FADE IN:

EXT. BOULEVARD - DAY

An infinite number of Africans line the roadway, back toward the city of Kinshasa, dancing and singing to a distant beat.

Standing on shingles, vehicles, and tree limbs, the most foolhardy perched on electrical poles. All eager for that one glance at aristocracy.

EXT. BOULEVARD - DAY

Heavily-armed soldiers riding in jeeps flank a convoy of jet-black limousines.

Soldiers hold back a hive of surging BLACK FACES and gnashing white teeth. Those breaching the road are hit with AK-47s.

EXT. BOULEVARD - DAY

A rent-a-crowd of traditional AFRICAN DANCERS, robed in colorful dashikis, play a motley of musical instruments.

BANDLEADER
Djalelo tu muakidilayi balowpe betu.
(turns, smiles at the musicians)
Milele na milele.

Emerging from the crowd is a life-sized placard of PRESIDENT MOBUTO held up by a MAN wearing a sandy-colored suit. He approaches the Band.

MAN
(waving the placard)
Lokuta monene.

The Band are caught off-guard, and stop singing.

MAN
Lokuta monene.
One after another from the encircling CROWD begin to chant.

CROWD
Lokuta monene. Lokuta monene.

MAN
(spits at the placard)
It is a big lie if you think this world will change.

The Man melts into the crowd, and the Band resumes playing.

EXT. BOULEVARD - DAY

A cavalry of Harley Davidson motorbikes come to a halt. Soldiers and undercover Operatives scan the anxious herd.

 Appearing more like an assassin’s weapon than a telephoto lens, a SOLDIER spots the intruder and raises the alarm.

The CAMERAMAN is tackled from behind by a burly OPERATIVE. SOLDIERS rush in, kicking the vulnerable Cameraman senseless. The crowd steps back in fear.

SOLDIER # 1
Who do you think you are?

A Soldier examines the device, while the others pin him down.

SOLDIER # 2
Botika ye.
(assertive)
Leave him now... eza camera eza camera.

Bloodied Cameraman composes himself. The Soldiers leave, except for one who continues to slap him across the face.

SOLDIER # 3
You are nothing but an animal.

EXT. BOULEVARD - DAY

Spanning several blocks, the contingent of VIPs wave from their presidential limousines.
An array of armed soldiers repel the frenzied mob.

Behind a bullet-proof Mercedes, the Bishop of Rome gestures divine guidance to his followers.

A stampede breaks through the cordon. Emergency Personnel attend the injured.

EXT. BOULEVARD - DAY

The sound of gunfire, and the crowd jolt. Onlookers yield to an overladen VW minibus as it stops at an intersection.

PASSENGER # 1
We must go...

Impatient PASSENGERS crouched on the roof of the minibus tumble to the ground, and run for their lives.

PASSENGER # 2
...no use, we are dead.

A flustered DRIVER turns the ignition over, but it won’t start. The rest spill out the doors and windows. The Driver kicks open the door and flees.

SOLDIER
(points)
Arrest those savages.

Soldiers move in on the melee, detaining the stragglers.

SOLDIER
Do not let them get away.

They strike the Passengers with fists and boots before dragging them beyond view of the fast approaching procession.

A Soldier blabs into his walkie-talkie. A tank breaks the cordon and trashes the minibus.

EXT. BOULEVARD - DAY

JORDAN SIMARO, mid 20s, handsome, tall, with athletic qualities, stands behind a group of well-dressed STUDENTS.
Limousines roll into view.

Jordan nods, and the Students turn and drop their pants and shirts, exposing backsides penned in white lettering to the converging entourage.

**INSERT: BOYCOTT BAD REGIMES. WHERE IS HUMANITY. HYPOCRITES. JUSTIFY YOUR INTEREST.**

**INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY**

DIGNITARIES chuckle. Their African CHAUFFEUR ignores the circus act. A PRESS SECRETARY snaps a shot from her camera.

**EXT. BOULEVARD - DAY**

Hapless Soldiers look on as a flat-bed truck ferrying foreign JOURNALISTS film the bizarre spectacle.

**INT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT**

Wooden tables and chairs litter a thatch-roofed tavern. A noisy CROWD watch as the day’s highlights unfold on a TV mounted behind the bar.

