



RED IS THE ROYAL BLOOD

A 3 act Play

By

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2nd version with the Ballet

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Characters

Garcia	The artist
Alvaro II	The King
BEATRIZ	The Princess
BERNARDO	The King's brother
Dona Zabela	King's mother
Joao	Justice civil servant
Pedro	Foreign affairs civil servant
Ne-Nsaku	Commander-in-chief of the army
Ndungidi	The King's shaman
Simao	First notable

Other notables, messengers, guards, peasants, and his two children, dancers (male and female), Ne-Nsaku's favourite wife.

Prologue

Before the opening, men and women are singing a traditional song.

When the curtain rises, women and men dressed in multi-colored linen form a circle and dance. It is the courtyard, and in the middle stands a young man who plays the drum.

An older man enters using walking sticks on the stage.

STORYTELLER: We are in the middle of the sixteenth century in the ancient Kingdom of Kongo. At the heart of the political edifice of the Kingdom is the capital, the centre of all activity. The site offers the double advantage of a central position and excellent natural defense against enemy attacks. Violence, however, remains the privilege of a multi-faceted sovereign: one brutal and oppressive, the other justice-loving and conciliatory.

BALLET I

Around the representative of Nzambi, a Mpungu Tulendo (is this a person on stage or a representation of this influential figure?) are men dressed in multi-colored linen-covered up to their hips and women covered up to their breasts. They are dancing and in the middle is a gentleman who plays the drum.

STORYTELLER: The country was born in violence. Down through the successive reigns, power has always been taken by force. Force has remained a fundamental value. Its miracles are attributed to the existence of Nzambi a Mpungu Tulendo, who

delegated his power to a shaman, who is the protector of women, men, and children. The country's conflicts resembled civil wars and are noted in several old accounts. They resulted not only from power rivalry but also from economic competition, which was intense in a region where Negro slave trade found its outlet and where centuries of exchange with European slave traders were established. Vita Ntu, Ka Mabundu; war was the business of the chiefs, not the subjects.

Men and women dance in the frantic sounds of drums and traditional songs like in the beginning.

STORYTELLER: Then King ALVARO II arrives. The Kingdom is at its political summit. ALVARO II is the King. Yes, a King who rules with equity and impartiality. Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo is the supreme god for all in the Kingdom and what it represents. *(Pause)* He's an intermediary between men and the spirits of the ancestors, which use Nkisi to cure people. *(Pause)* When an individual encounters hardship and fears, it means the spirit has breached him, then it is necessary to consult a diviner, the Nganga, who often instructs the afflicted. He adds medicines to certain Nkisi to achieve well-being.

Men and women dance to the frantic sounds of drums and traditional songs like in the beginning.

STORYTELLER: ALVARO II, the King, allows his subjects to participate in decision-making using contradictory debate. A comprehensive system of civil servants supports the activities of the royal court. And the most fearsome is Ne-Nsaku. He makes life a misery for villagers using extortion, bribery, and assassinations. The fact a sculptor loves the Princess

does not interest the commander-in-chief of the army. Garcia is his sworn enemy because he wants to marry princess Beatriz, the woman whom he loves. However, the official reason is: "Royal blood cannot be mixed." But don't forget one thing: "Red is the royal blood."

Men and women dance in the fierce sounds of drums and traditional songs.

STORYTELLER: Can you hear the power of the sound of the drum? The drums, symbols of royalty and power, guarantee vigor and fecundity of kings and political leaders' very existence—and give out the word of war. This time, it is not about the war, but a typical rejoice of the Kingdom's subjects who want to please the King.

BALLET II

Around objects representative, Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo, men dressed in multi-coloured linen-covered up to their hips, and women covered up to their breasts carry out a dance. In the middle is the gentleman who plays the drum.

ACT I

Scene 1

Sculptor's Workshop. Different traditional objects are displayed on the wall. GARCIA, the sculptor, dresses in plain linen fixed securely around the waist, and he's finishing the sculpture of the Princess's face. The Princess BEATRIZ is well adorned and dressed in a long multi-coloured tunic extending from her neck to ankle.

GARCIA: Woman? Or shall I call you wife? Today, I am shaping your face, which will be admired from generation to generation as proof of my infinite love.

BEATRIZ: I will be your wife from eternity to eternity.

GARCIA: How will your father react if he finds out about it? Could you convince him?

BEATRIZ: My father is an understanding man, and I know how he acts and reacts well. The King, my father, wants my happiness, and the only predictable antagonists will be his Notables. They are very conservative, and I am their Princess, which means breaking taboos and tradition if I marry a sculptor.

GARCIA: That is why I am wondering about those conservative men who only know one word: "*Tradition.*"

BEATRIZ: I know we will face strong opposition, but we must not stop. Prejudices and chattering of the Kingdom will never separate us.

GARCIA: The power and strength of our love will break all those who want to hinder it.

BEATRIZ: My father, his Notables, and his civil servants will come and visit your workshop in two weeks. Show him my

likeness. I am sure my sculpture will please him. Then, do not hesitate; express to him your feelings about me.

GARCIA: Under no circumstances shall I allow people to destroy this love because it has been increased by what we have been through together.

GARCIA finishes the sculpture and hands the sculpture to the Princess.

BEATRIZ: What excellent work!

The Princess puts the sculpture on the floor and embraces GARCIA.

BEATRIZ: It's splendid! I have never received such a gift in my life before. I will do everything to take my sculpture to the royal palace. My father will admire it night and day, and the spirits of my ancestors will lead my mother to come to contemplate this wonderful sculpture, the like of which she has never been seen before.

GARCIA holds the Princess by the right hand.

GARCIA: Now, go back. You know that at this time, you must stay with your Grandmother and help her with specific tasks.

Scene 2

Royal Palace. In every corner are wooden Kongo sculptures made with nails representing "Nkisi Nkondi" or the power figure, the dwelling place of an ancestral spirit used by Kongo divinity. Behind the King, a Kongo Ivory trumpet with a carving of a Royal figure is hung. King ALVARO II sits on a

well-adorned throne. He dressed in a long multi-coloured tunic that covers him from neck to ankle. Near him sits his brother, the prince BERNARDO, who dresses in a long tunic but is very different from the King one. On either side of the throne sit Notables.

ALVARO II: Gentlemen, I welcome you. Some time ago, our Kingdom knew a troubled period. We lost our valuable civil servants during the war against our neighbours. The reason for your presence here is the confirmation of your appointment. *(After a pause)* JOAO.

JOAO stands.

ALVARO II: *(continues)* Today, you shall have Justice's responsibility in the Kingdom. You will judge and condemn culprits and acquit innocents with proof and evidence. Be righteous and equitable. Are you ready to be committed?

JOAO: Yes, your Majesty. I am.

ALVARO II : Ne-Nsaku !

Ne-Nsaku stands

ALVARO II: *(continues)* I appoint you commander-in-chief of the army. Your job would be to avoid all future rebel incursions in our land. Are you able to take this new responsibility to the point of sacrificing your own life?

NE-NSAKU: Yes, your Majesty. I am, and I promise to be faithful to your Majesty and in the Kingdom.

ALVARO II: Pedro!

PEDRO stands.

ALVARO II: (*continues*) I appoint you to be responsible for Foreign Affairs. Are you ready to respect the code of good neighbours and be respectful to our guests?

PEDRO: Yes, your Majesty. I am.

ALVARO II: (*takes his sword and put it on the shoulder of each*)
On the fourteenth day of May 1455, I declare you civil servants.

Scene 3

Forest of FISIMA. There is some palm wine in calabashes where the traditional manufacture occurs. Peasant's children, a boy, and his beautiful daughter are on the stage, boiling another traditional alcohol drink.

PEASANT: (*to his children*) Make sure it is boiling correctly. I don't want people to die because of my alcohol.

PEASANT'S SON: Are you afraid of going to prison?

PEASANT: To prison? Not at all. I fear the death penalty.

PEASANT'S SON: Death penalty?

PEASANT: Yes, it's.

PEASANT'S DAUGHTER: Ah! Ah! Ah! You are talking about Ne-Nsaku, the new commander-in-chief of the army?

PEASANT Oh! Yes. Don't laugh. He is bad news, and I have never seen an evil man like him in my life.

PEASANT'S SON: Can you hear that? People are coming here.

PEASANT: Yes. Oh my God! Speaking of the devil!

Enter Ne-Nsaku and his favourite men.

NE-NSAKU (*arrogantly*) Peasant! (*Laughing*) Are you surprised?

