmmmmm, what shall you do?

YAYA. I need to find my sister. I must talk with her. I must- *(YaYa begins to cry. She mourns her father.)*

OLUMIDE. Yes, yes but no time for tears gal. Your enemy shall not wait for your grief to subside. Bring me my bag Baba. *(He brings it to her. Digs as she speaks.)* Let me see. Where is it? Here it is. *(She pulls out a small bottle of liquid.)* Ah yes. This will do nicely. *(Opening the vial.)* Spit in it. Go on now. *(YaYa spits into the vial. Olumide takes the vial and hands it to Baba who spits in it as well. She then takes the vial and she spits in it too. After a shake the vial changes color. She pours the liquid to the ground. Olumide takes the end of her walking stick to stir. The ground begins to glow.)* Look there now. Go on and look. What do you see?

YAYA. Nothing. I don't see anything. I need to go find Esan, auntie!

OLUMIDE. Look closer.

YAYA. I don't-

OLUMIDE. Closer!

YAYA. *(Kneeling.)* Wait, I see...

OLUMIDE. What gal?!

YAYA. The bodies of the elders are strewn about my feet.

OLUMIDE. Ah! Sweet vengeance. What else?

YAYA. General Kobina, he is slain-

OLUMIDE. And? Go on, tell me child.

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YAYA. I see me...I am in the robes of a queen... sitting on the golden throne! The people kneeling before me...calling my name.

OLUMIDE. Of course you are the queen to be. No man will be greater than she. No matter what they do. No harm will ever come to you! A fate only a paternal sister can undo. *(Daybreak. The magic dissipates. Olumide stumbles. Babatunde comes to her aid in her weakened state.)* Ah where did the time go? Dear YaYa, you know what to do. Do you not? You should hurry home now. You have a father to avenge. *(Calling Babatunde for assistance.)* Baba! *(He appears.)* We will now take our leave. *(Beat. To YaYa)* I will see you soon my dear. *(Olumide and Babatunde exit or disappear. Yaya stands alone.)*

YAYA. Finally, alone. I am alone. No father. No mother. I am lost. There is a chance that it was not a vision at all but really a dream. Perhaps it is all a dream that I will awake from. I will awake to find my father and mother home. Home and alive. They will hold me tightly and sing me back to sleep. They will tell me it was all a horrible nightmare. That Olumide used a magic potion to make all this up. *(Beat)* But that is only foolish wish. A foolish wish by an ignorant girl that allowed herself to be duped by her betters. How could I be so stupid! How could my father have been so blind to his betrayers! My life was not supposed to be like this! Not this! *(Beat.)* What about magic? Olumide can bring my father back to me!? Of course, she can. Of course. *(Beat.)*No, No, no. *(Let's out a mournful cry.)* I miss my mummy. Mummy I need you. I cannot go on. I shall sit here until one of those lions Baako speaks of comes and tears me to pieces. I give up. Oh, my king. My father. *(Beat.)* But my dear Esan. She needs me. We have both lost our father. Nsia and Baako too. They would be devastated if I gave up. I must not give up. I must avenge my father! I must save our kingdom from the thieves that would dare to undermine my position and take what is mine by birth right. I will follow my sister's sharp advice. The elders must die and all those who support them. I will marry, change the course of history...and I will be avenged. *(Lights fade to black.)*

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SCENE 4: A Time to Marry

A courtyard outside of the palace. A soldier stands guard at the entrance. BAAKO enters with ONI trailing behind. She is assisted by OBA a servant. Baako is carrying a bag items from the market for Oni.

BAAKO. Are you alright there, auntie Oni?!

ONI. No need to yell Baako. I am not going deaf!

BAAKO. *(Mumbling.)* Not yet anyway.

ONI. What did you say?

BAAKO. *(Projecting.)* I said, lovely day auntie!

ONI. *(Joking.)* Because you are carrying my bags I won't feed you to the hyenas.

BAAKO. *(Playing along.)* You are very generous auntie!

ONI. Not yet anyway.

BAAKO. *(Realizing. Laughing.)* Ahhh, I see what you did. You are funny auntie.

ONI. This old dog still knows a few tricks. *(Nsia enters.)*

NSIA. Greetings mamma Oni!

ONI. Come child and hug my neck. *(They hug.)* You look tired. *(Baako chuckles.)*

NSIA. *(Changing the subject.)* Did you find something delicious at the market?

BAAKO. Indeed. Auntie is going to prepare my favorite dish.

ONI. Dear boy take those on in. *(To Oba.)* I would like to speak with Nsia alone. She can help me the rest of the way.

OBA. Yes ma'am.

BAAKO. Uhh-are you about to have girl talk?

ONI. Good-bye Baako.

