

THE BLOOD FLOWING THROUGH IN OUR VEINS IS RED.

a screenplay

by

Tshiama Nambombe

based on the play "Red is the Royal Blood" by

Tshiama Nambombe

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FADE IN

SUBTITLE: NSUNDILAND KINGDOM 1320

EXT. FOREST OF LOANGO - EVENING

DRY SEASON

Arrow-armed men move around, infiltrate the village, and attack and kill the villagers. They also burn houses. The villagers are running around.

Several people, including men, women, and children, are lying on the ground. Among them are three important notables of the kingdom: MATONDO, 54, LUTONADIO, 55; and LUNGAMBA, 50. Some villagers manage to escape. Many can't run. They have injuries. The rebels finish them off without mercy.

EXT. KINGDOM PUBLIC PLACE - DAY

The kingdom announcer beats the drums to announce an express meeting. At the same time, the notables are heading towards the kingdom court. They talk to each other but indistinctly.

INT. THE ROYAL COURT - DAY

All the notables sit on both sides of the court.

Enter the KING NE-NSUNDI, 58, and his brother, the prince NE-BONDO, 40. Next to each stand a guard. Notable BESADI, 55, stands.

NOTABLE BESADI

The King Ne-Nsundi. All raise.

All the notables stand. The king and the prince sit down. Two guards stand beside each other. All the notables sit down.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Dear notables and the elders of the kingdom.

I understand that this meeting was not scheduled, but given the circumstances, I was obliged to break your pause.

Notables and elders look at each other and murmur.

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)

I know. I know that some of you are aware of what happened last night. The rebels attacked our kingdom. They killed men, women, and children.

(MORE)

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)
 Our three valiant notables,
 Matondo, Lutonadio, and Lungamba,
 died in this despicable attack.

NOTABLE BESADI
 (stands)
 Her majesty. Do we know who those
 rebels are? Where did they come
 from?

KING NE-NSUNDI
 They left no sign of their passage.
 They have been so clever. We need
 other notables to fill their
 positions. That is why I will begin
 consultations in the coming days to
 find the notables who will replace
 our valuable notables who died.

NOTABLE BESADI
 When would that be, Majesty?

KING NE-NSUNDI
 Let us first proclaim some days of
 mourning for the death of our
 valuable notables, the most
 precious the kingdom has ever had.

NE-NSAKU, 39, stands.

NE-NSAKU
 (smiling)
 Yes, Majesty. Your word has always
 been reasonable and sacred.
 Yes, majesty. Your comment has
 always been fair and holy.

All the notables look at him.

KING NE-NSUNDI
 (looks at Ne-Nsaku)
 Well, Ne-Nsaku, welcome to the
 council meeting. I believe that
 everyone knows that Ne-Nsaku is Ne-
 Malonga's son, our late commander-
 in-chief of the army. Notable Ne-
 Nsaku. I can see you are an
 intelligent young man. You deserve
 an important position on the next
 council, young man.

NE-NSAKU
 Thank you, Her Majesty.

Ne-Nsaku smiled again. Some notables looked at him,
 suspecting his excessive zeal.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Dear notables and the elders of the kingdom. I propose organizing our notables' funerals as soon as possible. What do you think?

The notables look at each other. Ne-Nsaku gets up.

NE-NSAKU

I suggest the organization of the funeral on Saturday in fourteen moons. I am sure it would be a good day, Her Majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI

All right, notable Ne-Nsaku. Any other suggestions?

No one raises his hand.

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)

Well. Proposition accepted.

NOTABLE BESADI

Dear elders, our meeting is finished. Let us return to our usual tasks.

The King Ne-Nsundi and Prince Ne-Bondo stand and leave. Then, follow the notables and the elders. They continue chatting indistinctly.

EXT. THE ROYAL COURT - EVENING

The notables MAKENGO, 55, and the notables Besadi and NE-MPUNGI, 54, walk together.

NOTABLE BESADI

How come the King promised such a great responsibility to that young man? As I remember, his father had the same responsibility. Does it mean children must inherit their father in the council?

NOTABLE MAKENGO

What is the problem, then?

NOTABLE BESADI

I don't trust him. Don't you think he's seeking the king's favor? His father was not even an exemplar notable.

NOTABLE MAKENGO

We need to stop gossiping. We don't need to judge people before we know them. Maybe we can give him a chance. Is that too much to ask?

NOTABLE BESADI

Okay, relax. Why do you get upset like that?

NOTABLE MAKENGO

I'm not upset. Ne-Nsaku was born in this kingdom, and he's the son of one of the most valuable chiefs of the army in the past. We need new blood in the council.

NE-MPUNGI

I will instead prefer Mavadidi, the woodcarver. He's so mature.

NOTABLE MAKENGO

Do you mean Mavadidi, the son of the late notable Mbenza, who initiated the Mpiaza period?

NE-MPUNGI

Yes, it's him.

NOTABLE MAKENGO

Oh, no. He's too young.

NE-MPUNGI

His father was a mature and clever woodcarver. Anyway, the King will decide after the funeral of three notables.

TWO WEEKS LATER.

INT. KING'S HOUSE - NIGHT

King Ne-Nsundi, QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA, 76, PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA, 20, and Prince Ne-Bondo return from the funerals of notables killed.

KING NE-NSUNDI

As the funeral of our valuable notables has gone well, next week, we will proceed to the appointment of the notables who will replace them.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Isn't it too early?

KING NE-NSUNDI

Not at all. On the other hand, during the last council meeting, I noticed an intelligent young man who impressed me. I think he deserves to be the chief of the army. I was very impressed by him.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

What is his name?

KING NE-NSUNDI

It is Ne-Nsaku—the late Ne-Malonga's son.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

What? Are you sure you want to appoint this young man the army chief?

KING NE-NSUNDI

Not only do I trust him, but we need new blood in our army, don't we?

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

My son. Have you thought about that? All the older people with experience will be jealous of him.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

My father. My grandmother is right. Also, remember what his father did to you.

PRINCE NE-BONDO

Our mother and my niece are right. Beware, my brother. Dogs don't make cats. His father did a lot of shenanigans. He almost killed you.

KING NE-NSUNDI

I know that because I was there, too. We must always forgive. We have to give that boy a chance. He's not his father.

PRINCE NE-BONDO

You are the king, my brother. You know what to do.

KING NE-NSUNDI

It's getting late. Let go and sleep. Tomorrow, we will calm down.

INT. KING'S HOUSE - DAY

Early morning. NDUNGIDI, the kingdom shaman, 63, enters the king's house. He kneels before the king.

NDUNGIDI

Her Majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Ndungidi. Welcome to the king's house. What is the purpose of your visit?

NDUNGIDI

Majesty. I heard that you want to appoint Ne-Nsaku, the son of the late notable Ne-Malonga, as army commander-in-chief.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Is there a problem, Ndungidi?

NDUNGIDI

Majesty. Nzambi a Mpungu and our ancestors will disagree.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Why, shaman Ndungidi ?

NDUNGIDI

That young man is just like his father. It's a snake. My preference is for the son of the late notable Mbenza.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Mavadidi? Why?

NDUNGIDI

Ne-Nsaku can be like his father, Majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Should he pay for his father's sin? Do you think it's fair, Ndungidi?

NDUNGIDI

It's not that Majesty, but did you forget how his father was? Isn't that we say like son, like father? That man almost killed you. Remember the way he organized incredible bad things in the kingdom.

BEGIN FLASHBACK: INT. KINGDOM COURT - EVENING

CONTINUED

SUBTITLE : SOME YEARS AGO.

The king Ne-Nsundi, 40, and Ndungidi, 45, stand. They are discussing. It is indistinct. Enter the notable MASSAMBA, 55, responsible for foreign affairs.

NOTABLE MASSAMBA
Majesty. Masked men attacked some girls in the forest.

KING NE-NSUNDI
Were they killed?

NOTABLE MASSAMBA
No, Majesty. They raped some girls. Fortunately, the girls recognized one of the men by tearing off his mask.

KING NE-NSUNDI
Guard.

Enter a guard.

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)
I want to see the notables Lukau and Ne-Malonga here as soon as possible.

The guard runs to get the notables.

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)
Where did those bandits come from?

NOTABLE MASSAMBA
The situation is serious, Your Majesty.

Enter the notable LUKAU, 48, and the notable NE-MALONGA, 50.

KING NE-NSUNDI
Notables Lukau and Ne-Malonga. Bandits raped the girls in the forest. Lukau. You are the head of the justice. Ne-Malonga, you are the head of the army. What are you doing about security in our forests?

NOTABLE NE-MALONGA
Majesty. We are unaware of this situation but will do our best.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Doing your best is not enough. It would help if you find those bandits and then eradicate them.

NOTABLE LUKAU

We will do it, Her Majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI

It would be best if you looked for those culprits. From the information we have, the girls recognized one of them. That is a good thing. The boy is the son Mabanza. Arrest him. I am sure he will denounce his accomplices. We have to punish them if the council finds them guilty. I want security for my subjects.

Everyone takes the leave except Ndungidi.

NDUNGIDI

I don't understand the attitude of the notable Malonga. I believe he was aware of the situation.

KING NE-NSUNDI

You are very suspicious, Ndungidi, aren't you?

NDUNGIDI

The spirits of our gods always guide me. If there's something wrong, I feel it.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Evil must not be seen everywhere. Ne-Malonga is a correct man. He cannot encourage people to commit crimes in the kingdom.

NDUNGIDI

As I said, I can't believe him, Majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI

I trust him, Ndungidi. Besides, he's a distant cousin of mine on my father's side.

Enter a messenger.

A MESSENGER

Mabanza's son was found dead.

Ndungidi looks at the king without saying anything.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO :

THE KING'S HOUSE - DAY

The king and Ndungidi walk in the courtyard.

NDUNGIDI

Majesty. Who else knew that Mabanza's son was one of the bandits? I'm not sure the notable Lukau did that.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Ndungidi. As I said, the notable Ne-Nsaku is not his father. Guard. Can you check if the princess is there?

INT. THE WOODCARVER WORKSHOP - AFTERNOON

A sunny afternoon. Different wooden objects are on the wall and in every corner. MAVADIDI, the woodcarver 30, is working.

Suddenly, enter Queen Ne-Makaya. She wears a long multicolored tunic stretching from neck to ankle. She approaches the woodcarver.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Mavadidi, my darling. As the weather is nice today, I decided to come and see you alone.

MAVADIDI

What a surprise, my princess. Did you come alone?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Yes, my love. It's not at all easy for a princess to go out alone, you know that. I dodge my father's guards.

Mavadidi looks at the princess.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA (CONT'D)

Are you not happy, my love?

MAVADIDI

I am, my princess. I like to see you coming here without your guards. It's an excellent way to respect our intimacy.

Princess Ne-Makaya looks at the carved face.

MAVADIDI (CONT'D)

(Staring at her.)

My princess. Today, I will finish shaping your face, which will be admired from generation to generation as proof of my infinite love for you.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

I know, my love. I promise I will be yours soon, from eternity to eternity.

MAVADIDI

I wonder how your father will react when he finds out we are in a relationship.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Don't worry about that, my love. Nothing terrible will happen to us.

MAVADIDI

Are you capable of convincing your father?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Of course, my love, I will. Nothing else is as important as that.

MAVADIDI

Do you think it can be easy, my princess?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

My father is an understanding man. Let me manage that. The king, my father, wants my happiness. However, the only predictable antagonist is Ne-Nsaku. That man hides his game, but I know he's just like his father, Ne-Malonga. His father was a kind of distant cousin to my father. He died years ago. He was a dangerous man. He could not hesitate to eliminate anyone who inadvertently crossed his path. He was cruel. Do you know what? A father's violent attitude can easily be transmitted to the son.

BEGIN FLASHBACK: EXT. FARM - DAY

CONTINUED.

SUBTITLE : SOME YEARS AGO

Ne-Malonga, 42, holds a machete, and then approaches the farmer's worker.

NE-MALONGA

Next time, if you don't pay on time, I will cut you off your hand.

THE FARMER

Please. Next time, I will pay everything I owe you.

NE-MALONGA

I need to make an example. So next time, you won't forget to pay the taxes.

(to one of his men)

Cut him his hand.

One of his men cuts the hand of the farmer's worker. He screams very loudly.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO :

THE WOODCARVER WORKSHOP - AFTERNOON

Mavadidi continues shaping the princess's face. The princess approaches him.

MAVADIDI

Did the king dismiss him?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

No. That has too much influence on my father. Can you imagine how cruel he was? Despite what his father has done, my father wants to appoint his son the army's commander-in-chief. Only Nzambi, a Mpungu Tulendo, knows what he can do.