PEASANT No. Not really, honourable notable.

NE-NSAKU Commander-in-chief, please! My men have informed me that you have not yet paid your tax for your protection.

PEASANT: My Lord! I do not have money now.

This year, the palm tree and canes did not make good wine.

Next month, I shall pay twice as much as usual.

NE-NSAKU: (*roars with laughter and to his men*) Have you heard that? Tell peasant how much Nzimbu someone who failed in the payment owes to the army commander-in-chief next time?

NE-NSAKU'S MAN: Four.

NE-NSAKU: Good. Have you heard that, peasant?

PEASANT: Yes, my Lord. I...

NE-NSAKU: (*Looks at the girl*) We shall retain her as a hostage.

PEASANT: No, my lords. Pity!

NE-NSAKU: Tell me, peasant. Is she betrothed to someone?

PEASANT: Yes, my Lord. She is betrothed to Kiabelua's son.

NE-NSAKU Kiabelua's son? This mugger? (*To his men*)

Take the girl away.

PEASANT Have mercy on me, my Lord. She has been accommodating since her mother passed away.

One of Ne-Nsaku's men goes towards the girl and holds her.

PEASANT: (*kneels*) Spare my daughter, my Lord; I shall pay four times.

NE-NSAKU: Good. (*Makes small steps*) Release her.

Exit Ne-Nsaku and his men.

Scene 4

Royal Palace. ALVARO II, BERNARDO, DONA ZABELA, and the Princess BEATRIZ sit on the floor, dressed in a long tunic extending from the neck to ankle with decoration at the hem. A similar piece of cloth extends across the chest. They are assisting in a traditional rite performance by NDUNGIDI, the shaman, who dresses in raffia. He holds a wand and casts a magical spell.

NDUNGIDI: Get out from here! Let Nzambi a Mpungu Tulendo protects the one who reigns among us with justice and fairness. Get out from here, evil spirits that bring darkness. Let Nzambi a Mpungu Tulendo protect our King and his family. (*He walks back to the King and kneels.*) Majesty, you are the greatest King on earth. Your Kingdom is the largest, most powerful, and beautiful in Africa. You take care of your subjects. You treat them with kindness. When you give a feast for the principal men of the capital who come to visit you from everywhere, you regale them magnificently with the best millet bread, much meat, and Muamba in abundance. Our ancestors sent me to grant you force and strength to rule this Kingdom. Your reign will last for years and years. No evil spirits will be able to destroy you. Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo will protect you. The great way is not men's work; the manner of death is Nzambi a Mpungu Tulendo, who made it. Nobody can give you death. Only Nzambi, a Mpungu Tulendo, can do that.

ALVARO II: Ndungi, you've all my confidence. From generation to generation, your family has been loyal to my family. In misfortune or happiness, they have always been near our family. Our gods bless you too.

NDUNGIDI: Your Majesty! Nzambi a Mpungu Tulendo sees all and rules all. He has given us basic laws and traditions that

derive all their power from the beginning age. It was his law and his absolute wisdom that underlies the oaths and rituals of loyalty.

BERNARDO: We can't go against his wishes, shaman Ndungi. We owe him reverence and respect.

NDUNGIDI: Majesty! This morning, some of the notable of yours will try to oppose your desire, but Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo will always be with you.

ALVARO II: Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo deserves our devotion. *(To DONA ZABELA and BEATRIZ)* Ladies, Notable's Council will soon begin.

Exit DONA ZABELA and BEATRIZ.

Scene 5

Morning time. Tom-tom sounds to announce the commencement of the elders' council. Enter PEDRO, JOAO, some notables, and civil servants council. NE-NSAKU is the last to enter. The Notables are dressed in coloured loincloths, which cover them from hip to feet. Some minutes later, the King re-enters with two guards. JOAO claps his hands.

JOAO: Gentleman, the King ALVARO II. All stand.

NDUNGIDI holds a statue, moves slowly to the King's throne, and starts incantations.

NDUNGIDI: Oh, Majesty! The Master of the Universe! You are the protector of our Kingdom against evil forces. You are the protector of our children and our women. Without you, no life exists. We are here to honour your greatness. You provide the light and the rain, which sprinkle our harvest. Be blessed by

our gods and our ancestors. We are here to glorify you. We are...

NE-NSAKU: Oh, Ndungidi! You, shut up and stop this humbug.

NDUNGIDI: Humbug? What are you talking about?

NE-NSAKU: I am talking about you, humbug. Majesty does not need your flattery. Do you forget your role? You are here to predict the future and especially to tell us when our enemies will attack us. Of course, *you* have only bad omens, and we have to glorify only his name.

NDUNGIDI: Does your rank of a dignitary give you the right to defy the ancestors and the established order?

NE-NSAKU: Established order? Established order? I am neither defying ancestors nor the established order. Do you want to cast a spell on me? Who was the last person you put a bit on? Ah! I remember now. Matondo's husband. *(Pause)* Why? That is because you desired his woman. Very funny. Poor little man! Now he cannot walk anymore. Nor can he perform in the marital bed.

Notables amused by this. Ndungidi turns on them.

NDUNGIDI: Sacrilege! There is the natural power of nature, which is sacred. The force of domination which is political and potent comes from our ancestors and tradition. The second is derived from the third, and this leads to a permanent order. Transforming these powers just for innovation will lead to disorder. Honourable Ne-Nsaku has to respect the hierarchy.

NE-NSAKU: Philosophy! Philosophy! Always philosophy!

NDUNGIDI: Insane person.

NE-NSAKU: No. I am not insane. You are insane.

NDUNGIDI: How dare you insult the protector of all spirits? Tell us about your concubines. To carry out some superstition,

one of them sacrificed her baby. Do you remember? She strangled him and buried the body in the Nkenge's field. She thought this act would increase her fertility. It's ridiculous. Isn't it?

THE CHORUS: This is ridiculous. This is ridiculous.

NDUNGIDI: You came and asked me for help. I gave you idols to protect you, your concubines, your family, and your house. Shall I continue?

NE-NSAKU: Rubbish. I did not do such a thing.

NDUNGIDI: Rubbish? I know many secrets in this Kingdom.

ALL NOTABLES: Oh! Oh! Oh!

NDUNGIDI: No one can challenge me.

PEDRO: Have you no shame, you two? It is a dishonour of you to wrangle in front of his Majesty. Today is the tenth anniversary since her Royal Highness passed away. We accept the duty to honour her memory. *(To his Majesty)* Your Majesty! Forgive us for this misunderstanding.

ALVARO II: Our concern Today is to seal our bond with the Mani Soyo. Nevertheless, our spies tell us the chief of Mani Soyo is trying to help the rebellion.

PEDRO: What can we do, Majesty?

NDUNGIDI: *(raises his wand in his right hand, a statue on the left, and steps toward notables)* Have we lost faith in our gods?

NE-NSAKU: Always wand and statue in your hand. What do you think to do with that? I command the armed forces of this Kingdom, and our soldiers are sufficiently equipped to fight any army.

BERNARDO: Silence! What is the matter with you two Today? What kind of rivalry is this? We should be discussing the current problem, and we should look to the interest of the Kingdom. Your arguments are beyond pathetic.

PEDRO: Majesty! We are sorry about this argument.

ALVARO II: *Dear compatriots, Today is the tenth anniversary of the death of her royal highness. We cannot forget her because she did many good works in the country. But, Today, we have another priority which means there is no official ceremony for the queen. The situation is dire. Rebels threaten our Kingdom. Their swords are more powerful than ours. I accept that times are insensitive, but quarrels between us will destroy the Kingdom. We have to extend our Sovereignty and our territorial area of influence, annexing rebellious provinces. We are and remain the powerful Kingdom in Africa. The villagers have to contribute and make some effort. Now!* (To Ne-Nsaku, the commander in chief of the army) *Can you explain your plan?*

NE-NSAKU: *(stands and carries the map)* Thank you very much, your Majesty. I will recruit all males between the ages of fourteen and forty.

ALVARO II: Honourable Ne-Nsaku. Fourteen years old?

JOAO: Your Majesty! Shall I suggest sixteen years old?

ALVARO II: What is your suggestion, BERNARDO?

BERNARDO: Sixteen years old? It is a reasonable age. I agree with the honourable JOAO.

ALVARO II: Pedro?

PEDRO: Sixteen, as the honourable Joao said.

ALVARO II: Honourable Ne-Nsaku! Go on.