MASISI, mid 20s, balding, and overweight, beer in hand, joins his FRIENDS at the bar.

KEMBOLA

Your ass looks bigger than a baboons.

The clashing of bottles and glasses merge with loud cheers echoing out into the street.

**ON THE TV**

We see a group of semi-naked Protestors bending over to reveal a litany of content.
BACK TO SCENE

MOPEPE
At least I don’t have a face to match.

ON THE TV

A French reporter interviews a Minister.

MINISTER
...we regret this action which was meant to destroy our relationship with the world. We thank the Saint Pope for this historical event...

BACK TO SCENE

JORDAN
We succeeded in making our presence felt today.

MASISI
All you did was air out your stinky underwear.

KEMBOLA
He is right. Nothing will come of it.

MAMA FEZA, 60s, hair in braids, pale voodoo-face, hands over the beers to the athletic-looking trio.

KEMBOLA
(pulls out a wad of cash and pays her)
Only regret.

MOPEPE
If you are mocking Jordan than you are laughing at me.
MASISI
Homeboys from the same province. On the same team. You don’t understand how things work around here.

KEMBOLA
Where are you going with your studies? In this country it is not about who deserves it, but who is loyal to the Dictator and his friends.

JORDAN
Yes, I understand most graduates end up as domestics pushing trolleys.

MASISI
Those with no education are the ones getting the best jobs and opportunities.
(finishes off his bottle)
...with money, you can be happy. Have anything you want. Even a wife.

MOPEPE
Money won’t give us a university degree.
(takes a sip from his bottle.)
...takes love and dedication.

JORDAN
Thank you, brother. You have given me reason to fulfil that dream.

Jordan stands up to leave.

MOPEPE
Where are you going?

JORDAN
My final exams are coming up tomorrow. I need to study.

Mopepe gestures to Kembola to buy more drinks.
MOPEPE
Stay for another...

JORDAN
I see you at the game next week.

MOPEPE
(shakes his hand)
Take care.

KEMBOLA
Okay, let him go. We are going to have fun.
(yells as Jordan exits)
Stay with your books and don’t stress yourself with those useless theories.

Tavern Keeper plants beers on the bar.

KEMBOLA
(something catches his eye)
These celebrations won’t be complete unless I get laid.

MASISI
(follows Kembola’s gaze)
But you already have a woman.

KEMBOLA
If you are asking me why I need another woman.
(down his bottle)
Then go ask the King of Swaziland why he has thirty-three wives.

MOPEPE
(laughs, then slaps Kembola’s hand)
Man cannot feed the same woman banana everyday.

MAMY WENGE, young, tall and slender, with natural dark skin, charms every man’s whim as she ambles over to an empty table.
MOPEPE
(looks about)
Who is she waving at?

Masisi smiles and waves.

KEMBOLA
How do you know her?

MASISI
Her name is Mamy Wenge. We met sometime ago.

KEMBOLA
How come I don’t know her?

MOPEPE
Don’t you see? Masisi has something going on with her.

KEMBOLA
As a friend, why don’t you introduce her to us?

MASISI
Just because you are buying the drinks, you think every woman wants to bed you. (fondles the bottle)
She isn’t easy.

KEMBOLA
Are you saying, she has no interest in you?

MASISI
That is not true.

Masisi loosens his shirt button.

MASISI
She didn’t want to hurt me. So she said: I will think about it.

MOPEPE
Most women often make excuses. Means she may or may not be interested.
KEMBOLA
Why are we still here?
(stands)
Time for some action.

MASISI
Anyway, you will never have her.

Clientele watch in envy as the trio nudge toward her table.

MASISI
Hello, Mamy. Can we join you for a drink?

MAMY
(smiles at Masisi)
Come, sit with me.

MASISI
These are my friends: Mopepe and Kembola.
(plops beside her)
Long time no see. How has it been?

MAMY
(crosses her legs)
I am fine, thank you. How’s business?

MASISI
Everything is perfect.

Kembola snaps his fingers. Mama Feza takes his order.

MAMY
Are you still selling cars?

MASISI
Today, I made a good commission.

Mama Feza returns with a tray full of beers and glasses.