MAVADIDI

That is why I wonder about those conservative men who only know one word: tradition. I don't think he would be the only person who would object.

(MORE)

MAVADIDI (CONT'D)

People like Ne-Nsaku know how to persuade others to follow their foolish ideas.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

You are right, my darling. We will face strong opposition, but we must not stop fighting. Prejudice and chattering of the kingdom cannot ever separate us.

MAVADIDI

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

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

My father and his notables say they will visit your workshop in fourteen moons. You will need to show to my father my likeness. I am sure it will please him.

MAVADIDI

Are you sure, my princess?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Yes, my love.

MAVADIDI

Isn't it too early?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

No, my love. We need to beat the iron when it is still hot. We cannot wait anymore. It is the moment to make it happen. Let no people destroy our happiness.

MAVADIDI

Under no circumstances shall I allow people to destroy this love.

Mavadidi finishes the polish of the sculpture and hands it to the princess.

MAVADIDI (CONT'D)

This is my gift to you, my princess.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

It's splendid! I have never received such a gift before in my life. When my father will see it, he will be delighted. I will hang it on the wall; that way, my mother's spirit will watch over it.

Mavadidi holds the princess by his arms.

MAVADIDI

I can't stop scaring about that Ne-Nsaku.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Don't be scared about him.

MAVADIDI

You said his father was dangerous.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Yes, he was. I also do remember one day. I think I was twelve. His father arrested someone who saved my life when two men aggressed me.

MAVADIDI

What happened?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

While walking alone in the forest...

BEGIN FLASHBACK: EXT. FOREST OF LOANGO - DAY

SOME YEARS AGO.

A 20-year-old man sits on a tree branch. He sees men brutalizing Princess NE-MAKAYA, 12. He gets up, approaches them, and begins to fight them. They run away. He stays with the princess, holding both hands.

Two confident of the Ne-Malonga see them from afar. They come to him and begin to brutalize the man. The young man struggles, but they do not let him go.

NE-MALONGA'S CONFIDENT #1

Why did you assault the princess?

YOUNG MAN

I did not. Two young men were assaulting her and I saved her.

NE-MALONGA'S CONFIDENT #1

You are lying.

NE-MALONGA'S CONFIDENT #2

We are arresting you now.

YOUNG MAN

I am telling you the truth. I am the one who chased those bandits.

NE-MALONGA'S CONFIDENT #1

You aggressed the princess.

YOUNG MAN

I did not.

NE-MALONGA'S CONFIDENT #2

Where are you from, young man?

YOUNG MAN

I am from Mbata.

NE-MALONGA'S CONFIDENT #2

I understand now. Most of the rebels come from there. We'll take you anyway.

They drag him brutally. The Princess Ne-Makaya holds the hand of one of them to release the young man.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

No. Leave him alone. He's not lying. He is the one who saved my life.

NE-MALONGA'S CONFIDENT #1

Do you recognize them, princess?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Not at all. They wore masks.

NE-MALONGA'S CONFIDENT #2

(to the princess)

It's for your safety. We need to keep him until we arrest those people.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Why? He did not do anything.

NE-MALONGA'S CONFIDENT #2

As I said, it is for your security. Next time, avoid coming alone in the forest without guards, princess. You are only twelve.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Please. Don't do that.

NE-MALONGA'S CONFIDENT #2

We are just carrying on our task, princess.

Ne-Malonga's confident #2 ties the young man's hands. They take him by force.

NE-MALONGA'S MAN #1

(to Ne-Nsaku's man #2)

Take the princess to the king's house.

END FLASHBACK

BACK TO :

THE WOODCARVER WORKSHOP - AFTERNOON

The princess Ne-Makaya takes a few steps.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA
Imagine what? They didn't give up.
They took him to that notable
Malonga, who dared to bring him to
my father's house.

BEGIN FLASHBACK: INT. NE-MALONGA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ne-Malonga's second wife gives a gourd of water to him. When he starts washing his hands, he hears the door knocks.

NOTABLE NE-MALONGA
Who is that?

NE-MALONGA'S MAN #1 (OFF)
I need to see you, chief.

Ne-Malonga recognize his voice.

NOTABLE NE-MALONGA
(to his wife)
Open the house, my preferred.

She opens the door. Enter, Ne-Malonga's men #1 and #2.

NE-MALONGA'S MAN #1
Here is the man who assaulted the
princess.

YOUNG MAN
It is a mistake. I did not do
anything.

NOTABLE NE-MALONGA
Shut up. Who asked you to open your
mouth? Put him in the cell.
Tomorrow, we will take him to the
king. We will punish him.

YOUNG MAN
I did not do...

NOTABLE NE-MALONGA
(interrupting)
... Take the culprit to the cell.
He deserves the punishment.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO :

THE WOODCARVER WORKSHOP - EVENING

The princess Ne-Makaya hugs Mavadidi.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Fortunately, my father was so understanding. He also failed in his plan because of Ndungidi, Ne-Malonga's opponent. He knew all his shenanigans. For once, my father believed him.

MAVADIDI

Poor young man. He had a chance. That is why I admire your father. He is the king who reigns with equity.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

I know. My father refused the council to condemn the young man.

BEGIN FLASHBACK: INT. KINGDOM COURT - NIGHT

SUBTITLE : SOME YEARS AGO.

The king and his wife, Queen NE-LUNAMA, 40, sit face to face. The notable Ne-Malonga, some of his men, and Ndungidi sit on both sides. The young man, his hands tied behind his back, kneels in the middle. Ne-Malonga gets up and wants to speak.

NOTABLE NE-MALONGA

Majesty ...

KING NE-NSUNDI

(interrupting)

Notable, Ne-Malonga. My daughter told me everything. This young man did not assault her.

NOTABLE NE-MALONGA

Majesty. He's lying. The culprit assaulted the princess.

KING NE-NSUNDI

You'd better find the real culprits and capture them. They were two. If you miss them, they'll do it again.

NOTABLE NE-MALONGA

Majesty. My men ...

KING NE-NSUNDI

(interrupting again)

... I trust my daughter. She will never protect someone who assaulted her.

NOTABLE NE-MALONGA

She said they wore masks. How can she know if it is him or not?

KING NE-NSUNDI

The case is closed. This young wasn't one of the bandits. Release him immediately.

(to the young man)

Go back to your village. The kingdom will reward you.

NOTABLE NE-MALONGA

Did you say reward? It would be wrong to do that, Majesty. My men saw everything. Three people cannot be wrong.

QUEEN NE-LUNAMA

No, Ne-Malonga. The case is closed. I think your men are corrupted.

NOTABLE NE-MALONGA

Nonsense, Queen Ne-Lunama. Abomination. Corrupted by whom?

KING NE-NSUNDI

Stop it, Ne-Malonga. Ndungidi will determine if he is lying or telling the truth.

(to Ndungidi)

Bring the gourd of the sacred water.

Ndungidi starts incantations. He takes a gourd of water, and hands it to the young man.

NDUNGIDI

Young man. You need to drink this sacred water. If you are lying, you will suddenly die.

NOTABLE -MALONGA

Again, this charlatan?

The young man drinks the sacred water. Everyone is looking at him. After that, Ndungidi puts the water in a calabash and then looks through the water.

NDUNGIDI

The young man is telling the truth.
I saw two young men who aggressed
the princess. They live in this
kingdom.

KING NE-NSUNDI

You are free to go, young man. I
thank you for saving my daughter's
life. My guards will escort you to
your village.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO:

THE WOODCARVER WORKSHOP - EVENING

Mavadidi and the princess Ne-Makaya still stand.

MAVADIDI

It's getting late, my princess.
Now, go back to your place.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Yes, my prince. It's better.

INT. THE ROYAL COURT - EVENING

The middle of the afternoon. The sun is shining.

In every corner are wooden masks made with nails that
represent Nkisi Nkondi (power figures), the dwelling place of
an ancestral spirit used by Nsundi divinity.

Behind King Ne-Nsundi's throne is a Nsundiland ivory trumpet
with a carving figure.

King Ne-Nsundi and Prince Ne-Bondo, dress differently in
long, multicolored tunics. The notable Besadi gets up.

NOTABLE BESADI

The King Ne-Nsundi and his brother,
the prince Ne-Bondo. All raise.

All notables stand.

Then, King Ne-Nsundi and Prince Ne-Bondo sit.

NOTABLE BESADI (CONT'D)

Have a place, notables. Our meeting
is about to begin.

Ndungidi and all the notables sit, but they keep talking.

NOTABLE BESADI (CONT'D)

Silence. The king is about to speak.

Some notables are mumbling.

NOTABLE BESADI (CONT'D)

Silence. The king will speak.

The king holds his cane and stands.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Notables. I welcome you all. Some time ago, our kingdom knew a troubled period. We lost our valuable civil servants during the rebels' attack. Since then, they were not replaced. But there is a time for everything. The time of mourning is up. We need to replace them today. That is what Nzambi a Mpungu Tulendo would like us to do. The reason for our presence here this afternoon is the confirmation of the appointments of some notables as civil servants.

The king holds his cane and stands. He looks at the notable Ne-Mpungi.

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)

Notable, Ne-Mpungi.

The notable Ne-Mpungi approaches the king. The king places his cane on his shoulders.

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)

Today, I appoint you to be in charge of the Justice's responsibilities in the Kingdom. You will judge and condemn culprits and acquit innocents with proof and pieces of evidence. You will be righteous and equitable.

(Pause)

Are you ready to be committed to that responsibility?

NE-MPUNGI

Yes, your Majesty. I do.

KING NE-NSUNDI

So, be it. On the fourteenth day of January 1320, I declare you chief of the Justice.

The notable Ne-Mpungi goes back to his place. The king looks at the notable Ne-Nsaku's direction.

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)
 Notable Ne-Nsaku. Stand up and
 approach.

The notable Ne-Nsaku gets up and approaches the king. The king places his cane on his shoulder.

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)
 Today, I appoint you in charge of
 the commander-in-chief of the army.
 Your task would be to prevent any
 future rebel incursions in the
 kingdom.

(Pause)

Can you take this new
 responsibility to the point of
 sacrificing your own life?

NE-NSAKU
 Yes, your Majesty. I do.

The King puts his royal cane on Ne-Nsaku's shoulder.

KING NE-NSUNDI
 I declare you army chief on the
 fourteenth day of January 1320.

Ne-Nsaku backs in his place.

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)
 Notable Besadi. Approach.

Notable Besadi stands and approaches the King Ne-Nsundi.

CUT TO :

EXT. KINGDOM PUBLIC PLACE - EVENING

The princess arrives near the palace of the kingdom.

Men and women of the kingdom surround him and sing
 simultaneously. The princess stops and begins to communicate
 with people.

BACK TO :

THE ROYAL COURT - EVENING

King Ne-Nsundi puts his cane on the shoulder of the notable
 Besadi.

KING NE-NSUNDI
 On the fourteenth day of January
 1320, I declare you chief of the
 foreign affairs.

The king leaves the court. All the notables and the guards follow. Some notables form a group and begin to murmur.

CUT TO :

INT. KING'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The princess enters. She approaches her grandmother, who sits.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA
My granddaughter. I was here alone
for a long time, waiting for you.
Where have you been?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA
My grandmother. Are you worrying
about me?

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA
Why not, my granddaughter?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA
I went out to stretch my legs.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA
Have you been with guards?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA
No, grandmother. Why?

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA
My granddaughter. How can you ask
me why? You are precious to me. I
won't forgive myself if something
terrible happens to you.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA
Nothing will happen to me,
grandmother.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA
It's not safe. Do you remember when
two men aggressed you when you were
twelve?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA
I do.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA
And do you also remember that some
of our valuable notables were
killed?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA
Yes, I do. I want to live free and
not always in fear.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

There are a lot of bandits out there. Don't forget that they make their law even on the plantations.

EXT. FOREST OF LOANGO - DAY

Early morning in the manufacturing of palm wine, the peasant MAVUANGA, 45, is extracting the palm wine. His twenty-year-old son and his seventy-year-old beautiful girl are putting the palm wine in calabashes.

MAVUANGA

(to his children)

Ensure you properly pour the palm wine into gourds; otherwise, microbes will get into it. I don't want people to die because of my drink.

PEASANT'S SON

(laughing)

Are you afraid of going to prison?

MAVUANGA

No. I am scared of the death penalty.

PEASANT'S DAUGHTER

(surprised)

Death penalty? What are you talking about?

MAVUANGA

The new commander-in-chief is horrible. He behaves like his late father.

PEASANT'S SON

It's clear to me that he's not the justice chief.

MAVUANGA

He always wants to be in the role of a kingdom's vigilante. In addition, he has a lot of influence on others. Everyone fears him.