NE-NSAKU: At the moment, a smaller corps of heavy infantry will be necessary. I will require soldiers to hold two weeks' worth of food upon reporting for campaign duty.

(Produces the map) We will take the position from the North to South and West to East. We will defeat them. We must encircle enemies on all corners.

PEDRO Is that all?

NE-NSAKU What do you mean?

PEDRO: You know very well what I am talking about. Your plan is unclear, and we understand your position. You will attack from North to South, West to East. However, you do not tell us how you would proceed.

JOAO: We need a coherent plan; otherwise...

NE-NSAKU: (*interrupting*) I know their position. To raise support against our enemies, we have to make concessions to others. One of the important concessions is to ally with the Duke of Kimpanzu and Mbwila.

PEDRO: Are you sure?

NE-NSAKU: Yes, of course. We have to stick with my plan if we don't want the Kingdom to fall into the hands of Soyo and its allies.

Notables murmur.

ALVARO II: Alright. (*To Ne-Nsaku*) I hope that your plan will work; otherwise, we will be all reduced to slavery. Dispatch a spy to go and find out what is happening on our borders. Send our emissary to make contact with our future allies. Your plan has to be explained in depth.

NE-NSAKU: Yes, your Majesty. I will go at once. (*To notables and elders*) Next week, we will initiate the second period of slashing-and-burning fields in Mpyaza. It will be the beginning of the thirteenth month. Everyone knows this date is marked by the death of Mbenza, the initiator of our painting workshop. Every year we make this visit to appreciate the talent of our artists.

Exit King ALVARO II and prince BERNARDO. ALL notables bow their heads and then kneel.)

Scene 6

GARCIA's Arts workshop. Various sculptural objects are displayed. Enter the King ALVARO II, BERNARDO, BEATRIZ, PEDRO, NE-NSAKU, JOAO and some notables. While admiring the works sculpted by GARCIA, they pick up Princess BEATRIZ's sculpture and approach it.

ALL NOTABLES: *(all notables stunned, except Ne-Nsaku) Oh! Oh! Oh!*

BERNARDO: What beautiful work!

ALVARO II: *(caresses the face of the sculpture)* It is, indeed. *(To the Princess)* My daughter! Have you seen the way you have been honoured by Garcia?

BEATRIZ: Yes, father. It's so wonderful.

Ne-Nsaku Looks at the Princess with dissatisfaction.

ALVARO II: Garcia, your sculpture displays a rare sense of emotion and beauty. This is something magical and wonderful. Everything is sacred. In my lifetime, I have never thought work of arts could be splendid like that. It seems like establishing a paradise in the Nsundi Kingdom.

GARCIA: Your Majesty. It's an honour for me that Majesty recognizes the value of my work. I am an artist, and I work with wood and clay, but only artistic eyes like Majesty can understand the beauty of the work. A sculptor can see his dream becoming a reality in his art.

As an artist, the sculpture is not only work but also the conservation of the tradition of whom his Majesty is the

guardian. (*Kneeling*) Your Majesty, you gave me the freedom to realise my art. I am thankful to you.

ALVARO II: No. Stand up, GARCIA. I have to thank you because you are furthering the greatness of our Kingdom. People can die. Generations can overtake, but your art can never be destroyed. The glory of our Kingdom will be sung; tales will be told from generation to generation. Artist, tell me. How can I reward you for this? What gift can I give you?

GARCIA: Majesty, your appreciation is the best thing I got from you. An artist does not need material gifts but the recognition of his work.

ALVARO II: GARCIA. I appreciate your art, and I must reward you, and this will be proof of my gratitude. If I did not reward, how can I convince myself that I appreciated your work?

GARCIA: Majesty, I cannot answer you. It's a huge dilemma for me. My inspiration has come from his Majesty, and it's only Majesty who can grant me. [*Pause*] Majesty! If I ask you something precious, will you give it to me?

ALVARO II: I will give you anything you want, GARCIA.

GARCIA: Majesty, I am smitten.

ALVARO II: (*Laughs*) Are you, GARCIA? Tell me, who's this woman? Since I am your King, I can give you whatever you want. Who's she? My guard will be ready to bring her to you now.

GARCIA: Majesty! I would devote all my soul and my body to her. I have never stopped loving her.

ALVARO II: Tell me, who is she?

GARCIA: Princess BEATRIZ, your daughter, is the one, I...

Princess BEATRIZ, astonished, has no word to say.

NE-NSAKU: (*interrupting*) Sacrilege! Blasphemy! Profanity! This is an offense against your Majesty. He deserves the death sentence for this, Majesty.

BEATRIZ: Death sentence? Did you say a death sentence? Are you serious? Who are you to pronounce a death sentence? Why does a man in love deserve this kind of penalty?

NE-NSAKU: You are a mere girl and, as such, have no right to speak in front of the elders and notables of the Kingdom.

BEATRIZ: Mere girl? A girl who can provide seed, do all those things that a woman can carry out at home, and satisfy a husband, still a mere girl? I ceased to be a small girl a long time ago, and I am now a woman. The choice belongs to me and I alone.

NE-NSAKU: Do you know why your Grandmother, Dona Zabela does not come here? Because she knows that her place is not among men.

BEATRIZ: Do you usually ask questions and give answers yourself at the same time? Are you a god for taking decisions in the stead of others? My Grandmother? My Grandmother, however, belongs to the old class, who believes women have no rights.

BERNARDO: Ne--Nsaku! Can you leave my niece to express her opinion on this matter?

NE-NSAKU: Your Royal Highness, with all due respect, the rules concerning the silence of women in front of men are strict. Garcia deserves a death sentence.

BERNARDO: Who are you to pronounce a death sentence?

NE-NSAKU: Then his heart has to be pulled away. Consequently, he will cease loving a princess with pure blood.

ALL NOTABLES: Oh! Oh! What a sacrilege!

GARCIA: Death sentence? Majesty said he could give me whatever I ask. Does someone deserve a death sentence because his heart decides to feel love for someone?

NE-NSAKU: Shut up Garcia. Do you suppose you own the world because you are a good artist?

GARCIA: I wonder, you appreciate my art, but...

NE-NSAKU: That's insane. And...

BERNARDO: Notable Ne-Nsaku. It would be best to avoid confrontation all-time with others; otherwise, you will be everyone's enemy.
NE-NSAKU: What are you talking about?

BERNARDO: Don't you remember your last confrontation? Ndungidi did not appreciate your words.

GARCIA: Do you know why the mouth is first to rot after death? Because it talks a lot of nonsense.

NE-NSAKU: Garcia, you should turn your tongue a thousand times before speaking, and it will be better for everybody.

ALVARO II: *(interrupting)* Enough. *(To GARCIA)* I heard your demand. A decision will be taken in the next council session.

GARCIA: Majesty...

ALVARO II: Notable? I said a decision would be taken in the next council session, and I have spoken.

GARCIA: Yes, Majesty. Your decisions are incontestable.

ALVARO II: Good. A decision will be made. You will be notified as soon as possible.

NE-NSAKU: Majesty, Lions, and sheep will never drink water from the same pond.

ALVARO II: Notable! Keep your expression for yourself. Council will decide. Either GARCIA will be or not authorized to marry Princess BEATRIZ.

GARCIA *(kneeling bows)* Thank you, your Majesty.

ALVARO II Now, it is time to let GARCIA continue his extraordinary work.

Exit the King, notables, and guards.

Scene 7

Forest of Loango. GARCIA and the Princess sit on a branch of a tree.

BEATRIZ: I am praying to Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo day and night. I am asking him to withdraw any notable resistance.

GARCIA: What can we do if there is one?

BEATRIZ: We shall fight. We shall fight till the end of my life. Nobody, not my father, my uncle, my Grandmother, nor the Notables, will be able to take away what I feel for you. I want our meeting not to be secret anymore.

GARCIA: My love for you will remain endless. I shall live with this love to my tomb. You are my love, and you will be forever.

BEATRIZ: You are kind and honest.

They hear Something moving.

BEATRIZ: Did you hear that noise?

GARCIA: Yes. What was it?

BEATRIZ: It was bizarre. It was as if someone was spying on us.

GARCIA: Do you think...

BEATRIZ: I do not know. We have to go now. This forest is full of rebels and evil spirits.

GARCIA: Then, we shall leave. Besides, it will soon be nightfall.

They exit.

BALLET III

Around objects representative, Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo, men dressed in multi-colored linen covered up to their hips, and women covered up to their breasts carry out a dance. In the middle is the gentleman who plays the drum.

