

# Shattered Calabash

(2002)

By Tunde Fatunde



*Liberated from  
capitalist control  
to educate the masses  
by  
Socialist Stories*

## CAST

<b>Nkusa Eteki</b>	<b>: Director of the National Gas Company</b>
<b>Sabine</b>	<b>: Eteki's wife and Primary School teacher</b>
<b>Njoya</b>	<b>: Eteki's son and journalist</b>
<b>Salimatu</b>	<b>: Njoya's wife</b>
<b>Kolingba</b>	<b>: Priest and Eteki's confidant</b>
<b>Pierre</b>	<b>: Friend and long-time colleague of Eteki</b>
<b>Christopher</b>	<b>: Pierre's son and Njoya's friend, journalist</b>
<b>Joseph</b>	<b>: Eteki's chauffeur</b>
<b>Yoro</b>	<b>: Minister of State in the President's Office</b>
<b>Colonel</b>	
<b>Prison Guard</b>	

## ATMOSPHERE ONE

*(In Eteki's house. Sabine is preparing super. She does not look happy).*

SABINE: How can things have turned out this way for me? What have I done? Have I committed a sin? No, no, I have done so much; I have done just too much for Eteki. But nothing has changed.

*(She shakes her head several times).*

I really don't know.

*(Enter Njoya and his wife, Salimatu. Sabine is so absorbed in her interior monologue that she does not notice the two arriving).*

I begin to wonder if all this will not end very badly. A frightened farmer who meets a hungry lion runs a high risk of evaporating. We'll see if...

NJOYA: *(He comes close to his mother).* Mamma, what's going on?

SALIMATU: Why are you talking like this? Have you had a bad dream?

SABINE: A bad dream? If it were one, that wouldn't be a problem. I don't have my head in the clouds. When somebody is crying, they can still see. When one swims, one tries to keep eyes open to avoid hitting against an obstacle. A dream? What dream?

*(Enter Eteki, staggering, seems slightly drunk. He advances with difficulty, feeling his way forward).*

My children, here's my problem!

*(Points at Eteki).*

I am not dreaming. Of late, he has become my problem, my one big worry. You see? He's as drunk as a cistern!

ETEKI: *(Completely drunk, he moves menacingly towards Sabine).*

Aren't you ashamed? I am your indispensable husband and so shall I be until you die! You speak to me in that insubordinate tone!

*(He turns towards the audience:)*

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Look! The devil is giving God and his disciples a hard time! If not, how come a good-for-nothing wife dare speak to her husband in this manner?

SABINE: Me? Good-for-nothing?

ETEKI: And you dare answer me back? You had better keep quiet when I speak. That is God's law. I shall repeat it to you a thousand times. You are worthless, and if you answer me back, I will give you the usual lesson.

SABINE: Just too bad! A drunkard can even embrace fire thinking it's a torch.

ETEKI: *(Takes off his shoe and moves towards his wife, threatening to hit her).*

I will whip you once again, today!  
*(Njoya and Salimatu bar his way).*

NJOYA: You won't do that in front of me. Aren't you ashamed?

SALIMATU: Papa, please calm down.

ETEKI: *(Trying to disentangle himself from them).*

Yes, I'll calm down if you give me a tranquilliser, namely, my wife. If I can hit a tranquilliser like her, I'll calm down for sure and be as still as stagnant water. Let me pass, if not...

NJOYA: If not what? Stop this nonsense! We've had enough!

ETEKI: Njoya, my son, you dare speak to me in this tone? If it were not for me who fed your mother, you wouldn't have been born. Stand back. This is my place; I can do what I want.

*(He backs off staggering, not strong enough to break the barrier created by Njoya and Salimatu).*

Oh. One is no longer free in this country!  
*(Addressing the audience).*

When a man like me, Director of a key company of the country is no longer free to do what he wants, we have all reached the end of the World. At any rate...

*(He throws himself on to a couch. Joseph, his chauffeur, abruptly enters).*

JOSEPH: Good day. Here are my boss's briefcase and documents. Where can I put them?

*(Surprised, Njoya and Sabine look at each other).*

NJOYA: Is that right?

SABINE: Yes.

NJOYA: Put them on the table.

*(Approaching Joseph:)*

What's your name?

JOSEPH: Joseph.

NJOYA: Where did you take my father?

*(Joseph does not respond).*

SABINE: Are you going to answer the question or not?

JOSEPH: *(Trembling).*

It's not my fault. I don't want to lose my job. Madam, please, I don't want to lose my job. I have six children and two wives to feed. It's not my fault.

NJOYA: You are not answering my question. Where did you take my father?

SABINE: Is this the way you behave? At the end of the month, when he doesn't pay you, you come to kneel down before me, praying me to ask him to pay you. And you say:

*(Ridiculing Joseph:)*

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“Madam, for God’s sake, in Jesus Christ’s name, in the name of our traditional religion, please give me money to feed my family. Your husband has not paid me yet”.

JOSEPH: *(Scared to death.)* Madam, what you say is true. But please try to understand my situation: I do not want to disobey my boss. If he wants me to take him anywhere, I do not have a choice.

SABINE: That isn’t the problem. I have always told you to inform me about the places he wants you to take him to beside his office. In that manner, if some misfortune happens to him, I can handle it myself. You don’t do that. Yet, at the end of every month, I have to pay you. You cannot dine with God and the Devil at the same time: month’s end is coming.

*(Joseph looks down. He hesitates, and looks at the ceiling).*

SALIMATU: Listen. You’re wasting your time. If you don’t want to talk...

*(She advances towards the door).*

Out!

*(Joseph hesitates again).*

Please get out!

NJOYA: Yes, see you at month’s end. Out!

JOSEPH: *(He takes a deep breath three times).* Ladies and Gentleman, I beg you to keep what I am going to tell you a secret. Please understand that if ever he happens to find out, I will lose my job. Worse still: as he is a personal friend of the President of the Republic, I’ll spend the rest of my life in the political prison reserved for the enemies of the President. There’s no chance of a court hearing, no appeal. One is completely forgotten and that’s the end.

NJOYA: You won’t have any problem, I assure you.

JOSEPH: Sure?

NJOYA: Yes, sure.

JOSEPH: *(He again takes a deep breath three times).* Well, this morning, I took my boss...

*(He comes close to Eteki, passes his right hand slightly over the boss's eyes to make sure he is asleep).*

Is he asleep?

SALIMATU, SABINE, NJOYA: *(In chorus:)* Yes, he is asleep.

JOSEPH: May God Almighty who lives in Heaven be blessed! Amen.

*(He continues:)*

Yes, as I was saying, I took my boss to testify at the Sovereign National Conference. In the meantime, he asked me to go to one lady's house, ask her to prepare him a good meal, a bottle of old Bordeaux wine costing fifty thousand francs, and a bottle of Scotch whisky.

SABINE: So he's not going to eat the supper I am preparing for him?

JOSEPH: Madam, to tell you the truth, you've wasted you time and money preparing supper for the boss, because he gave me fifty thousand francs for the young lady in question, and he had a sumptuous meal.

NJOYA: Does he often send you to do this, or is it just now and then?

JOSEPH: It has become a habit. It's his usual practice. I know at least five different women who prepare meals for my boss. They never stop phoning him. Sometimes, the boss complains of being disturbed by these women. But he is always happy to visit them.

NJOYA: Thank you. You can go now.

JOSEPH: *(Kneeling down:)*

Ladies and Gentleman, I beg you not to say anything to my boss.

*(He turns to Sabine:)*

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Madam, I pray you not to forget me next week, when the end of the month comes around.

SABINE: We shall see. Good night!