BAAKO. Definitely, girl talk. *(To Oba, giving him the bags.)* Here, you may carry these. *(Baako and Oba exit.)*

NSIA Auntie have you seen YaYa?

ONI. I have not. Was she out with you last night? Instead of wondering and worrying about her whereabouts we should be finding her a betrothed.

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NSIA. She has. She will marry our Baako.

ONI. Baako? Our Baako? (*Pointing in his direction.*) That boy who just walked away. Ah, would not have been my first choice but Baako will not give her any trouble. He is an innocent man. Those are rare find.

NSIA. I am worried mama Oni. I am trying not to but when YaYa is queen she can change everything. Especially this dumb law.

ONI. You sound like her mother. When my daughter was pregnant with YaYa she would lament to the king about why a girl would need to marry in order to inherit the golden throne.

NSIA. How did she know she would have a girl?

ONI. (*They sit.*) Ohh, it is in my family line. We almost never have males. It was a great disappointment to King Alake but he fell in love with YaYa's mother despite any misgivings. (*Beat.*) What about you child? What do the gods have in store for you?

NSIA. I do not have time to think of me. I must do all I can to support YaYa and our country.

ONI. Hear me and hear me well little girl. e not get the desires of our hearts by waiting. (*Beat.*) I trust that you will heed the advice of your betters.

NSIA. (*Grabbing Oni's hand.*) Always. (*YaYa enters*) There you are! I was afraid you were carried off in the night.

ONI. Ah? You have been spending the night outside of the palace again? And during a war? Have you lost your mind girl?

YAYA. I just needed to clear my head.

ONI. You are lucky you did not get your head split open! Here, sit next to me.

YAYA. Yes gran. (*To Nsia.*)

ONI. Daughter Nsia?

NSIA. Yes, auntie?

ONI. I need to speak with my granddaughter, alone.

NSIA. Oh, oh yes of course. Blessings Auntie Oni. (*YaYa and Nsia gesture goodbye. Nsia exits.*)

ONI. How are you child?

YAYA. That's a big question. We have a war, the king is missing, the golden throne-

ONI. Ahya!! I know all that. I want to know... do you have a plan?

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YAYA. Yes. Yes. I do but I do not know if I can see it through. I am scared mama Oni.

ONI. Of course you are my child. You would be a fool not to be fearful and my grand child is no fool.

YAYA. Do you think my father is dead?

ONI. I cannot say for certain but when I am still and I search the source within me...I do not feel he is here on this earthly plain. But I do not know for sure.

YAYA. To do all of this without him feels impossible. I know I am not alone but I still feel that way. I just wish that I could be sure.

ONI. Sure of what dear?

YAYA. Sure that I am making the right decisions. That I will not fail. That I will not be on the wrong side history.

ONI. Certainty? With a few exceptions, to have absolute certainty is the domain of the mad or the insane. Absolute with no room for possibility? (Sucking her teeth.) You worry about doing the right thing because you are wise. Because there is a part of you that already knows this moment is about more than power and who will rule. It is about changing the trajectory of our culture, not just the kingdom. But also, your reality is that without a sitting king on the throne you are at risk. You, your sister Esan...even me. We are at risk of being murdered... or worse.

YAYA. Worse than murdered?

ONI. When you are as old as I am, you know there are many things worse than death. They can only kill you once.

YAYA. I would never let that happen you or Esan. I would fight for you until my last breath.

ONI. Become queen and then you will have the power to insist we go after your father. That we bring him home to us alive or otherwise. (*Kobina and Thema enter.*)

THEMA. There you both are! Where have you been? (Hugging YaYa.) I have already begun the wedding plans on your behalf. We will follow all of the traditions and it will be lovely.

KOBINA. Yes, I tried to tell her we should speak with the princess first but there was no stopping your aunt.

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THEMA. I hope you do not mind princess but the elders felt that it was important that we marry you and Baako right away.

KOBINA. This news will surely let those who would dare question the strength of our nation know that we are indeed united.

ONI. Help me up child. It is time for me to go in. It is starting to smell of cow dung out here. *(Baako and Nsia enter.)*

YAYA. Tell me Kobina have you not conspired with the elders?

KOBINA. Girl, you know that I confer with the elders daily.

YAYA. Yet there still no plan to rescue my father?!

KOBINA. Nsia I thought you might have convinced YaYa to forfeit any plans of trying to rescue the king? While this wedding is welcomed news, we must now be on high alert. We do not need to have both the king and the future queen captured by the enemy. Can you imagine the upheaval that would follow? If something happened to you both...well we would have to choose a new king. That would be a shame but a necessary outcome to preserve the throne.

YAYA. Would it be a shame? Or would it play right into your designs?

NSIA. YaYa what are you saying?