ACT II

Scene 1

Ne-Nsaku's house. All walls are adorned with animal skins expressing his talent as a hunter. He sits on a well-decorated chair. His wife enters, kneels, and puts down a bowl full of wild bean and maize.

NE-NSAKU: Good. A woman must look after her husband in this way.

NE-NSAKU FAVOURITE WIFE: I am your wife, and I must satisfy all wishes of my dear husband.

NE-NSAKU: Matondo, you are my favourite. I am so proud of you. You differ from my other spouses.

Enter Ne-Nsaku's man. He's out of breath. Ne-Nsaku slams his hands down, and his wife exits.

NE-NSAKU : Speak. What happened?

A MAN: I have seen the Princess together with Garcia in the forest.

NE-NSAKU: Sacrilege! The notables have not made their decision yet!

NE-NSAKU: What were they doing?

A MAN: Talking. *(Raises his tone)* Talking? Good Lord! What is this?

A MAN: I was not sure.

NE-NSAKU: *(embarrassed)*. I have to find Something to confuse the King.

A MAN: Oh! Yes. I remember. They were doing foolish things.

NE-NSAKU: That is much better.

Scene 2

Royal Palace. Same set. Late night. The King sits with his mother.

ALVARO II: Mother, during our visit to the workshop of arts, Garcia, the artist, expressed to me his wish to marry BEATRIZ as a reward for the work he had done.

DONA ZABELA: What was your answer?

ALVARO II: The Notables' council has to make a decision. If they say "yes," he will marry my daughter, and if not, I shall not be able to do anything for him.

DONA ZABELA: My son, you are the King, the protector of our usages. You can decide without consulting the notables, and it is about the life of your daughter.

ALVARO II: Mother. I am, of course, the guardian of our usages, but a guardian of uses must also listen to his subjects.

At the same time, between the Alvaro II and Ne-Nsaku. Exit the queen's mother.

ALVARO II: Take your place, notable.

Ne-Nsaku sits.

ALVARO II: What brings you here so late? It's one o'clock. Something of the utmost importance?

NE-NSAKU: It is regarding GARCIA and the Princess. They were together.

ALVARO II: So?

NE-NSAKU: In the forest, your Majesty.

ALVARO II: Continue b...

NE-NSAKU: (*interrupting*) ... misbehaving.

ALVARO II: How?

NE-NSAKU: I mean doing foolish things, your Majesty.

ALVARO II: Like what, notable?

NE-NSAKU: What the law prohibits. I mean - fornication.

ALVARO II: Are you sure of your accusations? Are they Serious?

NE-NSAKU: Yes, your Majesty.

ALVARO II: What do you want, Ne-Nsaku?

NE-NSAKU: Notables have to delay their decision about Garcia.

ALVARO II: Have you seen it with your own eyes?

NE-NSAKU: No, Majesty. I mean...

ALVARO II: I want witnesses. Come back to me when you have one. Good night, notable.

Scene 3

Royal Palace. King **ALVARO II** sits in his ornate chair. Enter **BEATRIZ**.

BEATRIZ: Good afternoon, father. Your servant said you wanted to see me.

ALVARO II: Yes, indeed.

BEATRIZ: It is late now. Is it anything significant, and which cannot wait until tomorrow?

ALVARO II: Yes, my daughter. It is about you and the artist. People have seen you alone with him in the forest. What were you doing in there?

BEATRIZ: (*disappointed*) Do you mean your people spy on me?

ALVARO II: No. I am your father. I must care for my child.

BEATRIZ: Believe me, father. I will not dishonour you. I am not a foolish girl.

ALVARO II: You are the princess. You have to be careful.

BEATRIZ: I am a virgin, and I shall remain until the day of my marriage. Listen to your own heart and not to people's speculations. Do not you trust in me?

ALVARO II: I do, my daughter.

BEATRIZ: I have to go and meet my Grandmother. We shall go to Nkenge.

ALVARO II: Then, hurry and rush to your Grandmother.

Scene 4

Royal Court. Same set as the Royal Palace. The royal throne is the middle backstage. Some notables and elders stand on the corner of the council room.

NE-NSAKU: Have you ever heard of such a thing?

(Ironic) An artist wants to marry the Princess. Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! In addition, we have to give a ruling on this case. Yes. We will provide it with a verdict. How can we mix blood? Sacrilege! Do you want to accept things like that?

NOTABLES: Oh no! We can't let it happen.

NE-NSAKU: We have to fight for the nobility. We must stop this kind of insanity.

NOTABLES: Yes, we have. This is unacceptable.

Enter King ALVARO. Ne-Nsaku people stop talking.

JOAO: Gentleman, the King ALVARO II.

Everybody approaches.

JOAO: All kneel!

ALVARO II sits. Near him, King sits **BERNARDO**, the prince. All notables, elders and civil servants, and Ndungi take place.

ALVARO II: Notables, elders, and wise men of the Kingdom, a week ago, we promised to answer Garcia's concerns about his request to marry the Princess. During this business, our judgment must be just and without prejudice. We must be fair and forget our differences. I open this to the audience and ask prince Bernardo to make a statement on the situation.

King ALVARO II beckons prince BERNARDO approaches him and whispers in his ear.

BERNARDO: Guards, go and fetch GARCIA.

Guards enter with GARCIA.

BERNARDO: (*stands*) As Majesty has just said, we must rule on a case. This case is not difficult, but it is complex. It is the first time our Kingdom will rule on a case like this. What is it about? As a gift, a subject of a different class wants to marry a princess. I know that during this debate, the opinions will be contradictory. However, I want everyone to be guided by his heart. Whatever the grievance you have against GARCIA, I ask you to be objective. JOAO, the assembly wants to hear you now. (*He sits*)

JOAO: (*stands*) Majesty, your royal highness, notables, and constituent members of the assembly of the provinces. After having admired the extraordinary beauty of our artist, Garcia, the King decided to ask him to propose the

gift he wished. Garcia has expressed to our Majesty his love of Princess BEATRIZ. However, our wise Majesty promised to him to await the decision of the council. I believe that he deserves to obtain an answer, which is appropriate for him. Be it positive or negative; the reasons will have to be explained to him. In the name of the wise and the notables, I have spoken. *(He sits)*

BERNARDO: *(stands)* Ne-Nsaku, the council wants to hear you.

NE-NSAKU: *(stands)* Your Majesty, your royal highness, Notables. Let us not let this man deride our traditions. As I said before, it is an offense to fall in love with a virgin princess, and it is ridiculous, impossible, absurd, incredible, and insane. Royal blood cannot be mixed with common blood. And you...

PEDRO: *(interrupting)* Why not? Red is the royal blood.

NE-NSAKU: Yes, but it is sacred.

THE CHORUS: Oh! Oh! Oh!

NE-NSAKU: Do you want to allow this artist to taint royal blood? We cannot amend the customary law.

PEDRO: Honourable Ne-Nsaku. You have never accepted the established order. Why now?

JOAO: Honourable Ne- Nsaku! May I remind you of the origins of the Kingdom of Kongo? In the beginning, the highest position was occupied by the profession of ironwork. All those who worked with iron and paint came from the nobility. They are the founders of our Kingdom.

NE-NSAKU: Are you giving me...?

ALVARO II: Enough! This place is not for disputes. Everyone should express his thoughts. However, as it has been said, the controversy has no place here. Today, we must decide as I had promised the artist. *(To JOAO)* Go ahead.

JOAO: Tonight, we will answer two questions: do an artist and Blacksmith have the right to marry a princess? If yes, should we abolish our tradition relating to the matter? Do we have the right to condemn someone to death simply because he fell in love with a princess? Notables, wise men of laws of the Kingdom, I appeal to your integrity of judgment. Another should influence nobody. Everyone is free to express thoughts. After this discussion, we shall proceed to a secret vote. Notables and sages of the Kingdom, on behalf of the King, my father, I have spoken.

NE-NSAKU: (*stands*) Your Majesty, your Royal Highness, notables, and elders. As I said earlier, a man of inferior social class can never marry a princess. This type of union will have a long-term effect and cause misfortune to our Kingdom. Indeed, many elders and sages are in agreement with me on this point.

JOAO: Notable, only speak for yourself. Do not talk about what others may think. We will have the patience to listen to everyone.