*(Joseph walks out. Intense silence pervades the living room. Eteki is snoring, and suddenly, he vomits. Everybody is agitated).*

ETEKI: *(Lifts himself off the couch, staggering)*. My dear Pauline, I love you very much. Don't listen to Maria's insults. She is a poor faded old flower. A real frump. Frankly speaking, I have left Victoria, Cecilia and Priscilla. I have abandoned them all for you, my dear Pauline. Nothing can separate us. Not even Hell fire. Without you, I will die.

*(He falls down and vomits again).*

SABINE: Salimatu, please clean up this mess made by my dirty husband. And you, Njoya, help me carry your father to my bedroom. He should not mess-up the living room any further. Thank you.

*(Njoya and Sabine carry him off, while Salimatu prepares to clean the floor).*

SALIMATU: *(While cleaning)*. An alcoholic head destroys his family. A Director drowned in alcohol risks draining public coffers through profligate spending on useless things.

*(She stops suddenly).*

It's so strange: my father-in-law, Papa Eteki, was a nice personality when I first knew him, a little before I got married to his son, Njoya. He was cool and composed and very hard working. But I remember that my mother-in-law, Sabine, told me that for the last two years, her husband has been coming home late and always drunk. Worse still: he no longer gives her his salary. Luckily, she is a teacher and a strong woman, if not, she would have died of hunger.

*(She sighs and shakes her head).*

Really this business is going to end badly.

*(Enter Njoya and his mother).*

NJOYA: It's not possible! My father stinks like a pig that's been rolling in the mud.



SABINE: You haven't seen anything: his mouth's started to emit a terrible stench because he doesn't brush his teeth any more.

NJOYA: (*Coming close to his mother:*) Tell me, Mamma. Since when did my father become an alcoholic?

SABINE: (*Surprised*). I told you, some months ago.

SALIMATU: That's true. I remember. But you know, Mamma, Njoya didn't take you seriously. He thought you were complaining too much. Sometimes men defend each other in a bizarre kind of way.

NJOYA: Listen. Don't let's open yet another conflict. We all have to work hard to contain this regrettable situation: my father has become a real alcoholic.

*(He approaches his mother).*

I'm worried. If my father continues like this, if his liver and his urinary system are affected, he's dead meat.

SABINE: You talk about the liver that is in his belly. I am concerned about his trust in me. Here you have somebody who comes home drunk and who threatens to beat me if I dare ask him to stop drinking. One day, under the influence of drink, he'll pull out his pistol and shoot. Luckily, I had the foresight to take out the bullets and hide them away. If not, I would be dead meat already. What is happening is that he is losing both his liver and his love for me.<sup>1</sup>

NJOYA: Mamma, we cannot afford to live in the past. We have to move forward: what do we do?

SABINE: I hope it's not too late to rescue him.

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<sup>1</sup> The play with words, "le foie", the liver, and "la foi", the trust, is lost in the translation. [Translator's note.]

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SALIMATU: (*Moving close to the two*). We should not be pessimistic. We can still do something to help him. This is crazy, though. Mr. Eteki is such a nice person, devoted to his work.

SABINE: That's true. I suspect that ever since he became best friend of a certain Mr. Bernard Kolingba...

*(She pauses).*

Things started falling apart.

NJOYA: Who is this Bernard Kolingba?

SALIMATU: What? You mean you don't know Mr. Bernard Kolingba? But... that's not possible!

NJOYA: You know him?

SALIMATU: You mean you don't know my cousin who is the Director of Customs? The one who was at our wedding?

NJOYA: Oh! Yes, I know him; but he's a man of integrity; at least that's the impression he has always given me. He preaches at least two times a month at the church. He sometimes appears on television. But, Mamma, I don't understand.

SALIMATU: I don't understand either. Kolingba is a great believer.

SABINE: (*Laughing loudly*;) Listen, all fish have the same innocent look, but nobody knows what they think. Someone can smile at you during the day, but feed you poison in the night. You haven't seen anything, my children.

NJOYA: That's enough of these proverbs. Talk to us directly and frankly.

*(Sabine doesn't utter a word. Everybody is waiting. She smiles and shakes her head. Someone knocks at the door).*

SABINE: Who is it? Come in.

KOLINGBA: (*Enters*). May God bless this house! How is everyone?  
(*No response*).

I hope God is protecting you from the Devil's continual harassment.

SABINE: Especially when the Devil disguises himself as a man.

KOLINGBA: (*He approaches in a mocking manner*). You, with your proverbs, one day you'll win a Nobel Prize for them.

SABINE: (*Loudly*). Don't touch me! A cat that pretends to be a friend will end up one day eating meat meant for a special occasion if the door to the kitchen is not well closed.

KOLINGBA: Call your husband for me.

SABINE: Mister Kolingba, you would do well to go back home immediately, or else...

(*Salimatu and Njoya look at each other, puzzled*).

KOLINGBA: What's wrong? You're threatening me? Since when do you speak to me in this tone? May God pardon His daughter when she loses her way!

(*He takes out his small bible from his pocket*).

Let us pray that God calms down your tormented soul.

(*Salimatu and Njoya obey and try to kneel down*).

SABINE: (*Shouting menacingly*): Not in my house!

KOLINGBA: You mean in the house of your husband, my friend Eteki?

SABINE: This house belongs to my children, Eteki and myself.

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KOLINGBA: Man is and will always be the head of the family. At any rate, before the devil takes over in this house, we must quickly get down and pray. Everybody kneel down and close your eyes in honour of God.

*(Salimatu and Njoya are about to kneel down).*

SABINE: *(All the more threatening)*. I repeat: not in my house. To wait for its prey an aquatic scorpion hides in a calm pond.

*(She moves towards the door).*

Mister Kolingba, please, get out, if not...

NJOYA: Mamma, calm down. I don't understand why you're so angry with Mr. Kolingba. You're all on edge. Calm down. Perhaps Mr. Kolingba's prayer will help us at this critical moment.

*(Silence. Sabine remains close to the door).*

SABINE: Mister Kolingba, I am asking you once again to leave my house.

KOLINGBA: What you should say is that we need to pray. Let's do so.

SABINE: A toothless hen knows how to protect itself. Kolingba, get out!

ETEKI: *(Comes running from the bedroom)*. I heard a noise and I was frightened. What's happening?

*(He looks at himself: he is wearing only his underwear:)*

Unbelievable: Excuse me, I am going to dress. But look at me: I am handsome and well built, aren't I! In a male beauty contest, I would be unbeatable. What a body!

*(He looks at himself once again, and then goes back to the bedroom).*

SABINE: Kolingba, I telling you to get out!

ETEKI: *(Enters)*. What did I hear you say, Sabine? Maybe I misheard you. I'm going to get some cotton-wool to clean up my ears.

SABINE: You don't need to look for cotton-wool. I have had enough. I repeat: Mister Kolingba should get out of this house.

ETEKI: What? Could you speak louder and more clearly, in good English!

SABINE: That's no problem at all. I repeat that Mister Kolingba has become a *persona non grata* in this house. I'm giving him one minute to leave. If not, he'll regret what he has done.

*(Eteki quickly returns to his bedroom).*

KOLINGBA: What have I done? Oh! Is it a sin to ask you to pray?

ETEKI: *(Abruptly entering)*. Sabine, here's your suitcase. Go to your bedroom and pack your things. It's enough that for months all you've been doing is to cause me trouble. Today, you're leaving this house.

NJOYA: Papa, please calm down.

ETEKI: Oh! You're taking your mother's side, aren't you?

NJOYA: No, that's not true. But where do you want her to go now? If we calm down, we can solve...