PEASANT'S DAUGHTER

Oh! Do you mean honorable Ne-Nsaku?

MAVUANGA

Yes, my daughter. Evil like him, I have never seen it in my life.

PEASANT'S DAUGHTER
 Everyone knows that he's a kind of
 bad news.

The sounds of people's feet.

PEASANT'S SON
 Can you hear people coming?

MAVUANGA
 No.

PEASANT'S SON
 Oh, father. You are becoming deaf.
 Can you hear that, my sister?

PEASANT'S DAUGHTER
 Yes, I can, my brother.

MAVUANGA
 Who are they?

Mavuanga sees Ne-Nsaku and his men coming.

MAVUANGA (CONT'D)
 Oh, my God! Speaking of the devil.

Ne-Nsaku and his men reach the plantation.

NE-NSAKU
 (Laughing arrogantly)
 Are you surprised, peasant?

MAVUANGA
 No. Not really, honorable notable.

NE-NSAKU
 Commander-in-chief of the army,
 please.

MAVUANGA
 Commander-in-chief of the army.

NE-NSAKU
 My men informed me you haven't paid
 your protection tax this month.

MAVUANGA
 My lord, I do not have money at the
 moment. This year, the palm trees
 and canes did not make good wine. I
 think next month, I will pay twice.

NE-NSAKU
 What did you say? Should I wait for
 next month? Are you mad?

MAVUANGA

I am so sorry, my lord.

NE-NSAKU

(to his men)

Have you heard that?

(to his men)

Tell the peasant how much Nzimbu someone who has failed a single payment should have paid next month.

NE-NSAKU'S MAN #1

You will pay four times, peasant.

MAVUANGA

Yes, my lord. I will pay. I swear.

NE-NSAKU

(looks at the Mavanga's girl)

You have a beautiful daughter. Next month, if you don't pay, I will retain her as hostage and make her my wife.

NE-NSAKU'S MAN #2

Did you hear what the chief said?

PEASANTS

Yes. Please, my lord. She's betrothed to Kiabelua's son.

NE-NSAKU

That man? You are not serious, aren't you?

MAVUANGA

I am, my lord.

NE-NSAKU

(to his men)

We shall go now, but remember your promises.

INT. KING'S HOUSE - NIGHT

King Ne-Nsundi, Queen Mother Ndikua, Prince Ne-Bondo, and Princess Ne-Makaya are sitting together, but they speak indistinctly. Enter Ndungidi, the shaman, and approaches the king. He whispers something in the king's right ear

KING NE-NSUNDI

(to his mother and his daughter)

Excuse us. We must go to the secret room immediately.

(MORE)

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)

We need to sort out some situations related to the kingdom.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

That is fine, my son.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Mother. Don't forget my preferred meals. Can you make it for me, please?

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Yes, of course, my son.

The King Ne-Nsundi, the princess Ne-Bondo and Ndungidi enter the secret room.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

(to his grandmother)

What are the father's preferred meals?

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

My granddaughter. How can you forget that?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Remind me, grandmother. Even a princess can forget.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Your father's preferred meals are wandu and cassava tubers.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Oh! Right. I do remember now.

INT. SECRET ROOM - NIGHT

Inside the secret room stand many traditional objects. The king Ne-Nsundi and his brother Ne-Bondo, sit on the ground while Ndungidi, the shaman, stands.

BACK TO :

THE KING'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The princess Ne-Makaya brings a cup of water to her grandmother.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Here's a cup of water, my grandmother. Drink it. It will refresh you.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Usually, when your father enters the secret room, something fishy is happening.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Do you think?

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Yes, I do. Your grandfather used to do the same thing.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Maybe my father needs the blessing of our ancestors.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Possibly. My granddaughter, can we go to the kitchen now? We should start cooking your father's preferred meal.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Yes, grandmother.

CUT TO :

THE SECRET'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ndungidi walks back to the king. He starts the incantations.

NDUNGIDI

Get out of here, evil spirits that bring darkness. Get out of here. Let Nzambi a Mpungu a Tulendo protect the one who reigns among us with justice and fairness.

He kneels and then stands.

NDUNGIDI (CONT'D)

Majesty. You are the greatest on earth. Your kingdom is the largest, most powerful, and most beautiful. You take care of your subjects with kindness.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Ndungidi, tell us why you brought us into this room.

NDUNGIDI

Majesty. Our ancestors sent me to grant you force and strength to rule this kingdom. Your reign will last for years and years.

(MORE)

NDUNGIDI (CONT'D)

No evil spirits will be able to destroy you. Nzambi a Mpungu Tulendo will protect you. Nobody can give you death except him, the omnipotent and the creator of the kingdom.

KING NE-NSUNDI

You are not telling us anything new, Ndungidi.

NDUNGIDI

Majesty. Nzambi a Mpungu and our ancestors told me something fishy is being prepared against the kingdom.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Proceed, Ndungidi. You have all our confidence. From generation to generation, your family has been loyal to us. In misfortune and happiness, you always take care of us. Our Gods bless you, too.

NDUNGIDI

Majesty. Nzambi a Mpungu Tulendo sees all and rules all. His will is always done. He gave us basic laws and traditions—his rule and absolute wisdom that underlay the oaths and rituals of loyalty.

PRINCE NE-BONDO

You are right, Ndungidi, the shaman. We can't go against his wish. We owe him reverence and respect.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Ndungidi. Just tell us what that fishy thing is.

NDUNGIDI

Majesty. One of your notables will try to oppose your desire this evening, but Nzambi a Mpungu Tulendo will always be with you.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Who? Tell me, shaman.

NDUNGIDI

You will see it during the meeting. The traitor, the verminous snake, will be betrayed by his behavior.

(MORE)

NDUNGIDI (CONT'D)

There is an adage that says the one who will stab you is the closest to you and whom you love so much.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Oh! I can't see who would do that.

NDUNGIDI

Majesty. You need to start opening your eyes.

NE-NSUNDI

Alright. We will see in the meeting, then.

EXT. KINGDOM PUBLIC PLACE - DAY

The sounds of the tam-tam announce the evening notables council's meeting.

Men, women, and children surround the one who is playing the tam-tam. They are dancing.

INT. KINGDOM COURT - DAY

All notables and the shaman Ndungidi sit. King Ne-Nsundi and the Prince Ne-Bondo enter.

NOTABLE BESADI

Notables. The King Ne-Nsundi and the Prince Ne-Bondo. All raise

Everyone gets up.

NOTABLE BESADI (CONT'D)

You can sit now.

Enter Ne-Nsaku. Everyone looks at him.

NE-NSAKU

(with arrogance)
What's wrong?

NOTABLE BESADI

Are you serious? How can you be late like that? You know that no one enters after the King.

NE-NSAKU

I am sorry. Something came up.

NOTABLE BESADI

It is the total lack of respect for the person of the King. You have to apologize publicly.

NE-NSAKU

All right.

(looking at the king)

I beg your forgiveness for
offending you, Majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Excuses accepted.

There are reactions of discontent from some notables in the
assembly.

NOTABLE BESADI

Silence. We need to proceed.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Well, notables. We need to proceed.

Ndungidi stands. He has a statue in his hands.

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)

Ndungidi. Welcome.

Ndungidi slowly moves near the king's throne.

NDUNGIDI

Oh, Majesty, the master of the
kingdom! You are also the protector
of our families. You watch over us
against evil spirits. You provide
the light and the rain, which
sprinkle our harvest. Without you,
life cannot exist. We are here to
honor your greatness. Be blessed by
our gods and our ancestors. We are
here to glorify...

NE-NSAKU

(interrupting him.)

... Ndungidi. Shut your mouth,
please. Can't you stop your humbug?

NDUNGIDI

Humbug? What are you talking about?

NE-NSAKU

Don't you know what I am talking
about? His Majesty does not need
your flattery. Do you forget your
role? You are here to predict the
future, mainly telling us when our
enemies think of attacking our
kingdom. You are a bad omen.

NDUNGIDI

(angrily)

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

NE-NSAKU

(ironic)

Established order? Established order? It's the only thing you know how to say. What is that kind of gibberish? I am neither defying the ancestors nor the established order. Do you want to cast a spell on me? Tell me, Ndungidi. Who was the last person you put a spell on? Ah! I remember now.

Matondo's husband. Why?

(looking at the assembly)

It is because you desired his woman. Very funny. Poor little man! Now, he cannot walk anymore or perform in the marital bed. Well, notables.

All the notables astonish; look at Ndungidi.

NDUNGIDI

Nonsense. Who told you those lies?

NE-NSAKU

Ndungidi, Ndungidi, Ndungidi. I know everything that happens in this kingdom. You know that very well, dear shaman. Let me remind you something.

BEGIN FLASHBACK : INT. NE-NSAKU'S HOUSE - NIGHT

SUBTITLE: SOME MONTHS BEFORE

Ne-Nsaku sits and drinks some palm wine. One of his men enters.

NE-NSAKU

What are you doing here so late?

NE-NSAKU'S BEST FRIEND

I wouldn't come here if I hadn't something special to tell you.

NE-NSAKU

Couldn't you wait until tomorrow?

NE-NSAKU'S BEST FRIEND

No. I couldn't. You will not say that after hearing me.

NE-NSAKU

Alright. Go ahead.

NE-NSAKU'S BEST FRIEND

Your shaman, Ndungidi, cursed the husband of a woman he desired.

NE-NSAKU

Really?

NE-NSAKU'S BEST FRIEND

You know what? That man can't walk anymore.

NE-NSAKU

Are you sure, my friend?

NE-NSAKU'S BEST FRIEND

Oh, yes. I am very sure.

NE-NSAKU

That is very useful, my friend.

NE-NSAKU'S BEST FRIEND

That man is an evil incarnate.

NE-NSAKU

I will use it against him one day. That's going to be my secret weapon.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO :

THE ROYAL COURT - DAY

All notables, funnily, look at Ne-Nsaku.

NDUNGIDI

(Furious)

Ne-Nsaku. Listen to me. There is a natural power of nature, which is sacred. The force of domination, which is politically potent, comes from our ancestors and tradition. The second is derived from the third and leads to a permanent order; Transforming these powers just for innovation will lead to disorder. Honorable Ne-Nsaku, you have to respect the established order.

NE-NSAKU

Oh! It looks like gibberish.

NDUNGIDI

You are an insane man.

NE-NSAKU

You are the one who is insane, not me.

NDUNGIDI

How dare you insult the protector of all spirits? Tell us about your concubines. One of them had to sacrifice her baby to carry out some superstition. Do you remember? You strangled your child and buried the body in Nkenge's field. She thought this act would increase her fertility. It was not.

ALL NOTABLES

That is ridiculous.

NDUNGIDI

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

NE-NSAKU

I don't know what you are talking about.

NDUNGIDI

Yes, you know. Don't pretend, Ne-Nsaku.

NE-NSAKU

I don't pretend anything.

NDUNGIDI

Let me remind you that.

NE-NSAKU

You are the shaman. You don't have to divulge any secret someone told you.

NDUNGIDI

Nor does a notable have not the right to divulge a secret that has been heard without verification. So. I can reveal yours, too.

BEGIN FLASHBACK: INT. NDUNGIDI HOUSE - NIGHT

CONTINUED

SOME MONTHS BEFORE.

Ndungidi is preparing some portions. Someone knocks on the door. He stops preparing and hides everything.

NDUNGIDI

Come in, whoever you are, you are welcome.

Enter Ne-Nsaku. Ndungidi raises his head.

NDUNGIDI (CONT'D)

Oh, Ne-Nsaku. How can I help?

NE-NSAKU

I am so sorry to trouble you. I hurt my family. I had killed the child of one of my concubines and buried him somewhere. My families is in trouble. The curse follows me everywhere.

NDUNGIDI

Ne-Nsaku. I feel despised all the time. What do you want me to do now?

NE-NSAKU

Please. I need some idols for protection.

NDUNGIDI

I will help you, but be careful.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO :

THE ROYAL COURT - DAY

Ne-Nsaku gets up and wants to hit Ndungidi, but two notables stop him.

ALL NOTABLES

That is weird.

NE-NSAKU

Rubbish. I did not do such a thing.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Sit down, please, notable Ne-Nsaku.

NE-NSAKU
 (to Ndungidi)
 Liar.

NDUNGIDI
 You are the one who is a liar. I
 know other secrets about you.

ALL NOTABLES
 Oh! Oh! Oh!

NDUNGIDI
 (to Ne-Nsaku)
 You cannot challenge me.

The notable Besadi stands. He is very annoyed.