NE-NSAKU: My apology, your Royal Highness. (*To the notables*) We should not just say yes because it is expedient. Since saying yes will lead us not only to abolish our tradition regarding the mixture of blood, but the modification of all of our sacred things. These traditions were established generations ago. It will take several years to replace them. Should we apply pardon to a person who has violated our sacred law and principles? Honourable notables! The marriage between the humble and the sacred is prohibited by our tradition.

PEDRO: Tradition is not law, honourable Ne-Nsaku.

NE-NSAKU: No, indeed. However, honourable Foreign Affairs civil servant has to know that our traditions remain sacrosanct. On them are based our whole existence. Do you ...?

PEDRO: Are you trying to lecture me?

NE-NSAKU: No. Not at all, honourable PEDRO. I am trying to give you the true definition of our traditions.

PEDRO: Traditions remain traditions. There is only one definition of tradition, and this differs from the law.

A NOTABLE: (*stands and interrupts*) Since these discussions began, I never spoke. However, I heard you talk to each other. All of you, you know about a mother's womb. Can we imagine what a pain this mother will have when she hears that her son was executed because he loves a woman? And believe me, notables and the elders of the Kingdom, none of you as fathers, will accept that his son suffers such a fate. Sending this man to death will be a bigger sin than the Kingdom has ever committed. This case is too complex to discuss because any wrong decision would be like a lethal weapon to all young inhabitants of the Kingdom. On behalf of all the King, notables, and elders, I have spoken.

NE-NSAKU: The question is not whether this man came from the womb of a woman or not. We should not regard him as a victim. The law is for everyone. If we cannot condemn him because he fell in love with the Princess, we must condemn him for disrespecting his Majesty. Our rules are clear about that. For me, he deserves to be sentenced to death. By the names of notable and elders, I have spoken.

SIMAO: We are facing a great dilemma that our Kingdom has never experienced before. If we condemn this man, we will have the youth revolting. If we offer compassion, there will be excesses. All young people will take it as an example of leniency. So what can we do now? Let each of us decide according to his soul and conscience. Executing this man will make him a martyr. Acquitting this man is giving a signal that there is leniency in this Kingdom. I believe that life imprisonment would be a better option for everyone.

A NOTABLE: Who is the woman who accepts that the name of an outdated law sacrifices her son? Think carefully because the life of a human being depends on it. Notables and elders of the Kingdom, this man deserves neither death nor prison. Love comes from the heart.

SIMAO: A fault as such deserves punishment. Yes, discipline, but a sentence other than death. The sentencing to life imprisonment would be a good solution because he will likely become a martyr if we condemn him to death.

NE-NSAKU: Such a fault does deserve punishment. Yes, sentence, no other but death. This man has just trampled on ancestral traditions. Not only did he express his wish to marry our Princess, but he did not wait for the decision of the Notables before making things.

CHORUS: Which thing?

NE-NSAKU: He had sexual relations with the Princess.

THE CHORUS: Oh! Oh! Oh! It is abominable.

JOAO: Have you witnessed Notables?

NE-NSAKU: Yes.

JOAO: Good. We have heard each speak on behalf of the King. Before taking any decision, either acquit him, sentence him to life imprisonment or death, we have to listen to witnesses. Where are your witnesses Notable?

NE-NSAKU: Yes. I have two witnesses.

JOAO: Let's call the first witness.

Enter the first witness.

JOAO: Witness. What exactly have you seen?

WITNESS #1: I have seen the artist with the Princess in the forest.

JOAO: What were you doing in the forest?

WITNESS #1: I went to check my palm wine.

JOAO: What were they doing?

WITNESS #1: They were doing bad things.

JOAO: Let the second witness enter.

The second witness enters.

JOAO: What have you seen?

WITNESS #2: I saw the same thing as the first witness.

JOAO: How do you know what the first witness said?

THE CHORUS: Oh! Oh! Oh!

JOAO: Notable; your witnesses are not credible.

NE-NSAKU: (*stands*) How is that?

JOAO: Notables. We had heard both witnesses, but we have some doubt as to their credibility. For this reason, we have decided to proceed with a vote knowing that neutrality, in this case, will strengthen one camp against the other. Take a moment for reflection. When you return, everyone will express his decision by a vote. That is why we must make a wise decision conscientiously, regardless of the outcome.

BALLET IV

Around objects representative, Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo, men dressed in multi-coloured linen-covered up to their hips, and women covered up to their breasts carry out a dance. In the middle is the gentleman who plays the drum.

Scene 5

Enter King ALVARO II, the prince BERNARDO, and some Elders.
The BERNARDO claps hands to stop dancers.

ALVARO II: Thank you very much. Go back now to your positions.

A guard enters with GARCIA.

JOAO: Well! The council starts again. Each of you will find four small sticks in front of him. The red one symbolizes the death sentence, and the black symbolizes life imprisonment. The blue is a sign of a total acquittal, and the yellow means neutrality. At the signal, everyone will raise the stick of his choice, which should be done without looking at each other. Let everybody express his vote!

Notable, and elders raise their small stick. The counting of votes begins.

JOAO: Four Reds, one Black, one Yellow, and three Blues.

JOAO Looks toward the King.

JOAO: *(sighs)* It is the death sentence.

Some notables murmur.

THE CHORUS: Nonsense. Nonsense.

ALVARO II: Silence. The people have spoken. We must respect their will. Garcia will be put to death. *(To the guard)* Lock him in the prison while waiting for the day of his execution.

ALVARO II: Garcia, do you want to say Something before going to prison?

GARCIA: Yes, Majesty. Your Majesty!

Why Have I been brought here to be the judge as a thief? Your Majesty said to me I could ask for whatever I wanted. Why should I be shackled thus?

ALVARO II: Notable, and elders have found that your demand was too excessive. The majority had decided this.

GARCIA: This is the notable's judgment, Majesty. What is really in your heart, your Majesty? Is it an offense, fall in love with the Princess?

ALVARO II: I don't want a fantastic artist like you to die. It's not yet too late. If you agree that you will never see princess BEATRIZ again, your life will be spared.

GARCIA: How can I say that, Majesty? How can I say that a firefly is not attracted to moonlight? How can I say that a bee can survive without a flower? I can never give up my heart's desire. No, Majesty. I can never betray my heart.

NE-NSAKU: Artist, you have disregarded the royal traditions.

GARCIA: Commander in chief. Could you send your son to death because he has publicly expressed his love? You can't. You can't because you have done all this to defend your interests. Buying the voices of others to achieve your ends.

NE-NSAKU: Blasphemy! How dare you... Can you stop him?

BERNARDO: We can't stop him, Ne-Nsaku. This man is facing the death sentence. He has the right to express what is in his heart.

GARCIA: Blasphemy? No. Are you hiding Something?

NE-NSAKU: Shut up! You forget your status.

GARCIA: Your Majesty! I have not defied the

traditions. I have not committed any offense. Princess BEATRIZ overwhelms my mind. I am an ordinary artist who loves the Princess. Love does not recognize classes and differences.

NE-NSAKU: Shut up impudent man.

ALVARO II: Stop it Ne-Nsaku. Let him express all his thoughts.

GARCIA: I admitted in this court that I love the Princess. That is no reason to be sentenced to death. What kind of Justice is this, your Majesty? I am being silenced. Should I not speak the truth? My feelings are hushed. Can't you hear someone's heartbeat?

NE-NSAKU: Artist, you will be punished for your impudence.

GARCIA: What difference can it make? Alive or dead, I won't renounce my conviction. Royal rules have always slain true love! However, love has always been acclaimed! And despite all the powers, royalty has not been able to wipe out love. Notable and elders, your power cannot wipe out my passion.

NE-NSAKU: Notable, and an elder's power can wipe you out of existence. Majesty, this man has to be executed before the sunset.

GARCIA: Why? Are you worrying about Something? Love is a feeling that cannot be explained. Can you understand that?

NE-NSAKU: Love? Are you talking about love? Do you...?

ALVARO II: Enough! This man will be executed when I order it. Guards! Put him in chains.

Exit the King and all notables, except Ne-Nsaku and his fellows.

NE-NSAKU: The King is losing all reason. His state of mind is not normal. He is becoming fragile and making compromises with criminals.

NOTABLES: Yes. That's true.

NE-NSAKU: Are we going to let it destroy our Kingdom?

NOTABLES: Oh no!

NE-NSAKU: We have to take things in hand. We must overthrow him because one day, our Kingdom will fall into the hands of the enemy.

NOTABLES: Yes. We have to overthrow him.

SIMAO: My friend, if someone denounces us, we shall go straight to exile.