KOBINA. I am pained by the accusations. I have been a loyal servant to the king and his family for years - since I was a boy.

ONI. As I recall, you were a resentful little boy.

THEMA. Mamma Oni, you are not helping.

KOBINA. Baako take the ladies inside. I would like to talk with YaYa alone. Leader to leader.

BAAKO. Yes father, of course. *(Oni, YaYa, Thema and Baako exit. Baako lingers and is last to leave.)*

YAYA. Unless you are about to tell me the plan to retrieve my father I have no words for you.

KOBINA. You were always a spirited girl. That spirit endeared you to all you met. However now that you are older a more gentle temperament is the way to enticing a husband to do your deeds.

YAYA. You talk like this to me? Who do you think you are?

KOBINA. I am the man that has sent a secret garrison to rescue the king!

YAYA. You...what?

KOBINA. Do you think I would allow our king to flounder without any

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hope? Really? *(Pause.)* Are you finally speechless?

YAYA. When? How did it happen? Why was I not informed!?

KOBINA. I used your anger as the distraction. You telling anyone who would listen how awful and irresponsible we all were kept anyone from knowing my plan and warning the enemy.

YAYA. I did not know.

KOBINA. Perhaps, little YaYa does not know everything after all.

YAYA. Uncle, I am-

KOBINA. No need to apologize YaYa. My scouts tell me that the way is clear. We will not be able to secure the king before the wedding but shortly there after...I am certain.

YAYA. What do you mean? *(Nsia enters. They do not see her.)*

KOBINA. We cannot be for certain if the king will be alive when we find him. That is why we must continue with preparations for your wedding. You must see by now, to ensure the golden throne is protected, you must be married YaYa. When the enemy sees that we intend to ensure the legacy of the golden throne, it will deter their plans.

YAYA. Of course. *(An Aside.)* He thinks me a fool. My poor father has already revealed Kobina's true face to me. There is no plan to rescue my father. My father is dead. Betrayed by Kobina and his own council of elders. For what? To make way for Kobina to ascend to the throne. But that will never be. I am sure of that. *(To Kobina.)* I see now uncle, I must learn to trust you.

KOBINA. May I confess something to you? As a child, I always admired your father.

I coveted his life and all the trappings that come with it. I knew I was born for better than the station of my birth allowed. I studied and trained - foolishly as a child I thought I could prove my worth. Prove it so much so that I would be picked by his highness. Selected to be a royal. That despite my birth. He would see me. He would see that I am better. Not better, greater than the life I was assigned.

YAYA. And did he? Did anyone see that you were owed this life you wanted?

KOBINA. He did. Or at least I would like to believe he did. But we are

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similar you and I in that we are restricted by the failings of our forefathers. They did not have the vision to see that worthy royals are not born but they are made.

YAYA. So you feel that a woman can lead? That she can be queen?

KOBINA. Sure but by definition she can never be king, eh? And you have chosen my son?

YAYA. Yes.

KOBINA. You could have chosen me.

YAYA. What? You are married to my auntie, the king's sister!

KOBINA. A king may have as many wives as he desires.

YAYA. You are Nsia's and Baako's father! I could never.

KOBINA. Baako is a good boy but this is not the time for king's in training! You need someone who is strong and familiar with the intricacies of palace politics. Someone who can protect you from those would seek to destroy you and clear their own path to the golden throne.

YAYA. Then teach your son.

KOBINA. My son has many strengths and during a time of peace, he would be an excellent king. But we live in a time of war and I am loyal to the golden throne. It does not matter to me who sits upon the throne as long as they are whom the moment demands.

YAYA. Especially if it is you.

KOBINA. Without question. The moment demands a warrior YaYa and I am a warrior! YaYa, listen to me. Listen to reason. I know that I am much older than you. You do not love me and I do not love you. We do not need love to rule. What I propose is that we look beyond our personal desires and think honestly about what is best for our people. What would your father want? Accept me as your betrothed and I will sit on the golden throne. I love my son but he is a lamb. To rule you must be a lion. The elders would never truly respect Baako as king. You know me, I do not have to display my assets but you should remember that I have the trust of the elders. The soldiers are at my beck and call. The elders will never follow a queen. They would not follow you even if you were a woman king! It would be so easy to turn them to my will, should the wrong person be seated on the throne.

YAYA. Kobina you serve whomever is seated on the throne, correct?

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KOBINA. As long as it is the right man to rule.

YAYA. Who decides the right man or woman?

KOBINA. I do. We do.

YAYA. I would say it is the people.

KOBINA. People are dumb. We cannot leave it to the people to govern themselves. You know as well as anyone that people are selfish and they will only seek to amplify the man they think will uplift them.