KEMBOLA
(gives Masisi a foul look)
Since business is so good, perhaps you can pay for this round of drinks.
MASISI
Unfortunately, my credit cards are not accepted here.

Kembola pays Mama Feza.

KEMBOLA
Oh, I see. And what kind do you have... American Express?

Masisi opens a bottle.

MAMY
(places her hand over the cap)
Leave mine for now, Masisi.
(to the others)
Excuse me, but I must powder my nose.

She giggles, as the clumsy trio grapple with her chair.

KEMBOLA
Now you are pretending to be me. What kind of voodoo-tricks are you playing here?

MASISI
Did you expect me to tell her the truth.

MOPEPE
There is no shame telling someone you repair motor cars.

MASISI
Nobody is interested in a grease monkey.

KEMBOLA
Listen to me. I have a plan.

Before Kembola can speak further, Mamy returns to the table.

MAMY
Tonight the stars are out. Life is wonderful.

Masisi cracks open a bottle and pours her a glass.
KEMBOLA
(flashes a smile)
Are you committed?

MAMY
Yes, I am hoping to marry my fiancée next month.
(takes a sip)
We have been together for seven-years.

MOPEPE
Why such a long delay?

MAMY
He lives in Canada.

Kembola grins.

MAMY
...for the last five-years it has been very intense, all the letters and phone calls.

MOPEPE
So you easily wait five-years to be with your man?

MAMY
Had I been born a bird or a witch, I would fly to him.

MOPEPE
It must frustrate you, all this waiting.

Mamy frowns, looks down at the table.

KEMBOLA
There are many African women who are in this situation.

MAMY
(licks her lips)
My only desire is to be with him.

Mama Feza collects the bottles.
KEMBOLA
(circles his finger for another round)
Five-years without a woman. He must be some kind of god.

They laugh.

MAMY
He said that he is committed to me.
(pours everyone a drink)
All I know is that I love him.

MOPEPE
Temptation from another man must be hard to resist when he is rich and handsome?

MAMY
(gazes at Mopepe)
Even though I come here to drink, I am not after any man.

Awkward silence between them.

KEMBOLA
Mopepe, please stay with the young lady.
(beckons Masisi)
Masisi...

MAMY
(studies Masisi’s face)
Where are you going?

Masisi shrugs.

KEMBOLA
We must go outside to discuss some private business.

EXT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

Soft music lingers through the calm night.

A teenage STREET-VENDOR drudges over a coal-fired grill.
KEMBOLA
I will die if I do not have her.

They chew on skewered meat.

MASISI
It is impossible. Many men have tried and failed.

KEMBOLA
You will also have a chance to bed her.

MASISI
Believe me, she is not a prostitute.

KEMBOLA
Tell me, which man can say no to a beautiful woman?
(shifts his glance)
First, we must make her drunk.

MASISI
But how? She drinks like a small fish.

KEMBOLA
Go back to the garage and get me some brake fluid.

MASISI
You have the keys. Why don’t you go?

KEMBOLA
Because it is my plan. Now go.

MASISI
Why must I always be your slave?

KEMBOLA
Just do it, mother-fucker, if you want to get pussy.

Kembola watches Masisi scurry off.

KEMBOLA
...and be quick about it.
INT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

MAMY
Jordan is the one studying medicine, and you are the gifted engineer.

MOPEPE
Not exactly. Basketball is my real passion. That is what I live for.

MAMY
(stands)
Can I buy you a drink?

MOPEPE
As long as it doesn’t break your budget.

She opens her purse, smiles, then sleeks over to the bar.

MOPEPE
(whispers to himself)
What a honey-pot.

EXT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

A shadowy figure approaches on foot. Kembola keeps watch.

MASISI
(sweaty and exhausted)
What use do you have for this?

KEMBOLA
Give it to me.
(looks at the label)
Go ask Mopepe and Mamy to join us.

INT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

Masisi barges in.

MOPEPE
Where is Kembola?
MASISI
Outside.
(looks around)
What happened to Mamy?

MOPEPE
Gone to buy drinks.

MASISI
Kembola wishes to talk to you.

MOPEPE
What about?

MASISI
Come, you will see.

EXT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

KEMBOLA
Enjoy my friend.
(gives Mopepe a meat skewer)
While the night is still young.