ETEKI: Solve what? If you can't welcome your mother in your own house, that's too bad. I have a solution though: she can sleep under a bridge. There are a number of them in town. She will be joining the many jobless people there. Due to the current economic crisis, many people have lost their jobs and as a result can't afford to pay rent: these are the ones your mother will join under the bridge. She'll have to hurry up though, and get a space: the competition is pretty high! Njoya, I swear: your mother has become a *persona non grata* in this house.

*(Sabine enters her bedroom).*

These stories about women's liberation must come to a stop today. A man will always remain the lion of his house, if not, it will be a disaster.

SALIMATU: Papa, I believe there's a way to solve this problem in a friendly manner. I think that...

ETEKI: You have no right to think anything. When one offers a folding chair to a woman in one's house, she quickly claims the armchair of the head of the family. I hope you don't behave like that in my son's house.

SALIMATU: But, Papa, you've never behaved like this before. What's happening? I used to know you as an impeccable man who loves to keep peace.

KOLINGBA: Exactly. We must pray to chase away the devil in Sabine's heart. Let's pray.

*(He kneels down).*

God, you are our father. We have a possessed woman in this house. Her name is Sabine. God, we ask you to...

SABINE: *(Comes out of the bedroom and bumps into Kolingba, who falls down).*

It's you, Kolingba, the devil! And here's the proof. I have here documents that show that you're one of the causes of my misfortune.

ETEKI: What are you talking about? You're really possessed! A sow who's gone to the devil! You won't sleep in this house.

SABINE: *(Not worried by her husband's threats).* Here's proof that you have ruined my house. You're going to pay dearly for that, Mister Kolingba. And my husband, sorry, I mean Mr. Eteki, will not get off free either, I can assure you.

ETEKI: Very good. Sit down everyone. I'll make sure we all see how you've gone astray. Tell me what's in those papers. Your dirty tricks

won't work. You won't sleep in this house tonight. In a few minutes, I'll call the soldiers of the Presidential Guard to help me get you out of here.

KOLINGBA: (*Suspects some mischief*). No, Eteki, she must not read these papers. It's... You see...

ETEKI: (*Smiling*). I know what you think. No, there's no danger there. We are ruling this country, you and me. Can you imagine a simple woman leading a man by the nose in my country? That's impossible. She's simply run adrift like a vehicle without brakes.

KOLINGBA: Eteki, I'm warning you. She must not read those papers.

ETEKI: Listen, my friend. After reading those papers, she's quitting this house. I've no idea what it is she's going to read.

(*To Sabine*).

If you think that these manoeuvres will help you stay in my house, you're dreaming. Just wait and see.

(*He picks up the telephone*).

Hello. It's me, Eteki, the Director of the National Gas Company and the President's friend. Colonel, in an hour's time send me twenty well-armed soldiers. There's some threat to State security at my house. Yes, in an hour's time. Thank you.

(*He puts down the telephone*).

Ever since that dirty Sovereign National Conference, the President of the Republic has ordered Colonel Amadu to protect me.

SABINE: So, the Presidential Guard has become a private guard for some individuals. Well, we'll see.

ETEKI: Really? You dare insult the President of the Republic?

SABINE: I'm not insulting anyone.

NJOYA: (*Standing up and very angry*). Papa, are you really calling the presidential commandos to arrest my mother for a mere domestic quarrel? That's incredible. You shouldn't...

ETEKI: Enough of your sermons! You must be infected with this new virus called Women's liberation. That's the ideology your mother is propagating in my house.

NJOYA: You misunderstood me. We can solve our family problems without external interference. Besides...

ETEKI: Besides what? You'd better put a stop to your nonsense. If not, both of you will be "guests of honour" in the political prison of my friend, the President of the Republic.

NJOYA: Mamma, I'm curious to know what's in those papers. I hope the contents are authentic.

SALIMATU: I'm curious too.

KOLINGBA: That's the devil's victory again! If the contents of the papers are revealed...

SALIMATU: What will happen?

KOLINGBA: (*Kneeling down*). God Almighty, please do not allow the devil to win over you and your children. The devil is seriously possessing Sabine who...

SABINE: Here's the first letter written by a certain Miss Pauline who works in the President's office. It reads as follows:

KOLINGBA: Eteki, can't you do something to stop this?



ETEKI: Sit down, my friend. I'm going to get rid of this pretentious woman. Let her finish reading those papers and you'll see. There's no problem at all, I can assure you, my friend Kolingba.

NJOYA: Mamma, we are listening.

ETEKI: Who's "we"?

SALIMATU: Well, let's say, "you're being listened to". Perhaps put that way, nobody specific is implicated.

KOLINGBA: My word! There's fancy language for you! These educated women! Now we'll see everything!

NJOYA: Mamma, go ahead. Let's not waste time.

ETEKI: You and your mother will recover your wasted time in the presidential prison. You'll certainly have lots of fun there.

SABINE: (*Reads one of the letters*).

"My Dear Eteki, I thank you for sending me a cheque worth three millions CFA Francs. Mr. Kolingba brought it to my place. I thank Kolingba who introduced me to you. For a long time I had been looking for a sweetheart like you. Much as I might be the age of your son, Njoya, I'm ready and even capable of satisfying you. I'll be waiting for you at the Country Lodge this evening. Kisses, Pauline."

KOLINGBA: Eteki, you see what I told you? This is the devil's victory.

SABINE : Second letter.

KOLINGBA: Eteki, can't you do something to stop this scandal?  
(*Eteki is petrified with embarrassment*).

SABINE: "Hello, Eteki, thanks for giving me ten million CFA Francs. I think it's necessary to give money to Cecilia, Victoria and Maria so that

they keep their mouths shut. They know that you're going out with Pauline, Alice's friend and mine. Since the beginning of this evil and cursed Sovereign National Conference, these girls who attend the same church as me, came to me the other day and said they intend to reveal to the private press that they are used as transmission agents to deposit money in your account in the bank of Mr. Pierre, your friend, in Switzerland. These girls are jealous because they think you like Pauline more than them. That's serious. We shall have to settle all this mess with the amount you gave me. We shall discuss it in detail. Let's meet this evening at the Country Lodge. Pauline promised me to be there. See you then. Regards. - Signed: Kolingba."

Good friends, do you see why my house is in ruins?

ETEKI: My home is the best in the World. Tell the houseboy to bring us whisky, real whisky... imported.

KOLINGBA: Madam, where did you get these forged letters? May God punish the devil!

SABINE: An enraged dog forgets to protect its master.

ETEKI: We're not in a proverb class here. Answer this important question directly.

SABINE: Eteki, do you remember that I am the one who washes your clothes even when they stink of alcohol? Do you remember also that I have the right to empty the pockets of your suits?

ETEKI: Is that so? When you dare put your hand in my pocket, you're committing serious crime. By the way, can you prove that these letters are not fabricated to make me talk? You know, with this National Conference, everything is possible.

*(Sabine makes to hand them to him).*

SALIMATU: *(Rushes to Sabine)*. No, we must establish first whether they're genuine.

ETEKI: Is that your business?

SALIMATU: Yes, it's also my business.

ETEKI: You surprise me. My family's quarrel becomes yours too? What's going on here?

SALIMATU: Yes, Papa. I'm one of the few people who defend you everywhere. I've always said that ill talk about you is to be expected because people are jealous of your position of Director of the Gas Company. People envy you a lot. Besides, Mr. Kolingba is my cousin. You should understand therefore that if a scandal broke up in connection with you, my father-in-law, I couldn't remain indifferent. The hunter who shakes the bees' nest will return home with a bruised face.

ETEKI: Women again with their proverbs! Perhaps it's Sabine's and Njoya's faces that will be bruised. If you mind your own business, your face will be safe. Now, Sabine, let me see the letters.

NJOYA: Mamma, don't give them to him. I want to see them first.

SABINE: (*Pushes her son aside*). Don't worry, there's no problem. I'll give them to your father.