YAYA. What if the man, should be a woman?

KOBINA. A woman on the golden throne? It could never be.

YAYA. Could it not? Do you have so little imagination? Or perhaps it is too much ego?

KOBINA. I have the imagination and it will be up to you on how I choose to use it. *(Nsia reveals herself.)*

NSIA. I hope that you would choose to use it for the good of the people father. Even when that is bad for you. That is what you taught me, no?

KOBINA. Nsia, daughter. How long have you been there?

NSIA. Plenty of time to hear the truth of the matter.

KOBINA. I only want what is best for our people.

NSIA. I overheard you father. I know what it is you desire. Mother is calling, she requests your assistance in preparing your son for his wedding.

YAYA. I should go check on mama Oni. *(YaYa exits. Nsia starts to follow her.)*

KOBINA. Nsia, stay. I need to speak with you. *(Nsia storms up to Kobina and attempts to slap him. He stops her. Holding her wrist.)* Nsia, my lovely daughter. You have always trusted me. Continue to trust me, even now. I know what I am doing.

NSIA. *(Taking her wrist back.)* What about my mama? You would leave her?

KOBINA. I would never leave your mother. A king may have multiple wives. You know this.

NSIA. Mama would never agree and neither would YaYa. How could you ever consider such a thing? She is like a sister to me!

KOBINA. I only want to protect the throne.

NSIA. But this would destroy mama and Baako. They both would be

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embarrassed and hurt to know you ever consider this.

KOBINA. Enough whining. You must stop thinking of yourself and think of our people.

NSIA. I was going to say the same thing to you!

KOBINA. You will not talk to your father that way. I am the leader of this family.

NSIA. You have never said that to me before because you always behaved in a way that I knew it.

KOBINA. Your mother and I can work things out. It is none of your business child.

NSIA. The deed is done. Baako is her betrothed. It is laughable that you would try to change the tide. Is it not clear to you father?

KOBINA. It is clear daughter what I must do. I will be there to ensure Baako is the king he needs to be and that YaYa does not try to rise above her station. That much is very clear. *(Kobina exits.)*

NSIA. And I will be there to ensure my father does nothing we all might come to regret. *(Lights fade.)*

SCENE 5: A Wedding Party

A collage of images or tableaux to represent a wedding and post wedding celebration. YaYa and Baako stand in ceremonial garments. They are at the head of a table as party goers mingle about.

SULAYMAN. Attention! Attention please! It is my honor to salute our new King Baako! What a beautiful ceremony indeed. What a privilege to stand to the side and watch as our new king and our lovely queen usher us into a brighter golden era. *(Cup held high.)* To our king and queen!

ALL. To our king and queen!

ALL ELDERS. Long may they reign.

YAYA. Thank you Elders. The king and I are honored by your heartfelt words of affection. I only hope to serve as wisely as my father did. Now let us dance, eat and drink to commemorate this auspicious occasion.

ALL. *(Cheers.)*

BAAKO. *(Interrupting. Nervous.)* We are indeed grateful. I know many of

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you have doubts but I - we hope that you will support us in moving, uh...

YAYA. (*Grabs his hand.*) We hope that you will support us in moving into this new era. As we enter into a time of prosperity, the like that of which we have never seen before!

ALL. (*Various cheers and celebratory gestures.*)

YAYA. As queen and as king to the golden throne it is our duty to look to the future. Our women have been and remain the backbone of our civilization. (*Yaya looks to Baako as if she is passing him the baton to a speech they have practiced many times.*)

BAAKO. (*Confident.*) They literally carry us from womb to the grave. They are wise and we have been foolish to not utilize their wisdom. A time for change has come. Tonight I will make two decrees and they shall be henceforth followed without question from now until the end of time. In my first decree, women shall be allowed to serve on the royal council and as voting village elders.

VARIOUS. How can this be? Unimaginable! It's about time. Quiet you old fool!

KOBINA. (*To the Elders.*) Here! Here! While it is always wise of a king to have the support of his council, it is not required. (*To Baako.*) We will follow your decree, your highness. For as long as it is required of us.

BAAKO. Thank you general. A king and a queen must have trusted advisors by their side. Man or woman is no matter. Tonight we make history as Nsia daughter of Kobina shall be an advisor on the royal council. She shall have unfettered access to the king and queen. And shall assist us on all matters-

YAYA. All relevant matters as they pertain to education and advancing our nation's global presence in industry and textiles.

NSIA. I will serve the queen and her king for the honor of the golden throne and our people.

YAYA. I had no doubt that you would Nsia. Let us salute my sister in love and now relation. To Nsia! (*All cheers.*) She is truly one of the good ones.

KOBINA. Salute daughter! Salute my king! A father has never been more proud than I am in this moment. (*Joking.*) Congratulations madam.