MASISI
Kembola has big plans for us to make love to Mamy. I will be the first, and you will be second.

Mopepe staggers toward him.

KEMBOLA
Fool! I told you to keep your mouth shut.

Masisi helps Mopepe sit on a plastic beer crate.

MOPEPE
How can you have sex without her blessing?

Mopepe steadies his head.

MOPEPE
That is rape.
KEMBOLA
No, no, you are not witnessing everything. Rape is when you force someone to sleep with you.

INT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT
Tavern Keeper serves Mamy. She returns, places the bottles down on a deserted table, looks about.
A MAN at a nearby table, points to an exit. She looks at her watch.

EXT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN

MASISI
People do these kind of things.
(takes another meat skewer from the Vendor)
Very often they are too drunk to even care.

KEMBOLA
Look at it as our little secret. I promise you, she won’t mind.

Mopepe looks on.

KEMBOLA
Wait one minute then fetch her.
(places his hand on Masisi’s face)
...be careful. Say nothing.

INT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT
Kembola mingles with the Crowd at the bar, looks across the smoke-filled room, and spots Masisi entering.
Mamy smiles, she opens the bottles and pours for one.

MASISI
Leave them for now. Everyone is waiting outside.
Masisi leads her out. Kembola moves past the clutter, sits at his table. He glances about, pours brake fluid into a bottle.

EXT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

Mamy nibbles away at the skewered meat.

MOPEPE
Are you fine?

MAMY
Of course. Why? Is something wrong?

MASISI
Don’t concern yourself. He has had too much to drink.

Kembola startles Mopepe.

MOPEPE
Where did you go?

KEMBOLA
To the men’s room.
(to Mamy)
Where is your drink?

MAMY
Sorry but no one said to bring them.

They watch her leave.

KEMBOLA
Aha, we have got her.

Masisi slaps him a high-five.

INT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

Mamy spots a tray and exits with the drinks.
EXT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

Masisi takes a big swig and burps.

MAMY
We must call your doctor friend sometime and go out.

Kembola sneaks a look as she pours herself a drink.

MOPEPE
Invitations to party are out of season for Jordan.

KEMBOLA
(gives Mopepe cash)
Get us some more beers.

MAMY
 Enough!
(checks her watch)
What woman feels safe walking the streets at this hour?

KEMBOLA
Please stay a little longer. Masisi can take you home.

Masisi falls on his face.

MOPEPE
Yes, very late. Better we cool off.

Mamy goes to his aid. Masisi stammers his words.

KEMBOLA
No, no, my friends. Please wake up.
(slaps Masisi’s face)
He is not drunk. Only tired from working all day.

Kembola and Mopepe sling Masisi’s arms over their shoulders.

MAMY
Men, you are all the same.
(eye’s narrow)
What are you looking at? Take him with you.
EXT. DIRT TRACK - NIGHT

Partly lit by the moon, monster-like shadows move along a bushy landscape. A dog barks in front of a mud hut.

MOPEPE
He weighs more than a baby elephant.

INT. MUD HUT - NIGHT

They set Masisi down on a straw mat beside his sleeping WIFE.

KEMBOLA
(whispers)
Sleep like a baby, idiot! You have cost me everything.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAR PARK - LATE AFTERNOON

PROFESSOR KAYEMBE, 50s, grey-cropped hair and goatee, looking resolute in an olive suit, checked shirt and mismatched tie.

FLAVIO, tall, bony, with youthful ebony features, attired in loose-fitting threads that clash against Jordan’s white suit.

JORDAN
Hello.

FLAVIO
Good to see you again, Professor.

The Professor places his briefcase in the boot.

PROFESSOR
Where is Mopepe?

JORDAN
No sign of him in class.

FLAVIO
I haven’t seen him all week.

PROFESSOR
Give him a moment to arrive. After all he is worthy of our respect.
INT. PEUGEOT - LATE AFTERNOON

The Professor at the wheel.

PROFESSOR
Doctor Mabasele is the Special Adviser to the President.
   (adjusts his mirror)
On most days he can be a reasonable man.

FLAVIO
Then politics is off limits.

Passing shanty towns blur across the passenger window.

PROFESSOR
Exactly.

Jordan turns and gives Flavio a dismayed look.