NE-NSAKU: Exile? Do you know how many provinces are supporting our action? We had the support of more than five provinces. The dukes of this province also pointed out the weakness of the King. If there is somebody who must go into exile, it is Alvaro II.

SIMAO: It is suicidal.

NE-NSAKU: Suicidal? All right. Who is with me?

Everybody raises his hands, except SIMAO.

NE-NSAKU: Who is against me?

Nobody raises hands.

NOTABLES: We all are with you.

NE-NSAKU: As I can see, notable Simao is neither for me nor against me. Never mind. I promise you; you will all be my men of trust. No decision should be taken without your consent.

A NOTABLE: What is the plan?

NE-NSAKU: We need Soyo's help. We will send one of us to contact their Duke. We need a volunteer. Simao, can you carry out this mission?

SIMAO: No. I can't accept that. Can you choose another person? I am sure many here can accomplish this mission.

NE-NSAKU: All right. Who wants to be a volunteer?

Many notables raise their hands.

NE-NSAKU: Thank you very much for your loyalty.
(Points his hand to one of them.) Notable, thank you. You are a loyal person, and I am sure you will carry out a successful mission. I will tell you about the next meeting next time.

Scene 6

King's Palace. ALVARO II sits in an ornate chair, and two guards stand on his side. Enter DONA ZABELA, the Queen Mother. Exit Guards.

DONA ZABELA: Is Something troubling you, my son?
You are so sad. I've never seen my son so depressed since the Queen Clementina passed away.

ALVARO II: I am not depressed, mother.

DONA ZABELA: Yes, you are. Do I need to remind you that you were in my womb for nine months? So, I know every movement, every mood of yours more than anyone else. I always knew when you were lying, although your father didn't. Your father always asked me how I knew you were lying. I told him it was a woman thing. One day when in the company of other notable children, the King's musician said, you destroyed part of his patio. When I asked you, you said you didn't. However, you could not look me in the eye. I told you, my son, you are lying to me. You asked me, how did I know? I told you, every

mother knows when her children are lying. Now, tell me, what is going on? Is it about Garcia's death sentence?

ALVARO II: Yes, mother. I could not take this kind of decision against Garcia, and the death sentence against someone who has declared his love publicly is unfair and unreasonable.

DONA ZABELA: You are the King, my son. You can change this decision.

ALVARO II: Oh, mother! I can't. I can't change a council decision.

DONA ZABELA: Council knows you are the King of Nsundi, and you can make a decision you want without their consent. Are you afraid of Ne-Nsaku's reaction?

ALVARO II: No mother. Ne-Nsaku wasn't the only one who applied for the death sentence. I have to respect the decision of the council. GARCIA is a good and brave young man, but he made a big mistake. Our tradition does not allow behaviour like that.

DONA ZABELA: Yes, you are the King, and you can reconsider the notables' decision. Garcia does not deserve the death penalty.

Enter princess BEATRIZ.

BEATRIZ: Death sentence? So that's why you forbid every woman the right to attend the council? Father! Why did you take this decision? Why did you sentence GARCIA to death? Was this your own decision, or did Ne-Nsaku influence the decision?

ALVARO II: No, my daughter. Remember, my daughter, our council decisions have not always been unanimous, but a majority decision. Anything that has been done is for your good.

BEATRIZ: How can they know what is good or bad for me? What about you? You are not only the King, but you are also the guardian of the Kingdom's law and traditions. You know what is right and what is wrong. How could you accept a decision like that? If you were not a king, would you accept your son to be executed because he has fallen in love?

ALVARO II: You are a princess, my daughter.

BEATRIZ: I know, I am a Nsundi's Princess, but I am also a woman. Why do you need notables to take this kind of decision?

ALVARO II: I can't take an important decision like this without having the consent of the notables' council.

BEATRIZ: Notables' council? Your court does not even allow the defendant to defend himself.

I am sure that all witnesses provided by the Notable Ne-Nsaku had been bribed. What sort of Justice is this?

ALVARO II: This is about your protection.

BEATRIZ: My protection? How can you protect me against the innocent man? Father, this man does not deserve death, and he only expressed what was in his heart. This is not a sin as I know it. If you want to protect me, you would better protect me from Ne-Nsaku.

ALVARO II: I am protecting the people of this Kingdom. I also have the right to protect you.

BEATRIZ: Nonsense.

DONA ZABELA: Don't speak like that to your father.

BEATRIZ: Some minutes ago, I thought you were against the council's decision. However, I think you're really on their side.

DONA ZABELA: No. Not at all. I am on the side of the truth, and I can't accept someone's death simply because he's fallen in love with a princess. However, it would help to speak to your father in a reasonable tone whatever the fault committed.

BEATRIZ: My father knows Ne-Nsaku has a considerable influence among the notables. He can persuade anyone to do what he wants. He became a powerful commander in chief of the army because you gave him all privileges. In conclusion, everyone is afraid of him. Why can't my father understand he's able to corrupt everybody?

ALVARO II: How do you know that?

BEATRIZ: People talk, you know?

ALVARO II: My beloved daughter, are you in love?

BEATRIZ: Will my answer make you change the council decision?

ALVARO II: No, my daughter. I have faith in my notables' decisions.

BEATRIZ: I am not talking about the Notables. I am talking about Ne-Nsaku.

Enter a messenger.

MESSENGER: Majesty, several people are talking about the existence of a conspiracy to kidnap princess Makaya.

ALVARO II: Who wants to kidnap the princess Makaya?

MESSENGER: (*halting*)... Majesty! Rumors have it that it is one of your notables.

ALVARO II: Do you know the name of this notable?

MESSENGER: ...no Majesty.

ALVARO II: Messenger! The King cannot reign with presumptions. I need proof before the court decides on this case.

MESSENGER: There is Something else, your Majesty.

ALVARO II: What is it?

MESSENGER: There is another conspiracy aiming to assassinate his Majesty.

ALVARO II: *(Laugh)* If it is true, why was I not informed?

MESSENGER: I have been sent by some notables to inform his Majesty.

ALVARO II: Good. I shall decide later if the notables and elders will be able to meet me. But once again, I can't alert the council of notables because of making a noise.

Exit the messenger.

BERNARDO: Majesty, you could perhaps consider what the messenger has just said. There is no smoke without fire.

ALVARO II: We will need to reflect before answering. Be wary of chattering, my brother.

Enter a prison guard, out of breath. He bows. ALVARO II, the King puts his hand to his head.

ALVARO II: Guard! What happened?

ALVARO II slaps his hands, DONA ZABELA and the Princess BEATRIZ exit.

ALVARO II: Speak guard.

GUARD: Your Majesty. It's not me, and a group of insurgents wants to kill the artist.

ALVARO II: Garcia?

GUARD: Yes, Majesty. Fortunately, all prison guards stopped them.

ALVARO II: How many people died?

GUARD: No one, your Majesty.

ALVARO II: Oh my God! What is going on here?

JOAO enters. ALVARO II slaps his hands. Exit the guard.

ALVARO II: (to JOAO) Go and tell all notables about an urgent council meeting held at the royal palace tomorrow before sunset.

Exit JOAO.

Scene 7

Royal Court. ALVARO II sits on his throne, in the middle back. BERNARDO sits on his right and JOAO on the left. Enter NE-NSAKU, PEDRO, NDUNGI, and all notables. They sit downstage left and right.

ALVARO II: Notables and elders. Yesterday, a group of people tried to kill GARCIA in his cell.

NE-NSAKU: Kill? GARCIA is a convict who is awaiting death. Majesty, his life is no longer important.

ALVARO II: Fortunately, their plan has failed. The death sentence will only be executed thirty days from the day the decision had been taken. This will allow us to listen to some testimonies of specific facts that have not been clarified.

NE-NSAKU: Clarified?

BERNARDO: Would you never learn to listen to his Majesty?

ALVARO II: The assailants, who wanted to commit this act, have a supporter. We do not know yet who he is, but we will find out soon.

NE-NSAKU: Supporter? This is ridiculous.

ALVARO II: Guards. Take Ne-Nsaku one is out of breath.

Two guards drag Ne-Nsaku out. Another prison guard enters, and he is out of breath. The assembly is stunned.

ALVARO II: Guard! What is the problem?

GUARD: Your Majesty, the prisoner escaped.

NE-NSAKU is off the guards and comes back.

NE-NSAKU: Garcia escaped!

He makes some footsteps in the middle of the council room.