NOTABLE BESADI
 (to Ndungidi and Ne-Nsaku)
 Have you no shame?
 It is a dishonor of you to wrangle
 in front of his Majesty. Today is
 the tenth anniversary since her
 Royal Highness passed away. We have
 to honor her memory. We also have
 to seal alliances with our
 neighbors.
 (to the king)
 Your Majesty, forgive us for such a
 misunderstanding.

KING NE-NSUNDI
 Thank you, notable Besadi. Well-
 spoken. Last night, I had a dream.
 The ancestors reveal to me there
 will be a misfortune in our
 kingdom. Even Ndungidi predicted
 that days ago when he communicated
 with the ancestors.

ALL NOTABLES
 A misfortune?

KING NE-NSUNDI
 Yes, a misfortune.

NE-NSAKU
 What kind of misfortune? Majesty.
 Aren't those Ndungidi
 hallucinations? He always says
 rubbish.

NOTABLE BESADI
 Notable Ne-Nsaku. You have to stop
 behaving like a child. It's not
 about Ndungidi.

KING NE-NSUNDI

It is also said that we must strengthen our bond with our neighbors. That is the reason why we have to contact our spies to find out about future rebel incursions into our territory.

NE-MPUNGI

What can we do, Majesty?

Ndungidi raises his wand in his right hand and a statue on his left. He steps toward notables.

NDUNGIDI

We don't have to lose our faith in our gods.

Ne-Nsaku gets up again. He is very angry.

NE-NSAKU

Always a wand and a statue in hands. What do you think we are doing? I command the army. Our warriors are sufficiently equipped to fight any other army.

NE-MPUNGI

(to Ne-Nsaku)

Can you just shut your mouth, please? What is the matter with you? What kind of rivalry is this? We should be discussing the current issue. We should look to the interest of the kingdom. Your disputes are beyond pathetic.

NOTABLE BESADI

That is true. We don't need quarrels. Quarrels destroy people. If we are not careful, our kingdom will be in danger of destruction. Majesty is telling us something important.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Dear notables. I know that we are concerned about the security problems of our kingdom, but we need to think about important events of the kingdom. Well. In three days, it will be the tenth anniversary of the death of Her Royal Highness. Instead of celebrating, we will organize another activity because we can't be distracted.

(MORE)

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)

The rebels are watching us. Let the notable Ne-Nsaku explain his plan.

NE-NSAKU

(standing up)

I plan to extend our sovereignty and territorial area of influence, annexing rebellious provinces. We are and remain the mighty kingdom. However, all the kingdom subjects must contribute to recruiting all males between the ages of fourteen and forty-five.

NE-MPUNGI

Fourteen, you said? Isn't that an exaggeration, notable Ne-Nsaku?

NOTABLE BESADI

No, notable. It isn't. Isn't it true that a fourteen-year-old boy can make a child?

NE-MPUNGI

We are not talking about the progenitor. We are talking about the defense of our kingdom.

PRINCE NE-BONDO

Sixteen years old will be reasonable.

NOTABLE BESADI

We need a vote.

ALL NOTABLES

Yes, we do.

NOTABLE BESADI

Those who approve of the age of sixteen, raise their hands.

Everyone raises his hands, except Ne-Nsaku.

NOTABLE BESADI (CONT'D)

Proposition accepted.

NE-NSAKU

I'm afraid. I have to disagree.

NOTABLE BESADI

We know that, notable. You did raise your hand. Continue with your plan.

NE-NSAKU

Alright, then. I will require warriors to hold two weeks' worth of food upon reporting for campaign duty.

(crouching and designing)

We will take the position from the North to the South and West to East. That would give us the occasion to defeat our enemies.

NOTABLES

That is all?

NE-NSAKU

What do you mean, that is all?

NOTABLE BESADI

You know what we are talking about. Your plan is unclear. Sure, we will attack from the Northern to the Southern, to Western to Eastern. However, you do not tell us how we would proceed. We need a coherent plan, notable Ne-Nsaku.

NE-NSAKU

I know what my plan is. I understand the position of the enemy. To raise the support against our enemy, we have to make concessions to others. One of the most critical concessions is to ally with the Duke of Kimpanzu and Mbwila.

PRINCE NE-BONDO

Are you sure?

NE-NSAKU

Yes, Prince Ne-Bondo. In order not to fall into the hands of our enemies, we must abide by my plan.

Murmurs of all notables.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Silence, please.

(to Ne-Nsaku)

I hope your plan will work; otherwise, they will reduce us to slavery. Dispatch a spy to discover what is happening on our borders.

(to Ne-Mpungi)

(to Mwe-Mbuku)

(MORE)

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)

Send our emissary to make contact with our future allies. Your plan has to be explained in depth.

NE-MPUNGI

Yes, your Majesty. I will go at once; when I finish investigating, I will inform the council immediately.

KING NE-NSUNDI

(to Mwe-Mbuku)

Good to hear that.

(to all notables)

I want to remind you that we will initiate the second period of slashing-and-burning fields in Mpiaza next week. It will be the beginning of the thirteenth month. Everyone knows the death of the late notable Mavadidi's father, the initiator of Mpiaza. Every year, we visit the workshop he left to his son, Mavadidi, to appreciate his talent.

INT. WOODCARVER WORKSHOP - EVENING

Various wood objects are displayed.

Enter the King Ne-Nsundi, the Prince Ne-Bondo, the Princess, Ne-Makaya, and notables, among them Ne-Mpungi, notable Besadi, and Ne-Nsaku.

When they start visiting, the king sees from afar the face of his daughter, Princess Ne-Makaya, The figure of her daughter that Mavadidi has just completed.

KING NE-NSUNDI

(to Mavadidi)

It is a beautiful work, son.

Everyone approaches the object.

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)

(to his daughter)

My daughter. Have you seen how you have been honored by Mavadidi?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Yes, my father. I am aware of that.

KING NE-NSUNDI

(looking at Mavadidi)

Your work displays a rare sense of emotion and beauty. It is something magical and wonderful.

(MORE)

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)

It is sacred. In my entire life, I have never thought the work of a woodcarver could be splendid like this one.

MAVADIDI

It is an honor for me that your majesty has recognized the value of my work. I am a wood carver. I work with wood and clay. I make a lot of masks and other objects, but no one has honored me before because no one has ever looked at what I do. I am happy that the eye of majesty understands and appreciates such beauty. A woodcarver can see his dream become reality in his work. For me, the woodcarver is a profession and a conservation of the tradition, of whom his majesty is the guardian.

(kneeling)

Your majesty. You have given me the freedom to continue my work. I am thankful.

KING NE-NSUNDI

No, my son. I have to thank you because you are furthering the greatness of our kingdom. People will die, and generations will pass, but your work will never disappear. Tell me now. How can I reward you for this? What gift can I give you?

MAVADIDI

Majesty. Your appreciation is the best thing I can get from you. It's true that a woodcarver needs material gifts, but the recognition of his work is very important.

KING NE-NSUNDI

I appreciate your work, and I must reward you. It will be a proof of my gratitude. If I don't reward you, I will not convince others that you do good work. You will be an example of young people. I am sure they will follow your path.

MAVADIDI

I will help young people. I will choose some young people to join me. About the reward, I don't think it is necessary.

KING NE-NSUNDI

I insist, my son. Every good deed deserves a reward. So what do you want as a reward? Is it difficult to say, son?

MAVADIDI

Yes, her Majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Be brave, son. In addition, the council has many day-to-day matters to deal with. So, get straight to the point. Or do you want me to give you more days?

MAVADIDI

I want to ask you something, but I am unsure if Her Majesty will accept it.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Ask away, son. I will give you anything you want.

MAVADIDI

I am in love with a woman, but I do not know what to do, majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI

(laughs)

Tell me who is that woman. I am the king; I can arrange it.

MAVADIDI

Majesty. I would devote all my soul and my body to her.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Tell me then.

NE-NSAKU

Can you stop with your guesswork? You are talking to the king.

KING NE-NSUNDI

(to Ne-nsaku)

Notable, Ne-Nsaku. Don't frustrate him.

(to Mavadidi)

Go ahead, son.

MAVADIDI

It is the princess Ne-Makaya, Her Majesty.

The notables look at each other. They are astonished.

NE-NSAKU

Eh! Nonsense. Sacrilege. Blasphemy. Profanity. It is an offense against our majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Calm down, Notable Ne-Nsaku.

NE-NSAKU

This kind of act deserves the death penalty.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

(vigorous response)

Death penalty? Are you serious? Can you hear yourself what you are saying? Who are you to decide the death penalty? Why does a man who loves a girl deserve a death sentence?

NE-NSAKU

You are a mere girl. You have no right to speak in front of the elders.

NOTABLE BESADI

Ne-Nsaku. Calm down. You are not the king. Princess Ne-Makaya is not your daughter. You can't make any decision.

NE-NSAKU

She is a mere girl.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

A mere girl? A girl who can provide seed. Someone who can do all those things a woman can do at home and satisfy a husband? I am no longer a small girl.

NE-NSAKU

You can't talk like that to a king's notable.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Yes, I can. I am a woman now. The choice belongs to me.

NE-NSAKU

It seems like you are already in a relationship with him.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

So? What is your problem?

NE-NSAKU

Do you know why your grandmother did not come here?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

I don't care about that. I am not my grandmother.

NE-NSAKU

She knows that her place is not among men.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Oh! I see. You have all the questions and answers on your lips.

NE-NSAKU

Your grandmother...

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

(interrupting)

...We are not of the same generation. You know that, don't you? My grandmother belongs to the old class, which believes women have no rights.

NE-NSAKU

Our traditions forbid women to respond to elders. The curse can fall on you, my child.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

I am not your child.

NE-MPUNGI

Notable Ne-Nsaku. Stop making a fool of yourself.

NE-NSAKU

(to notables)

We have to make a decision.

NOTABLE BESADI

Notable, Ne-Nsaku. We cannot make any decision without the consent of the assembly. You know that.

NE-NSAKU

He deserves a death sentence. He will be hanged until his heart stops beating. Then, no one will ever commit that kind of crime anymore.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Stop it, Ne-Nsaku. Everything has to be debated in the Council of Elders. In my lifetime, there will never be an arbitrary hanging.

NE-NSAKU

But, Majesty...

MAVADIDI

(interrupting)

... His Majesty told me he would give me whatever I ask. Does someone deserve a death because his heart decides to fall in love?

NE-NSAKU

You are wrong.

NE-MPUNGI

Notable Ne-Nsaku. This situation requires appropriate study. That is why we have a council of notables to discuss and decide on such matters.

NOTABLE BESADI

Notable Ne-Nsaku. It would be best if you avoid confrontation with others. It makes you become the enemy of people. Do you remember your last fight with Ndungidi? Just stop that kind of behavior. It would help to turn your tongue a thousand times before speaking.

NE-NSAKU

Oh, please.

KING NE-NSUNDI

(interrupting)

That is enough. We must bring all the matter to the assembly, which can vote. In case there is no unanimity, I will take the appropriate decision.

EXT. RIVER - EVENING

A group of girls is washing clothes in Nkenge's river.

GIRL #1

Did you hear that?

Girls stop rubbing clothes and look at the girl #1.

GIRL #2

What, now? You never stop
gossiping, do you?

GIRL #1

Gossip? No. That is what I heard.
The woodcarver asked to marry the
princess.

ALL GIRLS

He eh.

GIRL #2

Who told you that?

GIRL #1

I can't tell you, but I am sure
that the council will meet tonight.

GIRL #2

The princess and the woodcarver? I
can't believe that. Are they fools?
The weight of the tradition will
undoubtedly fall on them.

GIRL #3

They love each other. What is the
matter?

EXT. FOREST OF LOANGO - EVENING

The princess and the woodcarver sit on a branch of a tree.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

I pray Nzambi a Mpungu Tulendo day
and night, asking him to help us.

MAVADIDI

What can we do if there is
notables' resistance?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

We shall fight until the end of our
life. Nobody, not even my father,
uncles, grandmother, or notables,
can take away what I feel for you.
I don't want our meeting to be
secret again.

MAVADIDI

My love for you is endless. I will
live with that until my tomb. You
are my love, and you will be
forever.

The sounds of something moving.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA
Did you hear something?

MAVADIDI
Yes. What was that?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA
It is bizarre. Is someone spying on us?

MAVADIDI.
What do you think?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA
I don't know, but we have to go now. It will be soon nightfall. This forest can be full of evil spirits sent by Ne-Nsaku.

INT. NE-NSAKU'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ne-Nsaku enters the house. His first wife, NSIMBA, 25, kneels before him and puts a bowl of peanuts and maize on the ground.

NE-NSAKU
Thank you, Nsimba, my preferred wife. A good woman always looks after her husband. I am proud of you.