(*She gives them to him*).

KOLINGBA: (*Very happy*). Very good!

SALIMATU: What does that mean?

ETEKI: Very good! I destroy these letters; I don't want any scandal in my house. I'll not tolerate another National Conference under my roof.

NJOYA: You don't have the right to destroy them.

SALIMATU: It's unacceptable!

KOLINGBA: God be praised! The devil is defeated.

SABINE: Don't worry. The rain that pours into a river comes out through the soil in the form of a spring. I'm giving to each one of you photocopies of these letters. The originals? No one will ever get them, even if you hold a knife to my throat.

*(Everyone takes a while reading the letters).*

SALIMATU: Kolingba, I recognise your signature here. You wrote the letter, yourself.

KOLINGBA: The devil pushed me to do such dirty work.

NJOYA: Papa, now I understand why you don't give money to my Mother to take care of the family. What's happening here is incredible!

ETEKI: *(Kneeling down before his wife).* My dear, please forgive me.

SABINE: I don't believe you any more. The other day, I found another letter from another fifteen-year-old girl in your pocket. It was a neighbour's daughter. That nearly broke into a scandal, but thanks to my intervention, emotions were calmed down. This matter had hardly settled down before you reverted to drinking and threatening me. I certainly don't believe you.

KOLINGBA: Madam, in the name of the Lord, please forgive us. We're victims of the devil's painstaking work.

SALIMATU: So, these two letters are genuine?

KOLINGBA: Maybe we should pray.

SALIMATU: Stop this hypocrisy. Do you still doubt the authenticity of the letters?

ETEKI: Why should we answer that question? Is this another Sovereign National Conference?

*(Kneeling again before his wife).*

Sabine, my love, I beg your forgiveness. Without you, I'll never be a man worthy of the name.

NJOYA: Mamma, for the sake of the family, I beg you to accept my father's plea.

SABINE: Listen, my son, I don't want to appear uncompromising. All I want is a guarantee, a written and signed guarantee.

ETEKI: What sort of guarantee?

SABINE: Only one. You write a will that passes all your possessions to your children and myself.

ETEKI: Why?

SABINE: I want to be sure of my future and that of my children. I don't want to see another woman take my rights away from me. The other day, one of your friends, Mr. John Sesele, the Governor of the Central Bank, made a will giving everything to a young girl. That was only revealed after his death. Yet, while alive, he told his family that the will would hand his riches down to them. I don't want to be the victim of such a misfortune.

ETEKI: And if I refuse to make such a will?

SABINE: Why would you refuse? I've contributed enormously to the construction of this house and to the upbringing and education of the children.

ETEKI: *(He laughs, but suddenly turns furious, hitting his chest with his hand).* Well, I, Eteki, incontestable head of my family, categorically refuse to make a will that passes our properties, yes, our properties to

our children. A woman, and that includes you, cannot give advice like that to me.

SABINE: Very well, we shall settle our differences elsewhere.

ETEKI: Where's that?

SABINE: At the on-going Sovereign National Conference.

ETEKI: You know what I'm afraid of? You and your witnesses, Njoya and Salimatu, are going to be the "guests of honour" at the President's political prison until the end of the National Conference. You'll probably be freed when the Conference ends.

NJOYA: Father, is that how you want to settle this dispute?

*(Pause).*

I can see clearly now. Mamma is right.

*(Somebody knocks at the door; Eteki is pleased).*

ETEKI: Very good. That's the Colonel with his soldiers from the Presidential Guard. You're under arrest!

SALIMATU: Papa Eteki, you really disappoint me! Listen, I'd like to propose the following peace plan...

ETEKI: Too late. Because of my wife's uncompromising and inflammatory words, my only guarantee is to lock you up in prison for a while.

*(He opens the door).*

Welcome to you, Col... No, that's not possible. Pierre, what're you doing here? I thought you were in Geneva!

PIERRE: Hello, everyone!

*(No one responds).*

Well, well, well. Kolingba, my friend, is that you? Thanks for the envelope you sent me. It was well stocked. We should make a toast to

it. Well, we'll talk about it later. Eteki, what's going on? Are you in mourning?

ETEKI: Yes, we're preparing to mourn.

PIERRE: Why?

ETEKI: Well, there are some people here among us who do not want to live in peace. That's why we're preparing for a mourning session.

PIERRE: Stop joking. Tell me the truth. I think something is going on here. I saw armed soldiers outside. If it were not for our friend the Colonel, they wouldn't have let me enter. Eteki, what's going on?

NJOYA: (*Approaching Pierre*).

My dear Pierre, do you have news of your son, Christopher?

PIERRE: Who are you talking about?

NJOYA: Christopher.

PIERRE: Don't mention that moron to me! By the look of things, my son wants to destroy me.

ETEKI: Do you have problems with your son?

PIERRE : Terrible ones!

ETEKI: Me too!

PIERRE: If we don't react fast, our sons will drown us in boiling water.

ETEKI: I'd say they could even stir-fry us!

PIERRE: The youth of today!

ETEKI: We were once like them, daydreaming, our heads in the clouds. Sooner or later, they're going to be disillusioned.

*(Somebody knocks at the door).*

It's probably the Colonel. Come in, please!

COLONEL: *(Enters and salutes)*. Mr. Eteki, a white person out here wants to see your son.

ETEKI: My son? What's his name?

COLONEL: He refuses to disclose his identity. He says you know him.

ETEKI: Is he armed?

COLONEL: No, he doesn't have any firearm on him.

ETEKI: No, I mean: is he armed with a camera? I don't want any journalist in my house. They've been bothering me since the beginning of this evil National Conference. Let him come in if he's not armed.

COLONEL: Thank you, Sir.

*(He leaves).*

PIERRE: By the way, can't my friend the President of the Republic put a stop to this National Conference?

SABINE: Why? The National Conference gives us the chance to speak freely for the first time in thirty years.

PIERRE: *(Looking at Eteki)*. Is this true, Eteki? Your family supports the holding of the National Conference? My God, we're reaching the end of the World! This country is advancing slowly but surely towards chaos and disorder!

KOLINGBA: That's true, Mr. Pierre. I never stop praying. The devil is in the throes of conquering our country.

*(Taking the prayer posture).*

May God Almighty save us!



COLONEL: (*Enters, followed by Christopher*). Sir, here's the man in question.

ETEKI: Thank you, Colonel. Wait for me outside, with the soldiers. Colonel, here's what you and your soldiers are going to eat.

COLONEL: Three thousand Francs? It's a bit too much, Sir!

ETEKI: There are about fifty of you outside there. It's not too much, old friend! You'll have a tough assignment in a short while. Just be patient.

*(The Colonel walks out).*

PIERRE: Christopher, what're you doing here?

CHRISTOPHER: Listen, Papa, I'm thirty years old. I'm no longer a minor. Does it matter to you if I'm dead or alive? In any case, I'm here to see my friend, Njoya.

PIERRE: It's all too obvious that you're no longer a minor. However, I am the one who introduced you to this family, thanks to the thirty-year-old friendship that links me to Eteki. We've known one another since this young country became independent.

NJOYA: Mr. Pierre, I see no inconvenience whatsoever if your son comes to my home.

ETEKI: (*Instantly boiling with anger*).

Shut up! You're no longer at home, here! You're going to meet your destiny shortly, moron!

CHRISTOPHER: I don't understand what you're talking about, Mr. Eteki.

ETEKI: Njoya, his wife and mine will shortly be "invited guests" at the political prison until the end of the National Conference.

PIERRE: Come on, enough of your jokes. How can you put your own family in temporary detention? Have you gone crazy or what?

ETEKI: My friend, I've just discovered that I have political enemies in my own house: my wife, my son and his wife. They've sworn they're going to complain about me at the National Conference.