NE-NSAKU: I knew this would happen, and it is the result of your cowardice. Those who wanted to kill him thought only to accelerate the procedure.

JOAO: Incorrigible. We would like to know who is behind all of this. If he escaped, it could also be your fault.

NE-NSAKU: My fault! When the crops fail, it is Ne-Nsaku. When somebody has a problem, it is Ne-Nsaku's fault. Of course, I'm not Agriculture or Social minister, and I am the commander in chief of the army.

ALVARO II whispers to JOAO.

JOAO: The Council is suspended. We have just learned the lifeless body of the notable Simao was found in the woods. (*Emotion and stupor among the notables.*)

JOAO: Let Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo keep his soul. We will meet again in seven days.

All notables exit. JOAO and BERNARDO stay.

BERNARDO: He's strange.

ALVARO II: Bernardo, it is your responsibility to organise Simao's funeral.

BERNARDO: Yes, your Majesty.

ALVARO II: Joao. Notables' council has to know what happened. And keep an eye on Ne-Nsaku.

JOAO: Yes, Everything will be done, your Majesty.

Scene 8

King's Palace. ALVARO II sits near the Princess BEATRIZ enters and bows in front of the King.

ALVARO II: *(to the Princess)* What is going on?

BEATRIZ: My father. I have Something to tell you. Father, please listen to me. It's of the highest importance for the future of the Kingdom.

ALVARO II: If you say so.

BEATRIZ: I have heard everything that was said in the elders' council.

ALVARO II: I have no doubt, my daughter. I know you very well.

BEATRIZ: I spoke with many people who told me that Ne-Nsaku was the instigator of the conspiracy. I also have evidence that he has bribed other notables to obtain the death sentence of Garcia because he was so jealous.

ALVARO II: Who are those people?

BEATRIZ: Villagers. They are farmers who have had enough of being robbed by Ne-Nsaku's men. Those brave people are suffering, and they are paying a lot of taxes.

ALVARO II: Will they come to testify to the council of elders?

BEATRIZ: I think they feared reprisal, but some of them would like to speak personally to you.

ALVARO II: I believe you, my daughter.

PEDRO: I always knew Ne-Nsaku was hiding Something. It was strange the zeal he used to obtain GARCIA's death sentence. We were fooled.

ALVARO II: We have not been fooled, but we did have confidence in one of our notables. I want to see all elders and notables now. We have discussed this matter. (*To the Princess*) Thank you very much, my daughter. Go to your Grandmother. She has Something to explain to you.

Exit BEATRIZ. Sounds of the drum, call the elders, and notables for the meeting. ALVARO II, BERNARDO, and JOAO talk by mimicking. After some minutes, PEDRO and some dignitaries and elders enter one by one. NE-NSAKU is the last one to join. All notables look toward him.

NDUNGIDI: O King! The dispenser of the wisdom of the ancestors! We are here to listen to your advice. You always tell the truth. With you, injustice does not exist.

NE-NSAKU: Okay! Okay!

JOAO: (*stands*) Everyone knows now the way you intimidate people.

NE-NSAKU: I don't know what you are talking about.

PEDRO: About your tricks.

BERNARDO: Today's meeting is your concern.

NE-NSAKU: The person who is supposed to be judged in absentia is Garcia, that is because he escaped from the royal prison.

ALVARO II: JOAO! Read for us the list of crimes of the accused.

JOAO goes towards the table near the King and takes the register. He walks towards the middle of the notables.

JOAO: On this date of March fifteen hundred Thirty-Nine, the royal court of Nsundi has noted the following abuses committed by the notable Ne-Nsaku, commander in chief of the army. First of all, to reinforce his wealth, Ne-Nsaku did charge the farmers excessive taxes.

NE-NSAKU: Rubbish.

JOAO: Secondly, the notable Simao has died in mysterious circumstances and the court thinks that you are the number one suspect.

NE-NSAKU: Simple presumption. You have no evidence.

JOAO: Everything is in order. Thirdly, to satisfy his selfishness, Ne-Nsaku has bribed certain notables so that they vote for the death of the artist GARCIA and so eliminate his rival.

NE-NSAKU: Rival? Whose rival?

JOAO: Did you not love Princess BEATRIZ secretly? Four; Ne-Nsaku sent our fighters to their deaths in the front line.

NE-NSAKU: Your Majesty, I protest. This text is entirely ridiculous.

NE-NSUDI: Ridiculous? It is the only word you have in your mouth.

NE-NSAKU: You don't have any evidence.

JOAO: Enter the first witness.

Enter the guard with the FARMER #1

NE-NSAKU: Farmers! Nonsense.

JOAO: *(to the first farmer)* Do you know this man?

FARMER #1: Yes, my Lord.

JOAO: The court wants to hear your evidence.

FARMER #1 hesitates.

NE-NSUDI: Speak farmer. Do not fear. You are under royal protection.

FARMER #1 Ne-Nsaku's men took more than two thousand Nzimbu shells, which I had saved.

JOAO: The second witness, please!

Guard enters with the second witness.

JOAO: *(points hand to Ne-Nsaku direction)* Do you know this man?

FARMER #2: Yes, my Lord.

JOAO: Go ahead.

FARMER #2: His men have killed my daughter's fiancé because Lord Ne-Nsaku wanted her.

NE-NSAKU: Ridiculous. How dare you farmers say this?

JOAO: Call the third farmer.

Enter the guard with the third witness.

FARMER #3: He destroyed all my season's harvest because I refused to join the assailants who planned to murder Garcia.

JOAO: Garcia, you can enter now.

The King beckons JOAO in.

NE-NSAKU: I protest most strongly, your Majesty.

JOAO: Garcia, the court wants to hear your explanation.

GARCIA: Your Majesty, your royal highness, notables, and court members. I can prove the notable Ne-Nsaku used flawed evidence to obtain my death sentence. As he secretly loved Princess BEATRIZ, he wanted me to be killed, and it was the only way for him to satisfy his desire.

NE-NSAKU: What do you mean? What are you talking about?

GARCIA: Notable Mwanza is an eyewitness to his tricks. He refused to be corrupted, so Ne-Nsaku threatened to kill him. He revealed his plan.

JOAO: Garcia, by the name of king Alvaro II and the court, accepts our apologies.

ALVARO II: Approach Garcia.

GARCIA approaches the King.

ALVARO II: In a few days, the royal family will set up the day of your engagement to Princess BEATRIZ.

NE-NSAKU: Blasphemy! This Kingdom is going against traditions.

NDUNGI: This is your end, Ne-Nsaku. You are a finished man.

NE-NSAKU: Shut up, charlatan.

ALVARO II; Guards! Take Ne-Nsaku away. *(To Ne-Nsaku)* It is the beginning of exile.

Two Guards take him away.

ALVARO II: Pedro! Send somebody to bring new clothes for Garcia. *(To GARCIA)* There is a lady who is waiting for you in the Royal room.

A servant enters with clothes.

GARCIA: Thank you, your Majesty.

ALVARO II: Servant! Take Garcia to the Princess.

GARCIA and the servant exit.

BALLET V

Around objects representative, Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo, men dressed in multi-colored linen-covered up to the hips, and women covered up to the breast carry out a dance. In the middle is the gentleman who plays the drum.

ACT III

Scene 1

In the dark, the sounds of the drum announce an urgent situation, Women and children scream, and the sound of rebel violas and trumpets is heard.

Royal Palace. When the curtains rise, the King, the prince, and the justice minister sit in their respective places. They mime. Enter the messenger. He kneels at the front of the King.

ALVARO II: Messenger! What is it about?

MESSENGER: *(still kneels)* Ne-Nsaku and the Mani Soyo troops attack our Kingdom.

ALVARO II: Where are they? Can you be more explicit?

MESSENGER: They are on the Kingdom border. Three thousand warriors armed with bows and arrows surround us. They are naked to the waist and painted with white and various coloured paints. Our spies said they wore a headdress made of the feathers of parrots and other birds. As for Ne-Nsaku, he wore on his head a kind of nightcap decorated with skillful embroidery representing a snake.

ALVARO II: What else?

MESSENGER: They form a group of musicians who carry drums, ivory trumpet, and instruments resembling violas. Majesty! Some of our soldiers have been captured.

ALVARO II: Tell the new commander in chief to come to see me.

MESSENGER: He's on his way, Majesty. He knows the situation.

The messenger exits.