NSIMBA
I am your wife, Ne-Nsaku. I must satisfy all your wishes.

Enter Ne-Nsaku's spy. He is out of breath. Ne-Nsaku slams his hand, and his wife leaves.

NE-NSAKU'S SPY
Honorable. Honorable.

NE-NSAKU
Speak up. What is the problem? What happened? Please don't make me wait.

NE-NSAKU'S SPY
I saw the princess.

NE-NSAKU
So? Everyone sees the princess.

NE-NSAKU'S SPY
I saw her together with the woodcarver in the forest.

NE-NSAKU

What? Are you sure?

NE-NSAKU'S SPY

Yes, I am. I saw her.

NE-NSAKU

Sacrilege. The notables have not made their decision yet, and they are flirting.

NE-NSAKU'S SPY

It looks like.

NE-NSAKU

What were they doing exactly? What did you see?

NE-NSAKU'S SPY

They were talking.

NE-NSAKU

Just talking? They were talking about what? Men and women don't only talk.

NE-NSAKU'S SPY

I am not sure, notable.

NE-NSAKU.

Nonsense. I want you to find out something to incriminate the woodcarver. Is that too much to ask?

NE-NSAKU'S SPY

No, honorable. Oh, yes. I just found out. They were doing things.

NE-NSAKU

Don't be stupid. What things?

NE-NSAKU'S SPY

They were engaged in a sexual act.

NE-NSAKU

Much better. We have to inform the king. I can't let that happen. The king has to call for a notables' meeting as soon as possible. Go and prepare yourself to be a witness.

INT. KING'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In the living room, the king sits in a chair. Enter his mother. She crouches in front of the king.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Stand up, mother. Don't do that.
You are my mother. I wouldn't be a
king if you did not give me life.

His mother gets up and sits on the chair next to him.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

My son. Did you want to see me?

KING NE-NSUNDI

Yes, mother. During our visit to
Mavadidi, the woodcarver expressed
his desire to marry the princess
Ne-Makaya as a reward for his work.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

What did you answer him, my son?

KING NE-NSUNDI

I was unable to make a decision. I
left it to the notables' council.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

My son. You are the king. You can
make any decision about your
daughter without consulting the
notables.

KING NE-NSUNDI

That is the way we work, mother. I
cannot, under any circumstances, go
beyond the traditional.

Enter a guard.

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)

Guard. Is there anything important
for you to come and interrupt the
conversation with my dear mother?

GUARD

The notable Ne-Nsaku would like to
see Your Majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Let him in.
(to his mother)
Can we continue this conversation
later, Mother?

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Yes, my son.

The Queen's mother leaves, and Ne-Nsaku enters.

NE-NSAKU

Your majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI
Have a seat, Ne-Nsaku.

Ne-Nsaku sits.

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)
What brings you here at such a late hour?

NE-NSAKU
Majesty. Something dreadful has just happened.

KING NE-NSUNDI
What, now?

NE-NSAKU
The woodcarver and the princess were together in the forest. They were doing nasty things.

KING NE-NSUNDI
Are you sure, Ne-Nsaku? Have you seen them with your own eyes?

NE-NSAKU
No, your Majesty. One of my men saw them.

KING NE-NSUNDI
Are they spying on my daughter?

NE-NSAKU
No, Majesty. He was just passing by.

KING NE-NSUNDI
Really? These are serious accusations.

NE-NSAKU
I know, Majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI
Do you know the council must hear three witnesses to confirm such a serious matter?

NE-NSAKU
Yes, Majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI
Good night, Ne-Nsaku. I will call the council meeting for tomorrow evening. But firstly, I have to talk to my daughter.

INT. KING'S HOUSE - MORNING

In the morning. The princess Ne-Makaya sits on her bed. Enter the king.

KING NE-NSUNDI

My daughter. Was your night good?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Yes, Father. It was. Thank you. But what brings you here? You usually don't visit my room at such a time. What is the matter?

KING NE-NSUNDI

It is about you and the woodcarver.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

What about us?

KING NE-NSUNDI

I don't know how to put it. People have seen you alone with him late in the forest. What were you doing there?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

(disappointed)

Father, do you mean you send your men to spy on me?

KING NE-NSUNDI

No, my daughter. I cannot do such a thing. I care about you.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Believe me, father. I will never dishonor you. I am not a foolish girl.

KING NE-NSUNDI

I know. You are the princess of Nsundiland. You have to be careful.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

I am a virgin, and I shall remain until the day I will get married. Listen to your own heart, not to people's speculations. What they want is to destroy our family. Have a trust in me.

KING NE-NSUNDI

I do, my daughter.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

I have to go and meet my grandmother. We are going somewhere.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Then hurry up.

EXT. KING'S HOUSE - DAY

The queen's mother stands at the front of the house. A guard approaches her.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

(to the guard)

I don't need you. Go back inside.

The princess Ne-Makaya joins her grandmother.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Grandmother. Do you know the latest news?

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

No, my granddaughter. Tell me.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

People said they saw me doing things in the forest with Mavadidi.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Who?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

I am not sure, but I think it is that man. The new commander-in-chief of the army.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Why should he do that?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

I think he hates Mavadidi. The way he looks at me, I am sure he is in love with me. They even reported the situation to the council. The council will meet for the matter of concern.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Council meeting?

INT. THE ROYAL COURT - EVENING

The king sits in the middle of his throne. On his left sit the Prince Ne-Bondo. On the left and right side sit the notables.

KING NE-NSUNDI

We are gathered here today at the request of the notable Ne-Nsaku. Commander-in-Chief. Could you explain to the court the reason you called for this meeting?

NE-NSAKU

Majesty, notables, and the elders. You will be surprised when I will expose the situation concerning the kingdom and the danger it can bring to us. All my life, I have never heard that. A woodcarver is asking the princess' hand for a marriage. Instead of waiting for the decision of the notables on his request, he begins to do horrible things to the princess.

NE-MPUNGI

Guard. Enter the witness.

A guard enters with the witness #1, which is one of Ne-Nsaku's spies.

NE-MPUNGI (CONT'D)

(to the witness)

Are you the one who saw the Prince and Mavadidi?

NE-NSAKU'S WITNESS #1

Yes, notable.

NE-MPUNGI

Tell us, what did you exactly see?

NE-NSAKU'S WITNESS #1

I saw the woodcarver with the princess.

NE-MPUNGI

We know that. What were you doing there?

NE-NSAKU'S WITNESS #1

I was checking my palm wine.

NE-MPUNGI

What were they doing?

NE-NSAKU'S WITNESS #1

They were in the throes of passion.

NE-MPUNGI

Throes of passion? Can you say that clearly?

NE-NSAKU'S WITNESS #1

(hesitating)

They were doing something wrong.

NE-MPUNGI

What was that?

NE-NSAKU'S WITNESS #1

They were making love.

ASSEMBLY

Oh! Outrageous.

NE-MPUNGI

Isn't it true that you owe money to the honorable Ne-Nsaku?

NE-NSAKU

What is the point of this question, honorable Ne-Mpungi?

NE-MPUNGI

(to Ne-Nsaku)

Wait. I am coming to the point, honorable. Many people know that you lend money to farmers and then start blackmailing them.

(to the witness)

How can we know if you are not doing that to reduce what you owe him?

NE-NSAKU'S WITNESS #1

You are wrong. I have never had money from the notable Ne-Nsaku. I am telling you the truth.

NE-MPUNGI

(ironic)

Hum. You are telling the truth! Good. You may dismiss now.

Exit the witness #1.

NE-MPUNGI (CONT'D)

Well. We have heard the witness. Notables. I don't know what you think after the witness's testimony. For me, there is a lack of credibility. I have a lot of doubts.

(MORE)

NE-MPUNGI (CONT'D)

As tradition requires, we will need two more witnesses before we decide.

NE-NSAKU

Are you serious, notable Ne-Mpungi,

KING NE-NSUNDI

Notable Ne-Nsaku. Everyone is tired. Tomorrow is another day. Our minds will be clear, and we can continue our debate.

NE-NSAKU

That is not fair.

EXT. A ROAD IN THE KINGDOM - DAY

Girls with their calabashes on their heads come from the river.

GIRL #1

Girls. Are you aware of that?

GIRL #2

What, again?

GIRL #1

It's hot at the Council of Elders. They are trying Mavididi.

GIRL #2

Do you mean the Woodcarver?

GIRL #1

Yes. He could face the death penalty. He is possibly facing the death penalty.

GIRL #3

How do you know that?

GIRL #1

I have many contenders among the elders.

GIRL #2

(to the girl #1)

My god! You are a calamity, my dear.

ALL GIRLS

Oh, oh, oh!

GIRL #2

Can you stop gossiping, please? Mavididi does not deserve that.

EXT. KING'S HOUSE - EVENING

The princess and the queen's mother sit on bamboo chairs.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

I am still a virgin, grandmother.
Nothing is faithful in what they
are talking about.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

I believe you, my granddaughter. As
I told you before, I am convinced
that all these are Ne-Nsaku's
shenanigans.

INT. THE ROYAL COURT - EVENING

Ne-Nsaku takes small steps.

NE-NSAKU

Our laws are clear about such
crimes. The boy deserves the death
penalty. There is no other
alternative.

NOTABLE BESADI

If we condemn this man, young
people will revolt. If we offer
compassion, young people will
consider it an example of leniency.

NOTABLE MAKENGO

What do we have to do now? The
thing is, executing this man will
make him a martyr. I believe that
life imprisonment would be a better
option.

NE-MPUNGI

What kind of woman would accept her
son to be sacrificed in the name of
traditions? We need to think very
carefully because life depends on
it. This man deserves neither death
nor life imprisonment.

NE-NSAKU

Abomination. Would we let that boy
walk all over our traditions? Such
a fault deserves punishment. None
other than death. Not only did he
express his wish to marry our
princess, but he refused to wait
for the decision of notables before
engaging in improper acts with her.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Notables. The meeting has to be
adjourned. We need to rest.
Tomorrow is another day.

EXT. NKENGE'S PLANTATION - DAY

Queen mother and the princess are having a traditional drink.
In the background, the peasants are still working in the
plantations.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

I can't believe what Ne-Nsaku
needs. He's insisting on the death
sentence. Do you think someone saw
you? Do they have some witnesses?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Ne-Nsaku can make his witnesses, as
his father did before. I don't care
about that because I know he's
lying.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

I believe you. I am pretty sure Ne-
Nsaku has already made his
witnesses. That man is very clever,
my granddaughter. One day, his own
game will beat him. Anyway. The
notables have not yet decided on
the case. They will continue the
meeting tomorrow.

INT. NE-NSAKU'S HOUSE - EVENING

Ne-Nsaku's second wife brings water to her husband. Ne-Nsaku
is drinking water.

Then she brings a bold of cassava tubers and safou.

NE-NSAKU

(speaking alone)

What's this? The world must be
upside down. Do the notables
believe the woodcarver word? I
can't believe that.

NE-NSAKU'S SECOND WIFE

Why are you so sad, my man?

NE-NSAKU

The King Ne-Nsundi is becoming a
fool.

NE-NSAKU'S SECOND WIFE

I think he's too old now. It's time to be replaced by someone else. My love, you are in the best position to replace him.

NE-NSAKU

That's why you're still my favorite. I swear I will have that woodcarver convicted at tomorrow's council meeting.

INT. KING'S HOUSE - EVENING

King Ne-Nsundi sits alone. Between the notables Besadi and Ne-Mpungi.

NOTABLE BESADI

Her Majesty. We are sorry for our visit at this late time.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Notables. You are welcome anytime here.

NE-MPUNGI

We heard that Ne-Nsaku got two more witnesses.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Oh!

NOTABLE BESADI

He's calling to another council meeting.

KING NE-NSUNDI

That is fine if he insists. Inform another notables for another meeting.

INT. THE ROYAL COURT - DAY

The king Ne-Nsundi, the prince Ne-Bondo, and all the assembly members are in the courtyard. Ne-Nsaku arrives late. All notables are confused. They look at him.

NE-MPUNGI

Always late, notable Ne-Nsaku. If you don't have another witness, let us decide. But you have to know, that we will not be able to condemn Mavadidi if we don't hear other witnesses.

NE-NSAKU
Majesty. Give me one minute.

KING NE-NSUNDI
Ah, Ne-Nsaku. We are tired, now. Go on.

Ne-Nsaku goes out.

NOTABLE BESADI
Nonsense.

Enter back Ne-Nsaku.

NE-MPUNGI
Notables. As the tradition requires, notable Ne-Nsaku will introduce his two witnesses.
(to Ne-Nsaku)
Well. Where is your witness?

NE-NSAKU
He is outside, honorable.