BAAKO. (*Joking.*) Thank you, your highness.

NSIA. Congratulations indeed.

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ESAN. I too am happy for both of you. King and Queen. My sister, I am most certain our father would be proud of you and your sacrifice for our country. Blessings to you my king.

BAAKO. Thank you Esan. My new sister! Music please!

YAYA. *(Interrupting.)* My king. You are forgetting the final decree. You did say that you have two decrees to proclaim. Did you not?

BAAKO. I did. Indeed I did.

KOBINA. If the king would like to deliver only one decree it is up to him.

YAYA. Kobina, thank you for your service tonight. Please go outside and verify that the perimeter is as you say secure.

KOBINA. Your highness, I can assure you that we are well protected.

(Silence.)

YAYA. You would dare refuse your queen on her wedding night? A lesser would say that sounds like treason.

KOBINA. I shall take my leave. King Baako, again a thousand congratulations and to you my queen words cannot express my feelings. Goodnight. *(Kobina exits.)*

YAYA. Such a dedicated fellow that Kobina. My king, you were saying?

BAAKO. My second decree as king is that no woman child of royal birth need marry to assume the throne as queen. It was is an archaic tradition and I would not want any daughter of mine to feel pressured to marry in order to protect her people. People should marry out of love and nothing else. Kingdoms are vital. Succession is vital. Love is everything. From this moment it shall be so. So let it be written. So let it be done. *(The elders are loudly whispering to each other.)*

EMIR. I cannot believe this!

DOGARA. This is a mockery of all we stand for!

ATTAH. He sounds like a woman!

DOGARA. Perhaps she is already king.

YAYA. What say you elders? Were those whispers words of celebration? Speak up for all to hear. As you are wise and your words shall let the people know the way to go.

EMIR. It is a wise man that knows when the winds of change are upon him and only foolish man would resist, your highness.

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YAYA. The winds of change are indeed here. Music please! *(The music plays and the wedding party mill about. ESAN crosses to YAYA.)*

ESAN. Congratulations my Queen.

YAYA. Thank you sister. You look beautiful.

ESAN. You are far too kind. Please come with me. *(ESAN and YAYA cross and are isolated in another part of the stage as the party goes celebrate.)* I went to see Olumide.

YAYA. Not today Esan. *(OLUMIDE appears from the shadows.)*

OLUMIDE. Greetings my queen. Do not blame your sister. She is merely the messenger. I come baring gifts. As you know the battle is not won and it can only be won by your hands. *(A golden flask is revealed.)* Give this to your king now. Tell him to share this drink with his council.

YAYA. What will it do? Will it hurt Baako?

OLUMIDE. It will not hurt your king but it will destroy enemies.

ESAN. Listen to her. Now is the time to strike. YaYa we all agreed.

YAYA. I care not about betraying the elders. The villains who wronged our father but Baako is an innocent.

OLUMIDE. Trust in me. No harm will come to your friend from drinking this potion. Trust me.

ESAN. We do ma'am. *(She takes the flask and puts it in YaYa's hands.)*

YAYA. Thank you. Thank you both. *(Yaya and Esan return to the party. Olumide exits.)*

BAAKO. There she is! My queen where have you been.

YAYA. *(Pulling him to the side.)* I went to fetch your wedding gift. It was made especially for you. It would be wise to share it with the elders. Now is your time to grease the wheels and this is just the drink to do it

BAAKO. As usual, you are the wise one. *(To the group.)* Elders, I respect and honor you all. Please join me in the library and partake in this very special wedding gift. Allow me to share it with you.

EMIR. I am not much of a drinker but if you insist.

DOGARA. Why thank you King Baako!

ATTAH. Indeed. *(The elders and Baako exit.)*

ESAN. *(Watching the men exit.)* You see sister? The plan is in motion.

YAYA. Let us brace ourselves for the coming storm.

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NSIA. My queen, may I have a word? A small business matter.

YAYA. Can it not wait? Now is a time for celebration.

NSIA. It will only take a moment.

YAYA. Certainly. Of course sister. *(Yaya, Esan and Nsia are in but not of the party. The party goes freeze or mill about unaware of the ladies.)*

NSIA. Esan, sister. I would like to speak with YaYa alone.

ESAN. The queen will only be alone when I hear the request from her mouth. *(Nsia looks to Yaya.)*

YAYA. It is fine. Say what is on your mind.

ESAN. Yes, say it. You are clearly upset.

NSIA. YaYa, sister. I thought we agreed to wait until your return from your wedding journey.

YAYA. I spoke with Baako before the ceremony and we thought it best to make the announcement now.

NSIA. Such a major change could cause an uprising.