CHRISTOPHER: (*Astonished*). No, that's not possible! Njoya, you surprise me. How can you do such a thing?

NJOYA: Listen, my father is exaggerating a bit. My mother found two letters, which show that he spends millions of francs on his mistresses, with Mr. Kolingba playing the go-between. And to safeguard her own future and that of her children, she's asking my father to write a will leaving her his possessions, should he die. My father categorically rejects this. She threatens to lodge a complaint at the National Conference. My wife and I were trying to settle the dispute in an amicable manner when my father called the soldiers to arrest us and take us into military confinement. Here are the letters.

(*He hands them over to Christopher and Pierre*).

PIERRE: Are these letters genuine?

ETEKI: (*Hesitantly*). Yes, they are.

PIERRE: And the originals?

ETEKI: With my wife.

PIERRE: Madam, where are they?

SABINE: That's absolutely none of your business. If you wish to know more about this issue, let's meet at the National Conference.

PIERRE: In fact, I came here to stop you from taking this matter to the National Conference.

CHRISTOPHER: Too late. It'll be settled in public at the National Conference.

ETEKI: Why?

NJOYA: Because Mr. Pierre and you have actively participated in the destruction and pillage of our economy and have contributed enormously to the moral decadence of our youth.

ETEKI: (*Laughing and clapping his hands*). Here's another comic! My son, are you in a position, with the facts to hand, to back up this pack of lies?

CHRISTOPHER: Yes, very possibly.

ETEKI: How? Are you conspiring against Pierre and me?

CHRISTOPHER: It's the two of you who are conspiring against the past, the present and the future of this country and even against other countries.

ETEKI: Where's the proof?

NJOYA: I have your bank account and that of your friend, the President. I also have videos showing that Mr. Pierre and you finance a network buying and sending young girls to nightclubs in Europe. Mr. Kolingba is your intermediary, recruiting these girls from his church, promising them paradise in Europe. You're going to appear before the National Conference.

PIERRE: Eteki, my friend, what your son has said is true. That's why I came to see you.

SABINE: How come, my son, you know so many things and you don't even whisper a word to me? Salimatu, do you know anything about this yourself?

**SALIMATU** : Yes, Mamma. Christopher sent us documents as well as videos implicating Mr. Eteki in these scandalous transactions. My husband received them yesterday from Switzerland. We had decided not to shock him further with these revelations.

**PIERRE**: Eteki, as I was saying, all this is true. Our misfortune can be blamed on the private press, which is very active in Switzerland. It also comes from certain parliamentarians who belong to the so-called human rights organisations. I still don't understand how those people got to know our secrets.

**ETEKI**: Alright. But I can't see the link between those moronic journalists, the so-called human rights defenders and your son, Christopher.

**PIERRE**: He's one of them. He belongs to something they call the Third World Committee Against Oppression.

**ETEKI**: But why can't you put pressure on your Government to ban the operations of these troublemakers?

**PIERRE**: My friend, in my country, there's democracy, which upholds the liberty of association. I once tried to do something by influencing my friends in the Secret Services. I tried to convince them that the Third World Committee was perpetrating the communist ideas of the former Soviet Union. This is the argument we've always put to your friend, the President, but it's no longer forceful. The communists are no longer ruling in the Soviet Union because it has simply dissolved.

**ETEKI**: And you couldn't even buy the support of your own son and his extremist organisation?

**PIERRE**: It's alright for you to speak! Have you managed to win your son's support, yourself?

ETEKI: No, Pierre, don't you see our problem? You and me have brought up and bound our sons with friendship so that they can take over from us. My son would become a minister or director, and your son, a banker like you. But now they've both rebelled against us. We try to kill cockroaches with an insecticide, but they become more and more resilient. What can we do?

*(A pause. Nobody speaks).*

SABINE: With all these new revelations, I feel ashamed to live with a rotten husband. I feel disgusted. Life has no meaning for me any more. The calabash is shattered into pieces and from now on it will be difficult to put them back together.

KOLINGBA: *(Stops praying and abruptly intervenes).* Madam, don't let the devil win over you. Pray God to forgive you for your sins.

PIERRE: We're not going to waste our time on sterile religious quarrels. We have to fend off the danger we're confronted with.

KOLINGBA: Amen! God be praised!

ETEKI: Do you see any solution?

PIERRE: Christopher and Njoya, you must notice that you're putting Eteki and me at serious risk. Me, I'm a man of peace and friendship. I've spent my life building the bridge between Europe and Africa. I'll remain loyal to that principle. So, let's find a compromise. You're still the unfortunate victims of that youthful dream of building a paradise on earth. Human beings are still torn between selfishness and collective well-being. But selfishness will always prevail. Let's find a compromise. Let's together find an equitable solution to the crisis that is battering our families. If Eteki and I are tarnished with disrepute and shame at the National Conference, you'll suffer the same fate.

SABINE: That's probably true, but...

ETEKI: Shut up! A woman has no voice in men's affairs!

NJOYA: (*Very angry*). A woman has the natural right, upheld by the society, to actively take part in all affairs. Here's my proposal for a compromise. First, my father must, within twenty-four hours, write a will passing his possessions, in case of death, to his wife and children.

ETEKI: And if your mother were to die before me?

SABINE: You already know that my will gives you and my children all my property. That will obviously remain unchanged.

ETEKI: Me, I don't want any of your possessions and I don't want your children.

PIERRE: We're listening to you, Njoya.

NJOYA: Secondly, Mr. Pierre, regarding the money hidden in your bank in Switzerland by high-ranking civil servants of my country, you must sign an undertaking authorising the restitution of all that money.

PIERRE: Together with the President's money?

NJOYA: Without any exception. As a journalist and advocate, I'm ready to pursue this matter to the end.

PIERRE: And do you go along with this, Christopher, my son?

CHRISTOPHER: Oh, yes, for sure. Njoya and me have the same future. Nothing will ever separate us.

PIERRE: Christopher, my son, if you continue down this road, my bank, I mean, your bank will be ruined. In my will, which you have seen already, you shall, as my only son, inherit the bank and all my real estate.

CHRISTOPHER: If you continue, with other bankers in Switzerland, to hang on to money stolen by dictators from their own people, there will never be peace in the World. If you do not sign an undertaking to return the stolen money, I'll denounce you before the Sovereign National Conference.

ETEKI: Pierre, we're wasting our time arguing with these idiots. The solution to this useless talk is outside. Let me call the troops in.

PIERRE: I agree. Go ahead!  
*(Eteki presses a bell and soldiers enter).*

COLONEL: *(Pointing to Christopher).* Mr. Eteki, should I arrest this white man?

PIERRE: Yes, he's my son. He has committed the same offence as these other people.

COLONEL: But, Mr. Eteki, this white man is an expatriate. I hope this arrest isn't going to provoke a diplomatic row.

ETEKI: I'll keep the President in touch with the whole affair. Don't worry. Just take them away!

COLONEL: Ok! Everybody, move!  
*(He pushes them out).*

NJOYA: Take it easy, Colonel. We're going with you. You three, I wish you good luck.  
*(The soldiers take with them Njoya, Christopher, Sabine and Salimatu).*

PIERRE: Listen, my friends. We've got a tough task ahead of us. It's not at all in our interests to keep our sons for too long in the political prison. All the same, they seem determined not to accept the compromise we suggest to them. Despite their stubbornness, we must

handle the situation with care. If the press gets involved in this affair, our sons will be the heroes. Obviously, you and me will be totally ruined.

KOLINGBA: That's true.

ETEKI: What can we do then?

PIERRE: Let's go and think about it together with our friends in the President's Office.