NE-MPUNGI
Guards. Ask him to come in.

Enter Ne-Nsaku's witness #2.

NE-MPUNGI (CONT'D)
Do you swear to tell the truth?

WITNESS #2
I do, honorable.

NE-MPUNGI
Do you know that if you lie, you will be punished?

NE-NSAKU'S WITNESS #2
Yes, honorable.

NE-MPUNGI
What have you seen that day?

NE-NSAKU'S WITNESS #2
I saw the princess and the woodcarver making love, honorable.

MAVADIDI
It is not true.

NE-NSAKU
Shut up. Who asked you to open your mouth?

NE-MPUNGI

Stop it, please, honorable Ne-Nsaku. I don't think your witness is credible. You scare them, so they can't tell the truth.

NE-NSAKU

I don't scare them at all. They are free to say what they want.

NE-MPUNGI

We need to hear the last witness.

EXT. KINGDOM PUBLIC PLACE - DAY

Some young people from the kingdom are heading towards the forest. They carry guns and machetes for hunting.

YOUNG #1

With everything going through at the elders' council, we must be careful because it can happen to anyone.

YOUNG #2

That is true.

YOUNG #3

Let's go hunting. What are you afraid of? Those older people had made their time. They are encrusting on the tradition to scare us. I am not afraid of them.

YOUNG #1

(to the young #3)

Be careful about what you are saying. Maybe someone can hear us. Besides, the notable Ne-Nsaku chief has spies everywhere. At least, that's what they say.

YOUNG #2

I have even heard that tomorrow evening, they will decide on the fate of Mavadidi by voting. Either they send him to prison or they execute him.

EXT. THE ROYAL COURT - DAY

The king Ne-Nsundi, the prince Ne-Bondo, and all the assembly members sit.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Although we heard the witnesses, we can notice a lack of credibility in witnesses. What is the point of calling the third witness? They all are the chief of the army witnesses. That is why we need to proceed with a vote. Take a moment of reflection when you go back home. Tomorrow, we will only answer whether Mavadiddi has the right to ask for the princess's hand in marriage. As for the question that states that they committed fornication, there is not enough evidence. It's irrelevant. Think about the case. In two days, everyone will express his voice, and then we can see the outcome regarding this case.

INT. KING'S HOUSE - EVENING

Princess Ne-Makaya brings a cup of palm wine to King Ne-Nsundi.

Enter Queen Mother. She approaches the king Ne-Nsundi.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

You don't look well, my son. Is it because of the council's meeting?

KING NE-NSUNDI

Despite the insistence of the notable Ne-Nsaku, all is going well, Mother. I know you will say, I should listen to you.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

No, my son. I am not blaming you. You just have a good heart.

KING NE-NSUNDI

In two days, we will start discussing the gift asked by Mavadidi.

INT. THE ROYAL COURT - DAY

King Ne-Nsundi, Prince Ne-Bondo, and all the notables sit. Then two guards enter with Mavadidi. They make him sit in the middle of the courtroom. King Ne-Nsundi stands before the court.

KING NE-NSUNDI

This evening, we must rule on this challenging and complex case. It is the first time our kingdom will lead such a case. What is it about? As a gift, Mavadidi, the wood carver, wants to marry the princess. We are aware that during this debate, the opinions will be contradictory. However, I want everyone to be guided by his heart. Whatever your grievance against Mavadidi, I ask you to be objective.

Ne-Nsaku gets up.

NE-NSAKU

I protest. You must mention in your statement, that the boy had sexual intercourse with the princess before the council decision.

NE-MPUNGI

Calm down, Ne-Nsaku. Your witnesses were not credible. We cannot mention your proposition. The case is already closed.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Ne-Mpungi, proceed, please.

NE-MPUNGI

Her Majesty, dears notables, and the elders. Whether positive or negative, everything must be treated with equity as the king asks us.

Ne-Nsaku gets up without permission.

NE-NSAKU

Your Majesty and notables. Don't let this man deride our traditions. Falling in love with a virgin princess as a woodcarver is an offense. Royal blood cannot be mixed with common blood. And you ...

NE-MPUNGI

(interrupting)
... Why not? The blood flowing in all our veins is red?

NE-NSAKU

Yes, I know, but royal blood is sacred. It is not the reason to allow this woodcarver to taint it. We cannot amend the ancestral law. It is an abomination.

MWE-MBUKU

Honorable, Ne-Nsaku. You have never accepted the established order. Why, now?

NE-NSAKU

That is because it has been like that since the beginning.

NE-MPUNGI

(to Ne-Nsaku)

That is not true. May I remind you of the origin of our kingdom?

NE-NSAKU

I don't need any lessons from you.

NE-MPUNGI

Yes, Ne-Nsaku. It would be best to teach you some lessons. Listen to me now: in the beginning, blacksmiths and woodcarvers occupied the highest positions because they were the ones who founded the kingdom.

NE-NSAKU

Where did you get that? Rubbish.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Enough! It would help if you grew up. It is not a matter of fighting.
(To the notable Ne-Mpungi)
Move on.

NE-MPUNGI

This evening, we must answer two questions: firstly, does a woodcarver have the right to marry a princess?
If yes, then should we abolish our traditions? Secondly, do we have the right to condemn someone to death simply because of falling in love with a princess? Notables, I appeal to your integrity of judgment. No one should influence the other. Everyone is free to express his thoughts. After this discussion, we will proceed to a vote.

NE-NSAKU

Your majesty, notables, and elders, as I said earlier, a man of an inferior social class can never bring misfortune to our kingdom. I am sure that many elders and notables agree with me on this point.

NOTABLE BESADI

Speak for yourself, notable Ne-Nsaku.

NE-NSAKU

We should not say yes because it is expedient. Saying yes will not only abolish our blood mixture traditions but also affect other traditions. Traditions established generations ago and that work well. This case is no reason to replace them. Why should we apply compassion to someone who has violated our sacred laws and principles? We are aware that this punishment is most often a death sentence.

NOTABLE BESADI

Tradition is not law, notable Ne-Nsaku.

NE-NSAKU

Yes, it is. But...

PRINCE NE-BONDO

(interrupting)

... Since we started, I have stayed quiet. All of us have heard what everyone said. We must know that a man the notable Ne-Nsaku asks to be sentenced to death emerged from his mother's womb.

NE-NSAKU

The question is not whether this man came from a woman's womb or not.

PRINCE NE-BONDO

It's about what, then? None of us would allow his son to suffer such a fate. Sentencing this man to death will be a horrific crime the kingdom will commit. Imagine his mother's pain when he has to be punished because he loved a woman.

(MORE)

PRINCE NE-BONDO (CONT'D)

And finally, my niece, the princess, is a woman. She deserves to marry who she wants.

NE-NSAKU

We should not see him as a victim. The law applies to everyone. If we cannot condemn him because he fell in love with the princess, we must condemn him for disrespecting the tradition.

NE-MPUNGI

It is too late, notable Ne-Nsaku. We need a break. In the next meeting, we will continue the discussion and also vote to resolve the case.

EXT. KINGDOM PUBLIC PLACE - DAY

Men and women are speculating about what is happening in the Council of the Elders. They speak indistinctly.

INT. THE ROYAL COURT - DAY

The guards enter with Mavadidi. They make him sit in the center of the courtroom.

Then enters Ne-Nsaku. All the notables look at him.

KING NE-NSUNDI

(to Ne-Nsaku)

We need to respect this court. You are the one who is putting pressure on this case, and you are obliged to get here on time. I won't admit anymore, this lack of respect in the future.

NE-NSAKU

(stand)

I am sorry, your Majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Forewarned is forearmed. Be seated.

(to the notables)

Today, we will do everything to decide this case.

(to Ne-Mpungi)

We may proceed.

NE-MPUNGI

Thank you, your Majesty. As we decided in the last meeting, we must be ready for the vote.

Ne-Mpungi stands and hands four small colored sticks to each notable.

NE-MPUNGI (CONT'D)

Each of you has four sticks. Each stick has a meaning. The red means the death sentence, the black one symbolizes life imprisonment, the blue one means acquittal, and the yellow is the neutrality. Without regard for another's vote, please raise the stick representing your choice. Raise your sticks now.

Each notable raises a small stick of his choice.

NE-MPUNGI (CONT'D)

(counting)

Four red sticks, two black sticks, and three blues.

Ne-Mpungi looks in the King's direction.

NE-MPUNGI (CONT'D)

The majority approve of the death penalty, but we need to wait for the king's last word.

NE-NSAKU

Nonsense.

NOTABLE BESADI

Can you shut your mouth for once, Ne-Nsaku ? What kind of man are you ?

KING NE-NSUNDI

(looking at Mavadidi)

Do you have anything to say?

Mavadidi stands.

MAVADIDI

Yes, Majesty. I just don't understand the reason I have been brought here as a murderer. I still don't know what I did wrong. Your Majesty told me to ask whatever I wanted. What sin have I committed? Why should I be shackled thus?

NE-NSAKU

Mavadidi. You have disregarded the royal traditions.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Honorable Ne-Nsaku. I am the one who asked Mavadidi a question. It's to me, he must answer.

MAVADIDI

(looks at Ne-Nsaku)

Honorable. Can you send your son to death for publicly expressing his love to someone?

NE-NSAKU

Shut up, Mavadidi. She is not someone. She is the princess.

MAVADIDI

No. You can't because you have done all this to defend your interest, because you are a secret admirer of the princess. You want her for yourself. I am sure you have bought the voices of some elders to achieve your ends.

NE-NSAKU

Blasphemy. How dare you.

(to notables)

Can you ask him to shut his mouth?

KING NE-NSUNDI

Ne-Nsaku. This young man risks the death penalty. He has the right to express what is in his heart.

MAVADIDI

Majesty. I am sure you know that I haven't defied the traditions. I also know you cannot decide without the consent of the notables. I have not committed any offense. Notable Ne-Nsaku wants my dead for the reasons he knows himself. Majesty. Princess Ne-Makaya overwhelms my mind. I am only an ordinary wood carver who loves a princess. Love does not recognize classes and differences.

NE-NSAKU

Shut up—impudent man.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Ne-Nsaku. That is enough. Let him express all his thoughts.

MAVADIDI

I admitted that I love the princess.

(MORE)

MAVADIDI (CONT'D)

I was honest before his majesty.
Why must the notable Ne-Nsaku, Your
Majesty, silence me?

NE-NSAKU

Mavadidi, you will be punished for
your impudence.

MAVADIDI

What difference does it make, alive
or dead? I will never give up my
conviction. Your threats can never
kill true love, since it always
triumphs. And despite all the
powers you wield, you will never be
able to erase my passion.

NE-NSAKU

Shut up.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Enough. This man will not be
executed at this moment.
Guards. Put him in prison until we
reconsider the situation. We have
to end our meeting.

(to notables)

Go back to your business.

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN THE KINGDOM - EVENING

A group of notables stands before the royal court. They are
gossiping.

NE-NSAKU

The king is losing all reason. His
state of mind is not normal. He is
becoming weak.

NOTABLES

(together)

That's true.

NE-NSAKU

Are we going to let him destroy our
kingdom?

NOTABLES

(together)

Oh, no.

NE-NSAKU

We must take things into our own
hands. We must overthrow the King,
or, one day, our kingdom will fall
into the hands of the enemy. My
friends, we have to overthrow him.

NOTABLES
 (together)
 Yes.

NOTABLE MAKENGO
 Notables. If someone denounces us,
 we will be forced into exile.

NE-NSAKU
 Into exile, you said? We will have
 the support of more than three
 provinces.
 The Dukes of those provinces have
 also pointed out the weakness of
 the King. If anyone must go into
 exile, it will be him.

NOTABLE MAKENGO
 It is suicidal, notables.

NE-NSAKU
 All right! Who's with me?

All raise their hands except the notable, Makengo.

NE-NSAKU (CONT'D)
 The majority wins.

The notable Makengo does not answer.

A NOTABLE
 What is the plan?

NE-NSAKU
 I am appointing the notable Makengo
 to contact the dukes.

NOTABLE MAKENGO
 No. There is no way I am going to
 do that.

NE-NSAKU
 Well. I conclude that who is not
 with me is against me. I will
 appoint one of my men.

INT. KING'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The King sits on his chair but is sleeping.

BEGIN OF THE DREAM

His deceased wife, NE-LUNAMA, appears to him.

NE-LUNAMA
 What is bothering you, my husband?

KING NE-NSUNDI

(in his sleep)

Ne-Lunama, my wife. What are you doing here?

NE-LUNAMA

Why are you so sad? What is the matter? Is it about Mavadidi and your daughter?