YAYA. Dear Nsia, you are overly worried for nothing. There will always be someone in the room offended by change.

ESAN. And they are the ones for whom change has come.

YAYA. We will announce, tonight.

NSIA. But YaYa you must-

ESAN. Your queen has spoken.

NSIA. I thought I was speaking to my best friend.

ESAN. *(Biting. Sharp.)* You thought you were speaking to your equal but my dear you were sorely mistaken. My queen, I am going to attend to our guests. *(Esan exits.)*

YAYA. Have a drink Nsia. You look like you could use a few.

NSIA. I am your friend YaYa. Your best friend. I could never be your enemy. I am only trying to help you.

YAYA. Tell me why you were trying to stop Baako from making this decree?

NSIA. You know that I support you. It is only because the timing feels ill advised.

YAYA. I feel the winds of change blowing through my hair and I will not be stalled a moment longer. Do you understand? *(Speaking as she turns to*

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reenter the party.) All hail king Baako. A king for all people! (Baako enters covered in blood and dropping to his knees. Esan screams. Kobina enters. Yaya runs to Baako and kneels beside him.)

BAAKO. They are all dead.

YAYA. Who? Who is dead.

BAAKO. The elders. They are all dead. *(Kobina exits. Followed by a soldier.)*

YAYA. How? Speak! What happened?

BAAKO. We were laughing, drinking and celebrating. Attah was showing off his father's blade and and...it all went black. *(Kobina enters holding a bloody weapon/blade.)*

KOBINA. The entire council is slain by this blade. *(The wedding party stares at Baako.)*

BAAKO. No. I would never...I could never!

ESAN. General Kobina how could you let this happen?

NSIA. You cannot blame him for this. We cannot rush to judgement. He is your king Esan!

YAYA. Where were you general!? You should've protected your king.

KOBINA. You forget princess I was charged with securing the perimeter.

ESAN. There were no guards with the king and the elders?

THEMA. Esan, please do not do this.

KOBINA. Do not defend me my love. Tragedy makes people say unusual things. Esan knows the truth. *(The soldier enters and a wounded Attah is with him.)* Attah, elder what happened to you?!

ATTAH. *(Seeing Baako.)* Keep him away from me! He is a mad man!

YAYA. Calm yourself brother Attah. You are safe now. Speak to me. Let your queen protect you. Now...tell me what happened.

ATTAH. We were drinking and celebrating with his new wedding gift. He passed around the flask of gold. The king, his eyes went red. His voice became an avalanche and he spoke in a tongue we could not understand. You will think me mad but then it seemed that he grew right in front of our terrified eyes. But then frozen in fear I realized he had not grown but flown across the room. The blade hacking at the air! Before I could close my eyes there was so much blood. Blood everywhere. I only survived by hiding

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under the body poor elder Dogara. Everywhere they went he cut them down mercilessly. There was no escape. The entire council... everyone... slaughtered like cattle!

KOBINA. *(To the Soldier.)* Take Elder Attah to the doctor, immediately. Do not stop for anyone. *(The soldier and Attah exit.)*

ESAN. Arrest the king. He must stand trial.

KOBINA. Are you insane? He has clearly been poisoned.

THEMA. *(Kneeling next to Baako.)* My son. Look at me. What happened?

BAAKO. I wish I could remember but I-I- *(Baako breaks down into tears.)*

THEMA. Please YaYa, have mercy.

YAYA. I wish I could. Look at the faces of our wedding party. They are in shock. As am I. We will sort out the truth but in the meantime Kobina instruct your soldiers to take King Baako away. Lock him in his quarters until I can decide what is next. *(Kobina gestures and two soldiers take Baako away.)*

KOBINA. YaYa, your highness. You know him. Baako would never.

YAYA. I only know what we all saw. I have to act as queen, in the best interest of my people.

NSIA. YaYa, you cannot do this to him.

ESAN. Stand down Nsia.

NSIA. I know my brother. He would never do anything to harm another person.

YAYA. We can never be sure what another might do to preserve themselves can we Kobina?

NSIA. YaYa how could you?

ESAN. You forget yourself girl.

YAYA. No one speaks for me. Everyone please leave. *(They all file out. Nsia and Esan trail at the end.)*

ESAN. Is there anything I can do for you?

YAYA. Yes, I would like to speak with you.

NSIA. I am happy to stay and help you figure out-

YAYA. Go be with your family. *(ASSASSIN #1 appears but is unseen by the guests.)* I need some time alone with my sister. *(Nsia exits.)*

YAYA. Did you know this would happen?

ESAN. I had no idea how it would work. The witch kept her word, Baako

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came to harm.

YAYA. There was so much blood.