*(Enter Yoro, Minister of State in the President's Office).*

YORO: This is incredible! Who's this I see? Pierre, I thought you were in Switzerland. The President has sent a minister to see you in Geneva, but you're here. You're certainly your father's son.

PIERRE: How are you doing? I don't think I follow your point about the father's son.

YORO: It's simple. In our African culture, when somebody we're talking about suddenly arrives, it means he has the luck to be present when people are talking about him. We say he has pure blood or he is the real son of his father. That's what I mean by that.

PIERRE: I see. Well, let's get down to more serious issues. What's going on?

YORO: Well, it's the Sovereign National Conference. The whole country has become ungovernable. At the supermarkets and boutiques, there isn't a single radio; they've all been bought up because everyone wants to follow live the deliberations at the Conference.

PIERRE: You mean there's no way to stop this Conference? It's perfectly clear that it's disturbing the peace of our beloved country.



YORO: Pierre, nobody can stop it. The President hates it as much as you do, if not more, but there's nothing he can do!

PIERRE: Why?

YORO: To the President's surprise, all the people, especially the army, and even our friends in other countries, support the holding of the Conference.

PIERRE: Despite what the President has done for the country?

YORO: That's just it! People see only the negative side of the President's Government. And yet it's the President who's given scholarships to this youth throughout their secondary and university education. He's the one who's trained the young cadres. Now, they turn around and accuse him and his ministers of stealing people's money. According to hearsay, you, Pierre, are keeping the so-called stolen millions in your bank. In fact, that's why I came to see Mr. Eteki. I had even wanted to go via Mr. Kolingba's house.

ETEKI: Why have you come to see me?

YORO: The President sent me. He says he has information that implicates you in fiscal fraud. Mr. Kolingba is also said to live off immoral earnings.

KOLINGBA: How did the President find those documents?

YORO: Very simple: through our Intelligence Agents who infiltrated the private press and the Human Rights Organisation. Besides, our spies have discovered that Christopher and Njoya pledged, during a meeting of opponents of the regime, that they were going to force you, Pierre, and you, Eteki, and certain other ministers, to bring back into the national coffers all the money you might have stolen.

ETEKI: What was the President's response to all that?

YORO: He says you should do everything you can to stop your children from giving any evidence before the National Conference. According to our Intelligence Agents, they're well placed to confirm the authenticity of these documents. I swear to you, should they testify before this Conference, we're all done for. And you know that in our African culture, a son who testifies against his father in a tribunal destroys him utterly.

PIERRE: Even if the son is lying?

YORO: Oh, yes, even if at the end of the day it's found that the son is a liar, the image and career of the father remains tarnished and compromised.

PIERRE: Then, we must take action immediately.

ETEKI: (*Angrily*). We cannot kneel down before our sons. They must vegetate in prison.

PIERRE: You're crazy, Eteki. What are you going to do to keep them in prison?

YORO: The President thinks that it's not in our interest to keep these children in prison for long. Listen, my friends, everybody is at the point of abandoning the President. The civil servants are wavering between the opposition and us, in order to safeguard their jobs. Such is life. It won't be surprising either if the very soldiers who are keeping your children under house arrest are bribed to transmit messages written by your children for the local and international media who are just now following very closely the deliberations in the National Conference. That would lead to yet another scandal. We're in a very delicate and embarrassing situation.

KOLINGBA: Good God, what shall we do?

YORO: The President says you must do whatever you can to persuade your sons to break away from our political adversaries. That could weaken our enemies while we sort ourselves out. That's the long and short of the message. I must go; I've work to do at the Presidency. Eteki, call me if you have any difficulties. Pierre, see you. I'll tell the President that you're here. This time around we're facing serious threats. We must win the war. Once again, bye.

*(He goes out).*

ETEKI: We're in real trouble.

KOLINGBA: Let's pray to God to come to our rescue.

PIERRE: For God's sake, stop praying. We must use our heads to get out of this mess. We'll do everything possible to dissuade our lost children from carrying out their plan. Let's go.

*(They all leave).*

## ATMOSPHERE TWO

*(Njoya and Christopher are sitting on one chair, Sabine and Salimatu on another. They have just woken up).*

SABINE: We've now been imprisoned for three days. Yet people think that we've hidden ourselves away from the supposed assassins who threatened to attack Eteki's house.

SALIMATU: It's amazing that the radio should broadcast such lies. In fact this regime is systematically spreading disinformation.

NJOYA: That's the problem. It seems to me that political power is infected with a virus that eats into the heart of the people, even people who otherwise are basically honest. As soon as politicians climb into power, they instantly forget that nothing lasts forever. They become arrogant and cut all links with the people.

CHRISTOPHER: They become corrupt, mainly because of flatterers and opportunists. Humanity is constantly torn between good and evil. Sometimes I wonder if evil is not predominant.

SABINE: I often wonder if he or she who is supposed to be our creator or "creatress"<sup>1</sup> and who is also capable of intervening in our affairs does not have an ambiguous personality.

SALIMATU: Why do you say that?

SABINE: It seems to me in any case that one liar can be more powerful than many honest people.

NJOYA: Really, what you're saying makes me wonder if the change that we're fighting for will not be short-lived.

CHRISTOPHER: Why?

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<sup>1</sup> An attempt to translate the feminine (gender) of creator as reflected in the original. [Translator's note].

NJOYA: I have the impression that good-willed people do not live long enough to serve humanity. What guarantee is there that our new democracy will not be hijacked by cruel and egoist individuals posing as democrats?

CHRISTOPHER: There's no guarantee. It seems that everywhere power quickly exhausts its humanistic potential, but it seems its sadistic element is inexhaustible. I begin to question the rationale behind our struggle.

SABINE: Why?

NJOYA: Let me answer. Isn't it possible to imagine that at this very moment, there are malicious and lazy people who are following very closely the struggle unfolding in the National Conference, waiting with crossed arms, for the first opportunity to jump into power and rule the country as they wish? What this implies is that struggle must be permanent.

CHRISTOPHER: The same situation still prevails in Europe. My dream is to see humanity uniting in liberty, fraternity and equality. But what does one see the World over? Utter selfishness! It's disheartening!

SALIMATU: But if a handful of men and women who believe in humanity had not fought together against cruelty, we would all have degenerated into beasts by now.

SABINE: That's true. Small stones piled together to bar the course of the river save houses downstream. Let's not be discouraged.

NJOYA: In any case, as for me, I shall fight until all those who have robbed the people and who are the authors of the misery of the people vomit up what they've stolen!

CHRISTOPHER: We're brothers in the struggle, Njoya. As for me, I realise that the best way to strengthen democracy in this country is to fight for a stronger democracy in my own. As soon as I get out of this prison, I'm going back to my country with more determination. Also, I think that...

*(A prison guard abruptly enters the waiting room).*

PRISON GUARD: Somebody wants to talk to Mrs Eteki.

SABINE: Let him come in.

*(Joseph enters, seemingly troubled).*

JOSEPH: Greetings, everyone. What? Are you so many?

*(Pause).*

Ha! There's even a White among you?

SABINE: What're you doing here? Has my husband sent you to tell me something or has he committed some new blunder?

JOSEPH: How did you guess so well?

SABINE: What! Tell us!

JOSEPH: Madam, can I trust that White there?

NJOYA: Don't worry. He's my old friend; we've shared many secrets.

JOSEPH: Good. No problem. It's about Pauline.

SALIMATU, NJOYA: *(In chorus).* Pauline again?

JOSEPH: Yes, Pauline.

SABINE: What has she done this time?

JOSEPH: As soon as the soldiers took you away, my boss, Mr. Eteki, asked me to fetch her. And so I brought her to the house.

SABINE: Which house?

JOSEPH: Your house, in Good Hope Street.