KING NE-NSUNDI

Yes, my beloved wife. You are right. This situation is uncomfortable for me. I don't know what decision I should have.

NE-LUNAMA

You are the King, do you remember? It was you who asked Mavadidi to make a wish. It would help if you kept your word. Mavadidi is a good man. He can take care of our daughter.

KING NE-NSUNDI

I know, but...

NE-LUNAMA

(interrupting)

... There is no but, my king.

The king wakes up suddenly.

END OF THE DREAM

INT. KING'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Enter the queen's mother. She approaches the king.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Is something bothering you, my son? You haven't seemed so sad since Ne-Lunama, your wife, passed away. Is it about Mavadidi and your daughter?

KING NE-NSUNDI

It's curious. Ne-Lunama just asked me the same question.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Did you say, Ne-Lunama?

KING NE-NSUNDI

No, mother. It's just... Uh!
I am not sad, mother. I am just
thinking.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

You are, my son. Do I need to
remind you that you were in my womb
for nine months? I know every
movement, every mood of yours more
than anyone else. I have always
known that you were lying to me.
One day, when you were playing with
other notables' children, one of
them said, you pierced his small
tam-tam. When I asked you, you
denied it. You could not look at
me. Then I told you. My son, you
are lying. You asked me how did I
know that. I responded, "Every
mother knows when her child is
lying." Tell me now. What is it
about? Is it about Mavadidi's death
sentence?

KING NE-NSUNDI

Yes, mother. It's a difficult
decision to make. In all my reign,
I have never faced such a
situation.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

You are the king. Do what you think
is better and, above all, would be
reasonable to soothe the minds of
young people. Imagine you were that
boy's father; how could you have
acted?

KING NE-NSUNDI

I'll wait for the council's
decision, Mother.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

The Council knows that you are the
king. You can change any decision
if it is in the people's interest.
Are you afraid of Ne-Nsaku's
reaction?

KING NE-NSUNDI

No. Ne-Nsaku wasn't the only person
who voted for the death sentence.
Some notables did vote against
Mavadidi, too.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Open your eyes, son. Didn't you consider that Ne-Nsaku could corrupt or influence the decision of those notables?

KING NE-NSUNDI

It's possible, but we need evidence.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Still, you are the king, and you can revise the decision. You have to. Mavadidi does not deserve the death penalty.

Suddenly enter the princess, Ne-Makaya.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

That is right, grandmother. Father. You have to listen to the grandmother. It is the way of the reason.

KING NE-NSUNDI

It was a majority decision. So be it. Maybe this decision is for your good.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

How do they know what is good or bad for me? What about you? If you had a son and were notable, would you accept the other to decide on his death sentence? You are not the king but the guardian of our tradition. You can make this vote null and void.

KING NE-NSUNDI

My daughter. It's not pleasant for me. That's why I have asked the notables to postpone the decision, waiting for new elements.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

What new elements, father? You know that Mavadidi did not do anything wrong.

KING NE-NSUNDI

I need their consent for everything.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Does your court not give the defendant the chance to defend himself?

KING NE-NSUNDI

It does, of course.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

You are an open-minded person. How didn't you think about the likelihood that Ne-Nsaku might bribe some notables?

KING NE-NSUNDI

Of course, I have considered that already, but I need evidence, like I said to your grandmother.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Oh! Until they kill him? Mavadidi is a good man who only expresses his feelings. You better protect me against Ne-Nsaku.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Calm down, my granddaughter.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Are you on their side, grandmother?

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

No, my granddaughter. I am on the side of the truth. I can't accept someone to be killed because he falls in love.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Ne-Nsaku has considerable influence among the notables. He can persuade anyone to do what he wants. He became mighty when he was appointed the army's commander-in-chief. Now, everyone is afraid of him.

KING NE-NSUNDI

How do you know everyone scares him?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

People talk, father.

KING NE-NSUNDI

You are in love, my daughter. Be careful with your judgment. It may lead to a lack of objectivity.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Alter the decision, Father, please.

KING NE-NSUNDI

I have faith in my notables' decision. Everything will be fine.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

I am not talking about your notables. You are the king.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Calm down, my granddaughter. Like your father said, everything will be fine.

EXT. KING'S HOUSE - DAY

The king sits on a chair under the tree. His guards stand on two sides. Suddenly, a messenger arrives.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Messenger.

A MESSENGER

(kneeling)

Majesty. There is a talk of a planned conspiracy to kidnap the princess.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Who wants to kidnap my daughter? Where did you hear that?

A MESSENGER

The rumors come from reliable sources in the kingdom, Majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Rumors are still rumors. Do you know who exactly is spreading these rumors?

A MESSENGER

No, Majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI

I can't reign with presumptions. I need proof.

A MESSENGER

There is something else, Majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI

What is it now?

MESSENGER

They are planning to assassinate Her Majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Are they also rumors?

Prince Ne-Bondo arrives and overhears part of the conversation.

PRINCE NE-BONDO

Majesty, you could perhaps consider what the messenger has just said. There is no smoke without fire. Some rumors can be relevant.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Well. Contact the chief of the Justice and deal it with him.

Suddenly, a correctional officer arrives. He kneels before the King.

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)

Guards. Why are you here?

A MESSENGER

Your majesty. A group of insurgents wants to kill the woodcarver in the prison. Fortunately, the prison guards stopped them on time.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Did they kill people?

A MESSENGER

No, Your Majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI

What is going on? Guard. I need to see Ne-Mpungi, Ne-Nsaku and Besadi.

Exit the messenger.

INT. KING'S HOUSE - DAY

Arrive Ne-Mpungi and Besadi.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Notables. Where is Ne-Nsaku?

NOTABLE BESADI

I have no idea, Majesty.

NE-MPUNGI

I did not see him. I heard that he traveled. I think he will come back tomorrow.

KING NE-NSUNDI

How can he travel without informing the council? We need an express meeting tomorrow afternoon.

(MORE)

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)

Some armed men attacked the prison to kidnap Mavadidi. We need an urgent council meeting at the royal palace tomorrow before sunset.

INT. KING'S HOUSE - EVENING

The Queen's mother and the princess Ne-Makaya sit. They are eating. The Queen's mother hears some noises.

The sounds of the tam-tam resonate.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Did you hear the sound of the tam-tam?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Yes, I hear the sounds of tam-tam.

INT. THE ROYAL COURT - EVENING

The King is on his throne in the center. At his side sits the prince Ne-Bondo, and guards stand on both sides. Ne-Mpungi, Besadi, the first notable and other notables, sit on both sides of the room. Some minutes later, enter Ne-Nsaku.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Notable Ne-Nsaku. I don't understand why you are coming late this time. What's going on?

NE-NSAKU

I am sorry, Her Majesty. I did travel.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Did you travel without informing the council?

You are the chief of the army. You accepted to protect people. Notables. Yesterday, armed men wanted to kidnap and assassinate Mavadidi in his cell.

NE-NSAKU

Assassinate? Kidnap? Mavadidi is a convicted man awaiting the death penalty. His life is no longer critical. Whether he is killed today or tomorrow, there is no change.

NE-MPUNGI

Decidedly, you will stop at nothing to have Mavadidi condemned to death. What are the real reasons for this relentlessness?

NE-NSAKU

What makes you think there is a reason? He defied the tradition. It's as simple as that.

KING NE-NSUNDI

You're not going to start bickering again.

NE-MPUNGI

The assailant attacked the jail to silence Mavadidi, as her majesty said. Fortunately, their plan has failed. They kept Mavadidi in a safe place.

NE-NSAKU

Why is that?

No one answers him.

KING NE-NSUNDI

The assailants have support. We do not yet know who. But we will find out soon.

NE-NSAKU

Majesty. Do you think someone supported them?

KING NE-NSUNDI

Possibly, but we have no evidence yet.

NE-NSAKU

So, the council is protecting Mavadidi like a prince. That is incredible.

NE-MPUNGI

(to Ne-Nsaku)

Incorrigible. Don't you have anything to do with that? You've been missing for more than five days. We don't even know where you have been. An important notable cannot disappear like that.

NE-NSAKU

What are you talking about? When the crops fail, it is my fault.

(MORE)

NE-NSAKU (CONT'D)

When somebody has a problem, it is my fault. Of course, I am not a bad guy here. I am the commander-in-chief of the army.

Enter a notable. He approaches Ne-Mpungi and whisper in his ear. Ne-Mpungi approaches the king and talks indistinctly with him.

KING NE-NSUNDI

This council is suspended for this evening. The notable Makengo has been murdered.

His body was found in the woods. Let Nzambi a Mpungu keep his soul. The council will let you know the date of the next meeting. Prince Ne-Bondo will have the responsibility to organize the funeral.

Exit the king, the prince, and all the notables.

INT. KING'S HOUSE - DAY

The king is alone. He sits in his chair. Enter the Princess, Ne-Makaya.

KING NE-NSUNDI

My daughter.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

My father. I have something to tell you. It's of the highest importance concerning Mavadidi's case.

KING NE-NSUNDI

What is it, my daughter?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

I heard everything that was said in the council.

KING NE-NSUNDI

I do not doubt that.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

People are saying that Ne-Nsaku is the instigator of the conspiracy that happened in the prison. I also have evidence that he bribed other notables to obtain the death sentence for Mavididi. I have some people who can testify.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Who are they?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

They are people who are tired of being robbed by Ne-Nsaku and his men.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Alright. I need your friends to testify before the council. Can they?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Possibly, but they need the guarantee of their security because Ne-Nsaku has long arms. He can reach them wherever they are.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Tell them not to be afraid. They will be protected, as we did for Mavadidi.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

That man is incredible, father. He behaves as if people's lives belong to him.

KING NE-NSUNDI

I knew that Ne-Nsaku was hiding something.
I knew that Ne-Nsaku was hiding something. We were fooled.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

No, father. You had confidence in him. It's normal. You listen to your notables. It's not a bad thing.

KING NE-NSUNDI

At the next council meeting, we will trap him. We are going to see Ndungidi, the shaman, immediately. Ne-Nsaku has to be there, too. Inform him.

INT. NDUNGIDI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The king, the prince Ne-Bondo, Ne-Mpungi, Besadi, and Ne-Nsaku sit on the ground. They form a circle. Ndungidi sits in the middle. He is mixing some herbs in a calabash.

NE-NSAKU

What is the reason for our presence in the charlatan's place?

NOTABLE BESADI

Ne-Nsaku. Can you have good manners for once? Your rudeness and your arrogance will serve for nothing.

NDUNGIDI

King Ne-Nsundi! The dispenser of the wisdom of the ancestor. We are here to find who is troubling our kingdom.

NE-NSAKU

Go to the facts, Ndungidi. Stop with your chanting. What is it again? What do you want from the king?

NE-MPUNGI

Calm down, Ne-Nsaku.

NE-NSAKU

Nonsense.

Ndungidi is making incantations. Then he looks at Ne-Nsaku. He approaches him.

NDUNGIDI

Nzambi a Mpungu revealed that you are the one who is giving trouble in the kingdom.

NE-NSAKU

I don't know what you are talking about.

NDUNGIDI

Really?

NE-NSAKU

You're looking for problems where there aren't any.

KING NE-NSUNDI

(to Ne-Nsaku)

Don't miss tomorrow's meeting.

INT. THE ROYAL COURT - DAY

The king, the prince Ne-Bondo, and all the notables sit.

NE-MPUNGI

Notables. We have new evidence of what is happening in the kingdom.

NE-NSAKU

Majesty. Where is Mavadidi? It's the one who is concerned.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Ne-Mpungi. Please read the list of pieces of evidence.

Ne-Mpungi stands.

NE-MPUNGI

On the day of December, thirteen hundred and twenty, the king's court found some evidence about the abuses committed by the notable Ne-Nsaku, commander in chief of the army. Firstly, he charged the farmers' excessive taxes illegally to reinforce his wealth.

NE-NSAKU

(stands)

Rubbish.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Sit down, notable Ne-Nsaku.

NE-MPUNGI

Secondly, the notable Makengo died under mysterious circumstances. Nzambi a Mpungu revealed that you are the one who plotted his death.

NE-NSAKU

(stands)

That is a vast conspiracy. I am leaving. I can't hear those stupid allegations.

He wants to leave the court.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Sit down, Ne-Nsaku.

He sits back.

NE-NSAKU

Simple presumption. You have no evidence.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Go on, Ne-Mpungi.

NE-MPUNGI

Thirdly. Ne-Nsaku, to satisfy his selfishness, bribed certain notables to vote for the Mavadidi death sentence.

NE-NSAKU
 Sit down, Ne-Nsaku.

He sits back.

NE-NSAKU (CONT'D)
 Simple presumption. You have no
 evidence.