ESAN. What you need to remember is why we are here. There is no turning back. You would only be seen as cruel if you put your husband to death and if you only lock him away you will be known as a woman easily trifled with. So I brought for you another option. *(The Assassin enters.)*

ASSASSIN #1. My queen.

YAYA. Go on. Do it.

ASSASSIN #1. Do what my queen? I need you to say it. Clearly.

YAYA. The king is being held on the far side of the palace. But I will have him moved for questioning to a less secure location. There you may surprise him and do your best. Make it quick, he is a kind man...and a friend.

ASSASSIN #1. Yes your highness.

ESAN. Enough talk, General Kobina is coming and he cannot see you here. If he does I will surely be found out. *(Assassin #1 exits as Kobina enters.)*

YAYA. General Kobina, how is Baako?

KOBINA. May I be informal your highness?

YAYA. Yes please. By all means, speak from your heart.

KOBINA. Yaya. You know him. There is a reason that you chose him to be your husband. You chose him because is a good boy. A good man, that has been there for you. This is your defining moment. It will define your reign throughout history. Find the truth.

ESAN. General Kobina, I have never heard you speak with such passion before.

KOBINA. I speak with the heart of a father.

ESAN. Actually what you do is speak with the passions of a lesser man. A man who would put his own needs before those of his people.

KOBINA. Esan, you should tread carefully.

ESAN. Or else what? You would dare threaten the queen's sister in her presence?

KOBINA. I have not threatened you yet girl.

YAYA. Enough. General I will speak to Baako. I have not made up my mind. But I will do so soon and make a decision that I feel is best for the queendom.

KOBINA. Of course. For the queendom. *(Kobina exits.)*

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ESAN. I do not trust that man.

YAYA. Indeed sister. I need you find Olumide and bring her to me. I will meet with her in my private chambers near the throne room.

ESAN. Of course my queen. Right away! *(Esan exits. Yaya contemplates.)*

YAYA. Can you see father? Can you see how I avenge you?! May you dye your robes with the blood of your traitors in the hereafter. Poor Baako my friend but you only have your father to blame. *(Lights fade out.)*

SCENE 6: Locked Up

At rise, the location where Baako is being held. Nsia paces as Baako sits watching her.

NSIA. She cannot allow you to be locked away like some criminal. You are innocent. Can you believe her? The villagers will rise up. This will not stand.

BAAKO. Sister, Yaya did the only thing she could do. I was covered in blood. Attah even named me as the villain. Now YaYa is in what I hope is a difficulty situation.

NSIA. How did my brother get so wise?

BAAKO. I have always been wise.

NSIA. Ah?

BAAKO. Eh.

NSIA. I recall a time when I had to pull a baby okra from your nose.

BAAKO. You put it there!

NSIA. Yes but did you die? *(They laugh. Kobina enters.)*

BAAKO. Father, I wasn't expecting you.

KOBINA. Did you think I would allow you to be taken without a fight?

BAAKO. A fight? What we should do is wait for me to speak with the queen.

KOBINA. You are extremely optimistic young king.

BAAKO. It is in my nature.

KOBINA. It is not *your* nature that I am worried about.

NSIA. How did your conversation with YaYa go?

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KOBINA. She will be coming to see Baako soon to make her own assessment.

NSIA. Yet you seemed worried.

KOBINA. I suppose I am.

NSIA. Well tell us.

BAAKO. What do you mean father? Why are you concerned?

KOBINA. We have to think! How does this benefit the queen? What does the queen want most of all? More than anything in the world?

NSIA. To bring her father home.

KOBINA. Exactly and what obstacles were in her way? Who or what was preventing her from bring her father home?

BAAKO. The Elders?

KOBINA. Yes.

NSIA. And the law.

KOBINA. Right you are.

BAAKO. So, what does all of this mean?

KOBINA. Think, there are no elders to block her. With you here, she no longer has a king to block her. One of Baako's final edicts was women ruling by birth and not by marriage. The king has been removed as a factor for her. Which is why you must convince her that you are no threat when she comes to you. You must convince her that there would be no need to remove you permanently from the board.

NSIA. She would never.

KOBINA. You are no longer running in the high grass playing at war. This is the real thing and we need to be prepared.

BAAKO. Fine. What do you suggest?

KOBINA. Let her know that the new ruling is safe and irreversible. Convince her that all you want to do is live and that you will fade away into obscurity.

BAAKO. Is that all?

KOBINA. For now. She is meeting with Olumide but for what I do not know.

NSIA. Her father. She is likely seeking confirmation that he is still alive.

KOBINA. Of course. This will not be good for us. If she speaks to Olumide. Baako is doomed.

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BAAKO/NSIA. Why?

KOBINA. Because then she will learn that I conspired with the elders to take the throne.

NSIA. No! How could you?!