PROFESSOR
Purpose of our visit is to secure sponsorship dollars.

JORDAN
Earlier you said: he has the power to influence others.

PROFESSOR
Yes, but we must stick to the agenda. Not debate how the regime has squandered the nation’s mineral resources for their own benefit.

EXT. MANSION - LATE AFTERNOON

Armed SOLDIERS flag down the Peugeot arriving at the gates.

SOLDIER # 1
What is your business here?

PROFESSOR
(winds down his window)
I have made arrangements to see Doctor Mabasele.
SOLDIER # 1
(looks at his manifest)
Names?

Soldiers order them out of the vehicle while they search it.

SOLDIER # 1
(eyes off Jordan and Flavio)
You are not on this list.

PROFESSOR
He is expecting us. I am a former colleague of his from the University.

The Soldier steps away, and blabs into his walkie-talkie.

EXT. MANSION - LATER

SENTRIES keep watch as the Peugeot rolls past manicured gardens nestled along a private road.

Two GUARDS grab hold of gold-plated handles and swing open the wide mahogany doors. The intrepid trio enter.

INT. MILITARY COMPOUND - LATE AFTERNOON

Dismal lighting lay bare walls and floors spattered with blood and excrement.

A dozen decrepit souls wither away in a cramped prison cell.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Trembling and gagged, uttering pitiful whimpers, Kembola sits hog-tied to a stool.

A SOLDIER lashes his naked flesh with a chicotte.

COLONEL ZOMBA, mid 20s, wild-looking, conditioned by the luster of brutality, signals to the Soldier to stop.
ZOMBA
Equality in Black Africa is a myth.

Zomba unsheathes his knife and cuts Kembola’s muzzle.

ZOMBA
A man has been poisoned. And you are responsible.

KEMBOLA
I beg of you, please. It was an accident.

ZOMBA
Why should I believe you?

Zomba picks up the chicotte.

ZOMBA
The wife of a dead man does not ask for forgiveness.
(circles his prey)
She is asking for blood to be spilled.

Blood-red streaks run down Kembola’s back.

ZOMBA
Rule of authority must be obeyed.

INT. MANSION - LATE AFTERNOON

The Professor, Flavio and Jordan admire the opulent courtyard setting and pool.

A WAITER wheels over a beverage trolley, serves them juice and coffee.

DOCTOR MABASELE, paunchy, middle-aged conservative, dressed in satin robes, steps into view.

He gestures to his BODYGUARD to leave. The visitors rise to their feet.

DOCTOR
Well, well, isn’t this a pleasant surprise.
PROFESSOR
(gestures to the lavishness)
Who can resist all this?

DOCTOR
(chuckles)
These days I am too scared to weigh myself.

PROFESSOR
Over indulgence is a Western disease. We Africans pride ourselves on wellbeing and morals.

Doctor’s face registers the verity.

PROFESSOR
May I acquaint you with our team captain, Jordan Simaro.

DOCTOR
(shakes his hand)
So you are Congo’s finest?
(grasps Flavio’s hand)
And you must be the vice captain?

PROFESSOR
(coughs)
Acting vice captain.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

ZOMBA
These are serious charges. Who put you up to it?

MOPEPE
I don’t know what you are talking about.

ZOMBA
The protesters.

He grabs Mopepe by the throat.
ZOMBA
We have an informant who has testified against you.

MOPEPE
They are liars.

ZOMBA
(places a transcript on his desk)
In exchange for your freedom, you must sign this document charging Professor Kayembe with treason.

MOPEPE
Go to hell.

Zomba backhands him.

ZOMBA
Bastard! Who are you to defy me?

INT. MANSION - LATE AFTERNOON

PROFESSOR
Tomorrow night’s game is likely to be my last as coach.

Jordan and Flavio make faces at each other.

PROFESSOR
Preoccupations. This fine-line between conformity and juggling academic tasks.

MABASELE
On the phone you sounded optimistic. Why the gloom?

PROFESSOR
Consent to lecture at the University of Paris has been endorsed.

MABASELE
A tentative position of course.
PROFESSOR
  (nods)
My last request is that you take up chairmanship of the basketball team while I am away.

MABASELE
  Trust and mutual esteem is something one cannot buy.