NJOYA: No. 13?

JOSEPH: Exactly. After they'd spent some time in the living room, my boss carried her like a bag of rice into the bedroom.

SABINE: Which bedroom?

JOSEPH: The master bedroom. I was outside, but I spied on them through the keyhole. And after a while, Pauline was crying: "Dear, rub against me, hard", "My love, without you I'm going to die", "Darling, you're so good inside me", "My love, don't come just yet, I haven't come yet".

NJOYA: And what did my father say?

JOSEPH: Just like always, my boss didn't say a thing. He simply closed his eyes while whacking away at Pauline. One hell of a boss! If there were championships in the field, he'd certainly come out a winner. Old devil of a boss!

SABINE: All that is taking place in my house. And I'm not yet dead. The day I die, my husband will bring a truck full of mistresses to celebrate my passing. How awful!

JOSEPH: Madam, I'm hungry.

SABINE: So what? Do I run a restaurant?

JOSEPH: Madam, you know that my boss doesn't pay me regularly. I spy on him for you in exchange for favours.

NJOYA: Are you telling the truth about my father?

JOSEPH: I always tell the truth about my boss, Mr. Eteki.  
(*Enter suddenly Eteki, Kolingba, Pierre and Yoro.*)

ETEKI: Who's mentioning my name?  
(*He stops suddenly.*)

What! Joseph, what're you doing here? I've been looking for you everywhere!

SALIMATU : Mr. Eteki !

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ETEKI : Yes?

SALIMATU: What's Pauline doing in your house?

ETEKI: Who told you that Pauline is in my house?

JOSEPH: I did. True or false?

ETEKI: It's true. But Mr. Kolingba sent her to give me a message.

KOLINGBA: Me? I don't remember sending Pauline to you.

ETEKI: Is that so? Perhaps she was lying...

SALIMATU: What was she doing with you in the bedroom?

ETEKI: Do you mean in the sitting room?

JOSEPH: First in the sitting room, then in the master bedroom.

ETEKI: Yes, it's true. It's because she was sent to give me a message in secret.

KOLINGBA: As God is my witness, I didn't send Pauline to Mr. Eteki's place.

SALIMATU: Why was she screaming?

ETEKI: Was she screaming? Alright, enough of this nonsense. She was screaming with joy!

JOSEPH: I saw you through the keyhole. One minute, you were on top of Pauline; the next minute, she was all over you. You weren't saying anything, but you kept your eyes shut. As for Pauline, she was crying: "Dear, rub against me, hard", "My love, without you I'm going to die", "Darling, you're so good inside me", "My love, don't come just yet, I haven't come yet".

ETEKI: Joseph, from now on, you're no longer my chauffeur!



JOSEPH: What good is it to be your chauffeur? You haven't paid my salary for six months. Yet I've always served you well. If it weren't for your wife, my family and myself would have died of hunger. Make me work like a nigga without being paid a cent, that's your policy, Mr. Eteki. In any case, I've decided not to work for you from now on. I'm quitting.

ETEKI: As for you, Salimatu, is this any of your business? You dare to ask me scandalous and embarrassing questions? Who gave you the right to interfere in my family's affairs?

NJOYA: Papa, you make me feel ashamed. It's always Salimatu, my wife, who defends you whenever you're caught up in a controversy. Sometimes, she defends your case in a very dogmatic manner, like some kind of a religious fanatic. But now you insult her.

ETEKI: I have no time for you, Njoya. Ever since you read that imported literature about liberty and democracy, you've neglected your African culture. It's not your fault anyway.

NJOYA: African culture presupposes honesty, decency and brotherly love. Ever since you befriended Pastor Kolingba, your moral values have tremendously declined. It's such a shame!

ETEKI: How dare you speak like that to the father who brought you into the world?

NJOYA: I'm beginning to regret that you're my father. The way things are going, you're likely to denounce your family because of your loose life with little girls.

PIERRE: Come on! We're not here to poison our relationships. I've come here with my friends to settle our misunderstandings in an amicable manner.

CHRISTOPHER: Our differences will be settled in public.

YORO: Where?

CHRISTOPHER: At the Sovereign National Conference, of course.

YORO: No, no, no! That's exactly what you mustn't do. In Africa, quarrels are settled in the house, in the bosom of the family.

PIERRE: If I may intervene, there are two contentious issues. We must look for ways to solve them.

SABINE: What are these contentious issues?

ETEKI: (*Angrily*). Woman, is that your business? This is a discussion between men, full stop!

SABINE: Mr. Eteki, you're not ashamed? You speak as if we should respect you. But you're a dirty pig!

ETEKI: You call me a pig? You dare to speak to me like that?

SABINE: What's the difference between a pig and you? Whenever a woman wants to contribute to a debate, you instinctively fall back on men's superiority over women. Do you know why you're a pig?

ETEKI: No.

SABINE: You demean yourself by sleeping all over the place with girls who are not even the age of your son, Njoya. You drag yourself down to their level. That's no problem because a pig sleeps with little female pigs as and when it so desires.

(*Raising her voice,*)

But what's most disgusting is that, at night, you humble yourself before your mistresses, making them believe that you're equals; but during the day and in front of everyone, you're hypocritical enough to claim that you're superior to every woman. You're a real pig!

ETEKI: Come on, we're not here to tarnish ourselves in public.

YORO: Indeed, Madam, the Presidency and myself are aware of the quarrels between your husband and yourself. This is the major concern of the President. He has sent me to address this problem.

SABINE: Listen, Mr. Yoro, I want to thank both the President and yourself for the interest you've taken in my private life. Although with a husband like this one, I don't have any private life because he dares take his mistresses into my house and make love to them in our bedroom. In brief, I don't know what Mr. Eteki has told the President and you. The solution to this problem lies in a document to be signed by Mr. Eteki stating that all his possessions will be passed on to his children and me after his death. If he refuses to honour our legitimate claim, we're ready to settle the problem in public before the on-going National Conference.

YORO: But, Madam, the National Conference, which I would have wanted to cancel by a presidential decree, is not a competent tribunal to settle quarrels between spouses.

NJOYA: On the contrary, Mr. Yoro, with all due respect, I'd like to make it clear that we're going to the National Conference to denounce the embezzlement of public funds and the moral and family decadence orchestrated by my father, a high-ranking government official who, in respect of the ethics of his profession, ought to be a model in our country. And we'll establish an enquiry into his file as well as into the future of the Nkusa Eteki family.

ETEKI: (*He rushes to Njoya, threatening to hit him*). I'll disown you if you do that!

YORO: Mr. Eteki, please be patient. Our problems are getting more and more complicated because the national media, including the section that is hostile to us, and part of the foreign media, are already informed that you're under house arrest. The same media is getting organised and asking the chair of the National Conference to pressurise the President of the Republic to free you so that you can go to testify. The President sent me to discourage you from going there.

PIERRE: Mr. Yoro is telling the truth. Christopher, my son, part of the solution to this crisis is in your hands.

CHRISTOPHER: Explain yourself, Papa.

PIERRE: I know that Njoya and you have documents that implicate a number of prominent figures in this young and beautiful African country. They're implicated in fiscal fraud and the illicit trafficking of young African girls to brothels in Europe. And I play the intermediary; I'm their partner. I'm going to tell you something, perhaps you know it already: in almost every instance everywhere in the World, every rich man has got to that stage through dishonest means. They kill, they assassinate, they lie, and they play dirty tricks. In brief, these rich people you see everywhere are dishonest.

CHISTOPHER: And so?

PIERRE: All I'm telling you is that the practice you're accusing us of here is as old as humanity.

CHISTOPHER: And so?

ETEKI: That means that you and my son, Njoya, ought not to bear us a grudge.