ALVARO II: *(he's talking alone)* Men, women, and children of the Kingdom know that, since my ascension, I have always been protected against the peculiarities of a personality, such as Ne-Nsaku. He used looting, extortion, and murder to strike fear in the heart of the populace. And now, he wants to destroy our Kingdom? As long as Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo A Mpungu Tulendo will be with us, he won't be able to do it.

Enter DONA ZABELA.

DONA ZABELA: Something serious, my son?

ALVARO II: *(hesitates)* Ne-Nsaku and his soldiers are attacking the Kingdom.

DONA ZABELA: Do you mean they want to invade our Kingdom?

ALVARO II: Yes, mother.

DONA ZABELA: Any casualties?

ALVARO II: We don't know yet, but some of our soldiers and farmers have been captured.

Enter NDUNGIDI.

ALVARO II: Please sit Ndungidi.

Then enter PEDRO and JOAO.

ALVARO II: The reason for your presence here is the attack of our Kingdom by Mani Soyo, led by Ne-Nsaku. Hundreds of our men have been killed. Pedro, can you manage it?

PEDRO: Yes, your Majesty. Soldiers are on route. I will join them soon.

ALVARO II: Ne-Nsaku! Who could imagine that? If I knew his intention, I wouldn't have spared his life. What a shame!

NDUNGIDI: What a shame? Man is ordered by wisdom to examine his attitude. It was difficult to predict that a man like Ne-Nsaku wanted to conquer the Kingdom. The best thing his Majesty has done was not to sentence him to death. It shows your great wisdom, Majesty. Sentencing him to death could have made him a martyr. And some of our citizens could have worshiped him as a god.

ALVARO II: I approve of your wise words, Ndungi. Facing this treason, we are learning to determine how to conquer our invaders and push them back. The superiority of our army will annihilate Ne-Nsaku and his allies.

PEDRO: I already sent our valued soldiers, Majesty. I promise to send the second group of soldiers if the situation becomes worse. But the first group can push back Ne-Nsaku out of Nsundi, and we will capture him.

ALVARO II: Good. I have every confidence in you.

Exit PEDRO and Ndungi. Enter DONA ZABELA, BERNARDO and BEATRIZ.

BERNARDO: Majesty, I will join the army to push back Ne-Nsaku.

ALVARO II: No, my brother. I need you here and want to be kept informed about the development of the operation. I have been confident in you, Pedro. Everything will be all right. In this troubled time, we must reinforce our relations with Portugal because we need weapons to fight our enemies, especially guns.

NDUNGIDI: Honourable Pedro can't forget that Portugal will not do this without a price. The conversion will continue, and we will lose our faith in Nzambi.

A NOTABLE: Sure. Since they have been trying to convert all of us to their religion.

ALVARO II: Don't forget about the benefit we will have. What do you think, Joao?

JOAO: I agree, Majesty. We need to establish diplomatic relations with some African Kingdoms and other European countries. We will talk about all of this when the Portuguese King's emissary comes. Even if we must pay the price, we need their help.

Scene 2

Royal Palace. **DONA ZABELA**, the queen mother, sits on the ground. Princess **BEATRIZ** arrives accompanied by two female slaves. She sits to the queen mother's right. Queen's mother claps her hands, and the slaves leave.

DONA ZABELA: I am the Grandmother of the Nkumba-nkumba line of descent. When we left Kinlaza, we had only five caravans, five men of royal blood. To help them exercise their duties with peace and dignity, they were anointed with a bone of our dead ancestors. The way was clear. There was no hate, except the family of Ne-Nsaku who created disturbances. I am your Grandmother. A woman, a clan mother, cannot refuse her granddaughter's marriage whatever the pretender's origin.

BEATRIZ: I know Grandmother. You are the wise one. I'm sorry for accusing you and your father of being on Ne-Nsaku's side. I understand that you never realised what this notable was doing.

DONA ZABELA: We all have the same blood. The myths said: In the past, the highest position in the Kingdom was occupied by Blacksmith, people doing iron and paintwork. Once, one of them became the King because he had the nobility to create an excellent piece of work. Now, I am satisfied that your father

understands malevolent Ne-Nsaku's ambition which blinded him to the truth.

BEATRIZ: Yes, Grandmother. However, now everything has worked out well. Grandmother, tell me about the boys' and the girls' conditions at your time.

DONA ZABELA: From early infancy to the age of five or six, boys and girls were subject to the dominant influence of the mother. They lived in her intimacy; from her, they learned the fundamental restrictions. To her, they owed their apprenticeship in the language and their knowledge of family history. Their discovery of the legendary fabulous world celebrated in its songs; they also learned to imitate her gestures, to recognise foods in their natural state, to observe the boundaries that delineated places and actions that were prohibited.

BEATRIZ: My marriage is going to be celebrated soon. I must learn to be a mother.

DONA ZABELA: Yes, indeed! Next would be the period of separation. The girl had to go to sleep in the house of the women, the boys in the place of the men. The dividing line between the sexes destroyed the integrity of the family unit formed by the mother and her young children. Very quickly, the boys discovered the superiority and advantages of the masculine condition; apprenticeship, hunting, fishing, handling agriculture equipment, being initiated in the recognition of plants and their use, and assisting the notables councils. All the rights we women can't have.

BEATRIZ: And the girls?

DONA ZABELA: The girl has to pursue her education at her mother's side. She had to prepare herself to become skillful in domestic tasks and the work of the fields; she has gradually learned the role of the wife. She has to give

very early proof of those talents, which would attract the attention of young men. Garcia saw all kinds of those qualities in you. That's why he wanted to marry you. However, before they get married, girls are subject to a...

Enter a messenger.

DONA ZABELA: What is the problem? What brings you here?

MESSENGER: Did you hear the distant sounds of tom-tom?

DONA ZABELA: No.

MESSENGER: The King wants you to be somewhere secure.

DONA ZABELA: What?

MESSENGER: Queen Mother. I have to take you somewhere safe.

BEATRIZ: What is it?

MESSENGER: It's a matter of Kingdom security.

DONA ZABELA: I am the Queen Mother. Messenger, tell me what is going on?

MESSENGER: With all respect due to the Queen Mother, I can't.

DONA ZABELA: I am the King's mother.

Exit the messenger, queen mother, and Princess BEATRIZ.

Scene 3

Some weeks later. Distant crowd shouting, cheering, and tom-tom sounds come off stage. At the Royal, the King sits on his throne. Near to him sit JOAO, NDUNGIDI, and other notables and civil servants.

PEOPLE: Ne-Nsaku is dead. Long live King ALVARO II! Long live Prince Bernardo! Long live Princess BEATRIZ! Long live Queen Dona Zabela! Long live Garcia.

ALVARO II: Ne-Nsaku died, the rebels have been dispelled. Everything is in order now. We did not have difficulties annexing Mpangu, Nkusu, and Wandu. The governors of these provinces came willingly and without resistance. Despite their earlier opposition, the provinces of Nsundi and Mbamba and all rebel provinces have been annexed. That's why from Today, the royal office must be subjected to a modification. Prince Bernardo becomes the representative for foreign and social affairs, while Pedro takes the load off the commander-in - chief of the army, because you coped well the interim role during the war against rebels. Pedro, we want to hear your view.

PEDRO: After the war and the death of Ne-Nsaku, our army had to be restructured. We must eradicate all corruption, such as what was introduced by Ne-Nsaku and his men. Every recruit will be trained before going to fight.

People continue to grow.

PEOPLE: Ne-Nsaku is dead. Long live King Alvaro II! Long live Prince Bernardo. Long live, Princess BEATRIZ! Long live Queen Mother! Long live, Garcia.

EPILOGUE

STORYTELLER: Have you heard that? Long live the Royal family! Long live the artist! It is certain that Ne-Nsaku died. However, Ne-Nsaku has many descendants. Will they quickly forget the death of their father, or are they going to take revenge? To follow... Nobody knows. The next part of the Kingdom of Kongo life will tell us what will happen.

BALLET VI

The scene of dance continues. Around objects representative, Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo, men dressed in multi-colored linen-covered up to the hips, and women covered up to the breast carry out a dance. In the middle is the gentleman who plays the drum.

CURTAIN

Synopsis

During the mid-sixteenth century, the King, his daughter, his brother, and some civil servants admire the work of a young artist in the Kingdom of Kongo. The artist has sculpted a stunning likeness of the Princess's face. The King is so pleased with the artist's work that he promises to give him anything he would like in return. The artist, in love with the King's daughter, asks to marry the Princess. Will the King honour the artist's request?

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