Mabasele hugs him.

MABASELE
  Accepted with honor.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Zomba picks up a chicotte and machete from the desk.

ZOMBA
  These were the tools of our Oppressors. A cure for our sickness.

A subdued Mopepe stares ahead.

ZOMBA
  (gives his men a knowing look)
  It was not so long ago that we forget.

Soldiers force Mopepe’s hands out on the desk.

ZOMBA
  (regards him shrewdly)
  This is your choosing not mine.

The machete comes down hard. Mopepe blinks.

ZOMBA
  (beckons his men to release their grip)
  I see you have no fear of death.

Mopepe’s limbs are intact. Zomba frees the wedged blade.
ZOMBA
Everybody loves a champion.

Mopepe’s face tightens.

ZOMBA
Your captain, Jordan Simaro. Does he also have a death wish?

MOPEPE
He is innocent.

ZOMBA
This is not true. We have many signed confessions confirming his guilt.

MOPEPE
These are confessions made under torture.

INT. PEUGEOT - NIGHT

FLAVIO
Most politicians have one thing in common with whores.

Professor turns the wheel.

PROFESSOR
And what may I ask is that?

FLAVIO
They don’t care who they screw.

JORDAN
Be kind to our new benefactor, Flavio.

EXT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Convulsive moans emit from the walls. Two smirking Soldiers stand to attention outside the doorway.
INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Mamy’s skirt hitched up to the thigh; exposed breasts bounce in unbridled rhythm as she arches her back in a rush of ecstasy. Zomba riding her like a wild beast.

EXT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

ZOMBA (O.C.)
You are free to go.

Door opens. Mamy adjusts her skirt. Zomba falls in behind.

ZOMBA
Report here once a week for the next three-weeks. By then the necessary travel documents should be in order.

Soldiers compete for her attention.

ZOMBA
Bring him to me.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

ZOMBA
(holds out a pen)
Have you made a decision?

MOPEPE
Swear it on the grave of your ancestors.

ZOMBA
No harm will come to him. You have my word.

Mopepe signs, throws the pen on the desk.

MOPEPE
Then it is done.

ZOMBA
Good! Now you are my property.
INT. PEUGEOT - NIGHT

Professor pulls up by the road. A light glows from a passageway near concrete dwellings. Jordan opens the car door.

    PROFESSOR
    Here, before I forget. Give this money to Mopepe.
        (passes him an envelope)
    Tell him, he sits on the bench.

    JORDAN
    Don’t joke with me, Professor. Without him there can be no victory.

Professor smiles.

EXT. CONCRETE DWELLINGS.

Jordan fumbles with the key to his room. Muffled voices catch his attention. He finds the LANDLADY’S door ajar.

    JORDAN
    Mama Lopango.
        (pushes open the door)
    Do you have a moment?

A knife wielding BANDIT lunges at him. He slams the door on the intruder’s hand. The knife falls to the ground.

    LOPANGO (O.C.)
    Let go of me.

    JORDAN
    (kicks open the door)
    What is happening here?

The Bandit spits out profanity, before brushing past him.

    LOPANGO
    A thief who does not pay his rent.

    JORDAN
    (picks up the knife)
    Are you okay?
LOPANGO
(hugs him)
One minute more and...

JORDAN
Is there someone I can call?

LOPANGO
No, I am a widow.

JORDAN
Anytime you need me...
(kisses her forehead)
Thank you for allowing me to wear these clothes.

LOPANGO
Keep them. My son is in the military. I know he would be grateful for your kindness.

INT. MUD HUT - AFTERNOON

ASSYNA SIMARO, late 40s, soft sisterly face, dressed in a sari that shrouds her obesity.

ASSYNA
(shoos off kids stealing food from her kitchen)
Mutoke mweye batoto amuna eshima.

INT. SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

School desks piled to one side of a small classroom.

A TEACHER, 50s, bright, alert eyes, gray hair lines along his temples, stands by the door and collects the admission fee.

TEACHER
Always you come with excuses.

A TEENAGER, wearing oversized clothes, hands over crumpled notes.
TEACHER
Instead of five Francs, you give me two Francs.

(smiles as Assyna enters)
Do you think I urinate petrol to run this generator?