NJOYA: You mean you're part of an age-old sickness that we must rid ourselves of?

ETEKI: No. It simply means that we suffer from an ancient disease that cannot be cured, because it is integral to humanity. And that disease is the accumulation of wealth.

NJOYA: Very good. You're going to defend yourselves before the Sovereign National Conference.

ETEKI: Listen, my son. I've struggled so that my family, of which you are part, doesn't become victim of the vicious circle of poverty which was the fate of my grandfather and my father.

NJOYA: So you decided to embezzle public funds and sell the country's girls to Europeans as prostitutes?

ETEKI: What does it matter! Man is more of an egoist than a social being; we all want to shelter ourselves from misery. My

grandfather laboured under the chieftaincy in our village. He ran away to try to make a living in town. My father was illiterate and a poor worker in the dockyards. He saved some money to send me to the colonial school. And I was lucky to obtain a scholarship to train in Switzerland where I met my friend Pierre. I've spent my life struggling to help my family make ends meet. My family leads a better life than that of my father and my grandfather. Now for some insignificant reason you want me to give back to the State all I have here and in Switzerland? Never! I repeat: never!

NJOYA: Is that so? We shall see.

PIERRE: My grandfather was a railway worker living like railway workers in the novels of Balzac. My father washed dishes in a restaurant of a tourist centre that was frequented by Kings, Princes and army Generals. At the end of my studies, I contacted my friends in the Third World and that's how I became a banker.

CHISTOPHER: But very soon now you will be obliged to give back the people's money that's in your bank in Switzerland.

PIERRE: Are you talking about our bank?

CHISTOPHER: Me, I'm no longer part of a fraudulent enterprise.

PIERRE: Do you call our bank a fraudulent enterprise?

CHISTOPHER: Your bank is founded upon embezzled funds.

PIERRE: Listen, my son, I'm going to teach you one thing: evil has governed the World since its creation.

CHISTOPHER: Do you mean that God is weak and the devil rules the World?

PIERRE: I don't know. I don't want to open a religious or metaphysical debate. What I have observed is that the struggle for material possessions is at the basis of political power. But of course nobody dares to voice this bitter truth out loud.

CHRISTOPHER: So?

PIERRE: Be patient, I'm getting there. All regimes, even those that have good intentions at the start, end up being corrupt.

CHRISTOPHER: Why?

PIERRE: Well, I'm not a historian, but I think that all this is linked to the fact that evil is a ferocious virus that is much more powerful than the good.

CHRISTOPHER: That means you're part and parcel of that evil. In other words, you're the custodian of evil in this country.

PIERRE: My son, let me tell you something. Even back home in Europe, you simply have to look at the bank accounts of the so-called revolutionaries, social democrats and even liberals. If you have the courage to find out how they became rich and how they continue to enrich themselves, you'll end up committing suicide because you'll forever lose confidence in humanity.

ETEKI: Exactly, all these individuals who're making such a noise at the National Conference, we know them. Christopher and Njoya, my son, do you really want Pierre and me to give our riches to these bandits who proclaim themselves to be democrats? Never! I'd prefer to throw my money in the Lake Geneva. I'm getting tired, but as you pursue your ideals, you two, take note of the fundamental message that Pierre has just given you: all regimes, even those that are well intentioned at the start, end up being corrupted. For myself, I want to add this: all National Conferences, even those that are well intentioned at the start, end up being controlled by swines.

YORO: Enough of all this philosophising; leave it to the intellectuals.

SALIMATU: I think that the minimum that we must hold on to from this discussion is that Mr. Eteki passes his possessions on to my mother-in-law and her children.

YORO: Fine, I'm getting there. We've examined these problems at length at the Presidency, in the presence of Messrs Eteki and Pierre, and we have, after a great deal of trouble and painstaking considerations, arrived at the following solution:

SALIMATU: Which one?

YORO: That Mr. Eteki passes his property to his wife and children.

NJOYA: Bravo! And what else?

YORO: That this is conceded in exchange for abandoning the plan to testify before the National Conference, as Njoya, Christopher, Salimatu and Sabine intended to.

CHRISTOPHER: And what will happen to the stolen money kept in my father's bank?

YORO: We, at the Presidency, believe that all banking activities taking place beyond our shores do not concern us.

CHRISTOPHER: But very recently, a certain country in Asia tabled a plea before the Swiss government to return stolen money to the country in question. And it seems that the Swiss government agreed to make inquiries into the affair and that it has now promised to return the stolen money. You could take advantage of this new development in the country of secrecy and banking and financial orthodoxy.

YORO: Mr. Christopher, with all due respect, you don't have the right to dictate to us the path to follow. We're a free and sovereign country. We do not allow you to interfere in internal affairs. That is contrary to international law.

CHRISTOPHER: Listen, Mr. Yoro, for over twenty years my father has deposited into his bank money stolen from your country. I believe he was, in that respect, interfering in your internal affairs, except that he was authorised to do so by high-ranking officials and civil servants. Instead of deporting him from this country, he

has always been welcomed like a prince from Europe. What a contradiction!

ETEKI: Christopher, you have no right to insult us here.

NJOYA: Christopher is not insulting anyone. I'd like to say something. I hope Messrs Yoro, Eteki and Pierre listen very carefully.

ETEKI: Go ahead, Mr. Historian!

NJOYA: You'll agree with me that the money hidden in Mr. Pierre's bank by certain high-ranking political personalities of my country, my father included, is enough to provide the entire country with water, electricity, and a telephone network. It could even create jobs for young graduates.

ETEKI: So what?

NJOYA: Allow me to finish what I have to say. One President of a Republic once said that the World couldn't afford to replace the Cold War between the East and the West by a North-South conflict based upon economic injustice. If authorities in the South steal money and, with the collaboration of bankers in the North, hide this money overseas, I imagine the prophecy of that President will come true. The future of humanity remains threatened.

YORO: Enough of all this philosophy!

SABINE: As for me, I don't want any of my husband's property. All I want for my children is the house in which we live.

YORO: You mean the one on Good Hope Street?

SABINE: Yes.

YORO: Why not his other properties?

SABINE: I don't know where he got them. Suspect property doesn't interest me. But the house in question was built with my assistance



twenty years ago; I still have all the relevant documents. I realise that I made a mistake to allow my husband to register this house as his property alone. Besides that, there's no link between this house and going to testify before the National Conference. If I'm invited, I shall testify.

KOLINGBA: That's yet further proof that the devil is firmly planted in Mrs. Eteki's heart. You don't want peace.

NJOYA: Mamma, don't listen to him. I am going to testify before the National Conference.

ETEKI: Even against your father who brought you into this world?

NJOYA: Yes. We'd better finish with all this dirty work.

PIERRE: And you, my son?

CHRISTOPHER: Njoya and I are united in the same fight. The failure of the new democracy here in Africa threatens to spread dictatorship even to my country. That might appear far-fetched, but it's a possibility. I'll do all I can to ensure that the new democracy is a success. We're fighting for the birth of a New World.

PIERRE: Even if this New World leads me, your father, to ruin?

CHRISTOPHER: There must be some people who pay for the birth of the New World.

PIERRE: A New World dominated by a new class of financial crooks!

ETEKI: Pierre, there's nothing you can do with these leftists. They're all stubborn. Even my wife is stubborn. And you Salimatu, are you with them?

SALIMATU: Yes.

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ETEKI: (*Turns to Yoro and Pierre*). You see, you can't use persuasion against leftists and their sympathisers. Only force can bring them back to right and reason.

*(To the inmates)*.

You'll remain in prison for a very long time. Your condition will worsen from now on. Yoro, Pierre, let's go and think over this situation at the Presidency.

*(Turning again to the inmates:)*

Ungrateful good-for-nothings!

*E n d*