BAAKO. Did you take the King?

KOBINA. It is better that you know as little as possible but Nsia you must go now. Stop her from speaking with Olumide.

NSIA. It is too late. She already knows.

KOBINA. What do you mean?

NSIA. She has been different. I could not figure out why. It has to be because of you. She knows. YaYa knows that her father was taken by you. And she intends to take Baako from us. *(On another part of the stage we see, Yaya sitting on the golden throne. Esan stands nearby as Olumide enters.)*

YAYA. Thank you so much for coming.

OLUMIDE. I would not have missed this moment for the world, your highness.

YAYA. You were right. I am queen. You have shown me the truth about my father.

OLUMIDE. I did nothing I only cleared the way for you to know the truth.

YAYA. Destroying the elders or annihilating Kobina will be easy. But Baako...I just cannot.

OLUMIDE. As you wish...then your father will never come to rest and shall wander aimlessly in an unending darkness.

YAYA. What?

OLUMIDE. The gods demand a sacrifice and King Baako is a part of the deal.

YAYA. But how do can you be sure?

ESAN. The same way she knew you would be queen.

OLUMIDE.

Smart girl. Listen to your sister. I see that she has the thirst for this moment.

YAYA. I see.

OLUMIDE. Finish the job girl. Bring your father home. Is that all you brought me here for?

YAYA. Do you still sense our father?

OLUMIDE. Do you?

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YAYA. Sometimes. At least I think I do. I hope I do. I am not too sure. I know he is no longer of this earth. That I am sure of.

OLUMIDE. His soul still needs to rest. He must be avenged to find his peace.

YAYA. A tension. A tension in the pit of my stomach.

OLUMIDE. Good. It is when you feel nothing that you should be worried. You know what to do girl and I have a feeling Esan will make sure it gets done.

YAYA. Thank you Olumide. We do have something for you. Esan, would bring it please?

ESAN. Someone is coming. *(Esan grabs a basket/gift that is filled with a variety of treats. It is possibly covered. This can be as grand as props would like to make it. She hands it to Babatunde.)*

OLUMIDE. My, my, my. A girl could get used to this your highness.

YAYA. It is the least I can do.

OLUMIDE. It sure is girl. It sure is. *(Kobina enters.)*

YAYA. Ah, look who it is. Olumide, I must depart and visit my king. Kobina, if you would, please see Olumide and Babatunde out of the palace. I shall see you both very soon.

OLUMIDE. Many thanks your highness.

YAYA. *(To Olumide.)* Until we meet again. *(To Esan.)* Sister. *(YaYa and Esan exit.)*

KOBINA. Olumide. Babatunde. This way please.

OLUMIDE. A word of advice General Kobina. Do not let that queen visit your son alone or her face will be the last face he sees while he is alive. *(Kobina starts and pauses.)* Go we can see ourselves out. You have more important matters to attend to.

(Kobina exits.)

OLUMIDE. All alone in the royal throne room.

BABATUNDE. Are you the least bit curious to see what it would be a like to sit upon the throne?

OLUMIDE. Dare I? *(Beat.)* Why not? We only live once. *(She sits.)* How do I look?

BABATUNDE. It looks good on you.

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OLUMIDE. It feels nice. *(Getting up.)* But I prefer the comfort of homes. The trappings of the royal palace are not for the soulful, eh?

BABATUNDE. Why did you tell him?

OLUMIDE. Tell who what?

BABATUNDE. *(Pointing in the direction Kobina went.)*

OLUMIDE. Ah, Kobina? *(Chuckles.)* We do not make anyone do anything my young apprentice. We give them choices. We open their eyes to possibilities. From there we get to watch the tragedy known as free will unfold. A tragic flaw in the human condition if you ask me. *(On the other side of the stage is the where Baako is being held.)*

BAAKO. *(Baako is humming as Kobina enters.)* What are you doing here?

KOBINA. Has anyone else been here?

BAAKO. No, just the guards. What is it?

KOBINA. Nothing just a word from Olumide.

BAAKO. Not you too. You can't let her rattle you. *(The Assassins enter dressed as guards.)*

ASSASSIN #1. General Kobina, it is time for us to inspect the king's chambers.

ASSASSIN #2. If you could step to the side so we can complete the inspection?

KOBINA. Inspection? Who called for an inspection?

ASSASSIN #2. Move aside please. *(He shoves Kobina slightly. Kobina walks in closer to see their shielded faces.)*

ASSASSIN #1. Can I help you?

KOBINA. Do I know you?

ASSASSIN #2. You are sir going to wish you had never met us. *(They fight. The Assassins kill Kobina. They walk up on the king. There is a struggle but Baako is over powered and is killed.)*

END OF ACT 1

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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