Assyna balances a full basket of sweet cassava on her head.

TEENAGER
What about her?

TEACHER
I cannot take money from the mother of Goma’s favorite son.

(hands him a ticket)
This is why we are here today.

TEENAGERS and MEN jam chairs in front of a small TV. Wires lead out of an open window to a noisy generator.

INT. BASKETBALL STADIUM - AFTERNOON

A FILM CREW set up their equipment near the sideline. FANS and SUPPORTERS clamber toward the balcony.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER

The TEAM look relaxed and euphoric.

PROFESSOR
He’s not coming.

Jordan pulls on his number six jersey.

JORDAN
(laces up his trainers)
This is not like him.

PROFESSOR
(looks at his watch)
We don’t have much time.
INT. BASKETBALL STADIUM - LATER

Lead by Jordan, the University Team jostle amongst themselves as they make their entrance from the tunnel.

FEMALE FANS
yelelelelelele... yelelelelelele...

Flavio throws a chest pass to a Team Player who whips around to his right and shoots.

MILITARY BAND strikes up a chord.

INT. SCHOOL - LATER

ON THE TV

Flavio dribbles across center court, lobs it high.

Jordan charges toward the backboard, leaps, catches the ball in midair before slam dunking it into the hoop.

BACK TO SCENE

Screams of joy as overzealous fans jump on their chairs.

TEACHER
Please, stop this nonsense.
Celebrate, but do not break my chairs.

MAN
We are very sorry.
(looks about)
The match has not started yet.
(points to a Teenager)
This one is making too much noise.

TEACHER
If you continue, I will chase you out. Then you can go and hear the game on your battery radio.
INT. BASKETBALL STADIUM - LATER

Mopepe spearheads the MILITARY TEAM into the arena. He bounces the ball across court with a brave look on his face.

MILITARY SUPPORTERS
Boma ye boma ye boma ye.

Professor motions to Jordan in a vague defensive gesture.

JORDAN
Has he gone mad?

Mopepe, wearing the number five jersey, snubs provoking glances from his former Teammates.

PROFESSOR
The people’s enemy have created a Devil.

FLAVIO
I prefer to die than let them win.

Colonel Zomba struts the court like he owns it.

ZOMBA
Better you die on the field than lose.

(off Flavio’s look)
I like it.

The Professor calls his team into a huddle.

PROFESSOR
(to Jordan)
Go with your heart.

(to the Team)
Make yourselves proud. Win this for me.

FLAVIO
Play close defense. Pressure their weak points.

INT. BASKETBALL STADIUM - LATER

REFEREE, 40s, tall, lean, with missing front teeth, dressed in cotton white shorts and top. An imitation gold chain and whistle dangle from his neck.
ZOMBA
Take their Defenders out of position.

Referee blows his whistle.

ZOMBA
(to Mopepe)
You hold the key.
(mops his eyebrow)
Guard him with your life.

Teams break their huddle.

Mopepe and Jordan at center court for the tip-off.

INT. SCHOOL - LATER

Viewers’ faces are glued to the screen.

TEENAGER
Go with him. Wear him down.
(claws his cheeks)
Run... throw him the ball.

TEACHER
You!
(turns up the volume)
Do you want to disappear?

INT. BASKETBALL STADIUM - LATER

Referee signals an illegal dribble.

BUKATIDO, a gentle giant, polished shaved head, riveted to the floor like a tree, steadies and shoots.

The ball banks off the backboard, rattles the rim and rolls off. The Crowd gasp.

JORDAN
(shakes his head)
Not good enough.

Opposing Team win the rebound. Players sprint back across the center-line.

ZOMBA
(checks the scoreboard)
Go my tigers.

Mopepe sneaks past a Defender, intercepts the ball and scores an uncontested goal.
Boos and cheers boom from the crowd.

PROFESSOR
You have less than forty-seconds on the clock.

A flurry of movement before a Defender drops the ball in low to Flavio.

PROFESSOR
(motions his players to move back)
Create an opening.

Flavio’s closely guarded. He spins clockwise, searches, can’t pass. Referee signals a three-second violation.

INT. BASKETBALL STADIUM - LATER
Mopepe makes contact with Flavio, and falls.

FLAVIO
Son of a dog.

Referee calls a foul.

MOPEPE
(to the Referee)
He tripped me.

The Crowd boo the decision.

JORDAN
What is wrong with you?

Mopepe shoulders him.

MOPEPE
(mumbles)
I hate this game.

JORDAN
...put your mind at ease, brother.

MOPEPE
(leers at him)
Forget about me.

Mopepe shoots for goal as the siren sounds.

INT. SCHOOL - LATER
The screen goes blank. Everyone gives a frustrated sigh.
TEACHER
Let me have a look.

EXT. SCHOOL - LATER
Expectant Teenagers watch from an open window as the Teacher pours fuel into a tank, then pulls the starter cord.

INT. BASKETBALL STADIUM - LATER
The Players spill onto the court.
Bukatido and Mopepe jump for the tip-off.

PROFESSOR
Shut him down. Do not give him space.

Players rummage for the ball. Flavio takes possession, outruns his Opponent, leaps and throws.
The ball falls a metre short of the hoop. Jordan doubles back, snatches up the ball and rams it into the basket.

ZOMBA
Prove to me you are warriors.

Defensive Guard fumbles the ball. Jordan steals it back. Mopepe pressures him. Jordan sets up a shot and scores.
He follows up with a victory salute to the Crowd.

FANS
Jordan, Jordan, Jordan.

Unnerved by the Crowd, Zomba slaps a CAMERAMAN filming him.

ZOMBA
Stay out of my way.

Referee blows his whistle. The Teams huddle.

ZOMBA
I cannot be humiliated on national television. Do you hear me?

Restless Players listen in silence.

ZOMBA
Sacrifices are to be made. Or you answer to me. Understand?

Crowd rejoice.
KAYEMBE
Without success the torment of life
is meaningless. We have trained
hard for this day.
(off their ardent looks)
Go out there and punish them.

INT. BASKETBALL STADIUM - LATER
Offense Defender throws to a Team Player on wing.
Mopepe throws up a shot and scores.
Flavio dribbles the ball wide, spins, and heads across court.

PROFESSOR
Pick up the pace.

Roused by Supporters, Jordan and Mopepe go head-to-head.
Bukatido cuts back to the basket, thwarts a shot for goal.
Opposition Players cluster around the ball.
Ball’s flung wide. Jordan seizes it, throws from inside the
three-point line, and delivers.
Mopepe elbows him.

JORDAN
Is this the way you want the game
to end?

Mopepe levies a fleeting glance at Zomba.

MOPEPE
I have a debt to pay.

Crowd teeter on the edge of hysterics.

JORDAN
Don’t abandon your friends.

Corner Guards cut back to the key. Jordan slips in behind
Mopepe, takes a pass, pivots, and shoots for goal.

JORDAN
Unless you have morals, you yield
to a tyrant.

A Player barrels down court. Jordan’s forced to guard Mopepe.

MOPEPE
What reason must I give you?

Mopepe receives a pass, then backs in on Jordan.
Whistle blows, the Referee awards Mopepe the ball.

JORDAN
Hold up your beliefs for the world to see.

Flavio contests the Referee’s decision.

MOPEPE
Someday we may learn from our mistakes.

Teams jostle each other.

JORDAN
Take back what is yours.

Mopepe looks confused.

JORDAN
Your self-respect.

The Referee halts play.

Zomba senses trouble, runs his fingers across his throat.

Soldiers pull the plug on all media coverage. There’s uproar.

Zomba nervously fingers his weapon, flicks open the holster.

ZOMBA
Level the score, and I ask for extra time.

The Crowd fall silent.

MOPEPE
(takes a deep breath)
God... forgive me...

Ball’s in flight. It recoils off the rim.

ZOMBA
Can you believe this shit!

Referee blows his whistle: GAME OVER. The crowd roars.

Mopepe looks on, as Jordan and his Team celebrate the win.

ZOMBA
(draws his weapon)
This is how you repay me?

Jordan’s expression changes.

Mopepe notes the fear in his former teammate’s eyes, and a language that makes no sense.
MOPEPE
(risks a grin)
Brothers of Africa... never stop dreaming.

Zomba takes aim and fires.

Mopepe crashes to the floor like a controlled demolition.

FADE OUT.