KING NE-NSUNDI
 Go on, Ne-Mpungi.

NE-MPUNGI
 Fourthly. The notable Ne-Nsaku sent
 to death our fighters on the front
 line.

NE-NSAKU
 Your Majesty. I protest. This list
 is entirely ridiculous.

KING NE-NSUNDI
 Ridiculous? That is the only word
 you have in your mouth.

NE-NSAKU
 I believe you don't have any other
 witnesses.

KING NE-NSUNDI
 You will see if we do or not.

NE-NSAKU
 I am sure you don't have witnesses.

NE-MPUNGI
 Guards. Bring in the first witness.

The guards enter with a farmer.

NE-NSAKU
 (astonished)
 This man? Nonsense.

NE-MPUNGI
 (pointing Ne-Nsaku at his
 finger)
 Farmer. Do you know that man?

FARMER
 Yes, my lord.

NE-MPUNGI
 The court wants to hear you.

The farmer hesitates.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Speak up, farmer. Do not fear anything. You are under the royal protection.

A FARMER

Your Majesty. Ne-Nsaku's men took more than two thousand Nzimbu shells, which I had saved for my family. They beat me in front of my children when I refused.

NE-NSAKU

He's lying.

KING NE-NSUNDI

You may proceed, Ne-Mpungi.

NE-MPUNGI

Guards, the second witness, please.

Enter the second witness, which is Mavuanga.

NE-MPUNGI (CONT'D)

(pointing his finger at Ne-Nsaku)

Mavuanga. Do you know that man?

MAVUANGA

Yes, my lord. His men killed my daughter's fiancé because the notable Ne-Nsaku wanted her. He also destroyed all my harvest because I refused to join the assailants who planned to murder Mavadidi.

NE-NSAKU

Ridiculous. How dare you tell those lies, farmer?

NE-MPUNGI

Enter the third farmer, guards.

INT. KING'S HOUSE - DAY

Princess Ne-Makaya and the queen's mother are at the table. Two maids put on the table plates filled with maize. Cassava and peanuts.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Why was the reason for that emergency meeting, granddaughter?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Oh! Grandmother. The meeting had concerned Ne-Nsaku.

(MORE)

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA (CONT'D)

They found some evidence against him. This time, they have credible witnesses. That man is a criminal.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Just looking at his face, you can see he's a villain.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Did you notice that too?

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Of course, I am an experienced woman.

Both laugh.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Mavadidi will be there to testify, too.

INT. THE ROYAL COURT - DAY

Guards enter with Mavadidi.

NE-NSAKU

Mavadidi? I protest most strongly, Your Majesty.

NE-MPUNGI

Why is that, Ne-Nsaku? The court has to hear him.

NE-NSAKU

Majesty ...

KING NE-NSUNDI

Oh, yes. The court wants to hear him.

MAVADIDI

Your Majesty and notables. I did not do what the notable Mavadidi is accusing me of. He had flawed evidence to obtain my death sentence because he secretly loved Princess Ne-Makaya.

NE-NSAKU

Lies.

MAVADIDI

Notable Makengo knew that. That is the reason they killed him.

NE-MPUNGI

Notable Ne-Nsaku. Don't even try to deny it. We know everything.

(to Mavadidi)

In the name of King Ne-Nsundi and the court, accept our apologies.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Approach, Mavadidi.

Mavadidi approaches the King and bows before him.

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)

The royal family will set your engagement day with the princess Ne-Makaya in a few days.

NE-NSAKU

Blasphemy. We cannot go against the tradition. That is outrageous, Your Majesty.

NDUNGIDI

(to Ne-Nsaku)

That is the beginning of your end, arrogant person.

Ne-Nsaku gets up to hit Ndungidi. All the notables intervene to separate them. Ne-Nsaku sits back.

NE-NSAKU

We will see, charlatan.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Guards. Take Ne-Nsaku away.

(to Ne-Nsaku)

Your place is the prison.

Guards evacuate Ne-Nsaku. He's resisting, but they take him away.

NE-NSAKU

You will see what will happen in the next few days. I swear that I will terrorize this kingdom.

NE-MPUNGI

Stop with your threats. Nobody is afraid of you, Ne-Nsaku.

KING NE-NSUNDI

(to Mavadidi)

Someone is waiting for you in the royal house.

Two guards take Ne-Nsaku out and take him to a cell.

NE-NSAKU

We'll see if my threats are
useless.

Other guards take Mavadidi to Princess Ne-Makaya at the royal house.

Everyone leaves the kingdom court.

EXT. KINGDOM BORDER - NIGHT

In the villages around Mbamba's border, the insurgents, armed with arrows, move around, killing women, men, and children. They burn the town. People are running and screaming. Several people are on the ground. Some villagers manage to escape. Some armed men pursue them to capture them, but they disappear.

INT. KING'S HOUSE - DAY

The king sits. At his side stand two guards. Enter an injured man, out of breath. The guards rush at him.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Let him come to me.

(To the man)

What happened?

MAN

Ne-Nsaku's groups and some foreign warriors killed a lot of people last night.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Where exactly?

MAN

It was in the villages around the Mbamba's border.

KING NE-NSUNDI

What else?

MAN

They killed a lot of people. They also captured some of our warriors.

KING NE-NSUNDI

(to one of the guards)

I need to see notables. Go and inform them. The situation is serious.

Exit the man. Enter the queen's mother. She approaches her son, the king, and she hears him mumbling.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA
My son? You are mumbling.

KING NE-NSUNDI
Men, women, and children of this kingdom know that since I am a King, I have always protected them against men such as Ne-Nsaku. The thing is, I did not know that he used looting, extortion, and murder to strike fear in the hearts of those people. Now, he wants to destroy the kingdom. But as long as Nzambi a Mpungu a Tulendo is with us, he won't be able to do it.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA
What is happening here, my son?

KING NE-NSUNDI
The kingdom is under attack, Mother.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA
By who?

KING NE-NSUNDI
Ne-Nsaku and his men.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA
Any casualties?

KING NE-NSUNDI
We don't know yet, but some of our warriors, villagers, and farmers have been captured.

Enter Ndungidi, Ne-Mpungi and the notable Besadi.

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)
Please, notables. Take place.

NOTABLE BESADI AND NDUNGIDI
(together)
Majesty.

KING NE-NSUNDI
Ne-Nsaku's men are attacking our kingdom. They join forces with some of our neighbors. Handle it, Ne-Mpungi.

NE-MPUNGI
Yes, Majesty. I will organize the response as soon as possible to all the warriors. We will not spare Ne-Nsaku's life because he is a dirty traitor.

NOTABLE BESADI

What happen?

NDUNGIDI

Of course, human beings acquire wisdom by examining their attitude and that of others, but we can also ask ourselves how we did not see Ne-Nsaku's actions coming.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Ndungidi. I approve of your wise words. You are right. Now, facing Ne-Nsaku's treason, we will stop him. I am sure our army's superiority will annihilate Ne-Nsaku and his allies.

NE-MPUNGI

I am sending the first group of our men, majesty. I promise to send the second group if the situation becomes worse. Ne-Nsaku will be pushed out of the border or arrested.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Good. You have my confidence.

Exit all the notables. Enter the prince Ne-Bondo. He approaches the king.

PRINCE NE-BONDO

Majesty. I want to join the fighters.

KING NE-NSUNDI

No, my brother. You are needed here. Ne-Mpungi and other warriors can handle everything.

PRINCE NE-BONDO

Majesty. I think, in this challenging time, We need to reinforce our relationship.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Sit down, my brother.

The prince Ne-Bondo sits near him.

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)

My brother. Decisions of this magnitude always have consequences.
(MORE)

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)

The Portuguese will want more than we can give them. The risk is to pay a higher price.

PRINCE NE-BONDO

Can we establish diplomatic relations with some African kingdoms?

KING NE-NSUNDI

I agree with you, my brother. I am giving you that responsibility.

INT. KING'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Princess Ne-Makaya and the queen's mother sit on the ground.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Why does Ne-Nsaku do this?

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

My little girl. Let me tell you something. I am the grandmother of the Nkumba-Nkumba lineage. When we left Kinlaza, we had only a few people of royal blood. The other people belonged to another clan. They were, in a way, our slaves, but we considered them as part of our family. There was no hatred between us. Only one family was suspicious.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Which one, grandmother?

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

I let you guess.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Ne-Nsaku's family?

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Exactly.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

But why did you continue to accept them?

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

It was our heart that spoke. We have decided to put hatred aside. Giving love was the right solution to live in harmony with everyone.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

That's great, but look at what is happening now. Trust does not exclude control, my grandmother.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

I know now, but it was not so wrong at all.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

What do you mean, grandmother?

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Think about it. If we had acted like you are saying, we could have also refused your love with him. I am saying that we cannot reject a proposal, whatever the person's origin.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Thank you, grandmother. You are the wise one. I am sorry for not understanding you.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

We all have the same blood. I know Ne-Nsaku's ambition blinded everyone in the kingdom.

EXT. KINGDOM PRISON - EVENING

The prison officers enter and look everywhere, but he cannot find Ne-Nsaku.

INT. KING'S HOUSE - EVENING

Ne-Makaya sits near her grandmother.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Now, grandmother. Tell me about boys and girls in your time.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

From the earliest infancy to age five to even twenty or late, boys and girls were subject to the dominant influence of their mothers. From there, they should learn the fundamental restrictions such as apprenticeship and the knowledge of the family line. They were also obliged to retain the tradition to avoid prohibited things.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

I love Mavadidi. I want to marry him. I must learn to be a mother because we decided to have children one day.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

It will make me happy, my granddaughter. The girls slept among themselves, and the boys too. Indeed, bringing them together could destroy the integrity of the family. While the boys were introduced to hunting and fishing, the girls continued their education alongside their mothers. They were preparing to become proficient in domestic tasks, such as housework, fields, cooking, and how to care for their husbands once married. They must demonstrate their talents early on to attract the attention of young men. I'm sure Mavadidi had seen all sorts of these qualities in you. That's why he wants to marry you. But before getting married, girls were subjected to...

Enter a messenger.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

What is the problem? What brings you here?

A MESSENGER

Didn't you hear the sound of tam-tam?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Not at all.

A KINGDOM WARRIOR

The king asked me to take you somewhere safe.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Why?

A MESSENGER

It is for your security.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

I am the queen's mother. Tell me what is happening; otherwise, we are not going anywhere.

A MESSENGER

With all due respect, Queen Mother,
I can't. We need to go.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

I insist, messenger.

A MESSENGER

Ne-Nsaku escaped from the prison.
He will seek revenge.

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

We are not moving from here.

INT. NKUNDILAND - DAY

King Ne-Nkundi receives a delegation from Ne-Nsundi with the
header Ne-Bondo.

KING NE-NKUNDI

Prince Ne-Bondo, notables of
Nsundiland. Nkundiland welcomes
you.

PRINCE NE-BONDO

We thank you, Majesty.

KING NE-NKUNDI

We know your visit today concerns
armed rebel incursion into your
kingdom. We also understand that
the notable Ne-Nsaku is responsible
for that situation. The notable Ne-
Nsaku has indeed forged many bonds
with some warriors of our kingdom,
but we do not condone that.

PRINCE NE-BONDO

Majesty. We are neighbors. We are
condemned to live together in
peace. Our kingdoms cannot continue
to have hate. That is the main
reason for my delegation visit.

KING NE-NKUNDI

Prince. Please convey these
messages to King Ne-Nsundi. From
today, we have decided to seal our
friendship and military
cooperation. Notables who worked
together with Ne-Nsaku will be
severely punished. In the coming
days, I will send my emissaries to
Nsundiland to discuss all this.

PRINCE NE-BONDO

Thank you, Majesty. This situation has gone on long enough. We had many deaths; among them are our valiant notables.

KING NE-NKUNDI

I agree with you, indeed, Prince Ne-Bondo. After all, we are cousins.

Enter some women with gourds of palm wine. They lay them in front of King Ne-Nkundi.

KING NE-NKUNDI (CONT'D)

Let's drink to our health and friendship.

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN THE FOREST BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF NSUNDI AND NKUNDI - DAY

Ne-Nsaku is in the middle of his men.

NE-NSAKU

Nsundiland and Nkundiland reached an agreement. Soon, we will have no help from Nkundiland. We have to seek the help from another kingdom. But in the meantime, we must kidnap the Queen Mother and the Princess Ne-Makaya.

NE-NSAKU'S MAN

Don't you see it will be dangerous? I am sure they're well-guarded.

NE-NSAKU

I am the chief, and I decide that, do you understand?

NE-NSAKU'S MAN

Chief Ne-Nsaku. I know that, but...

NE-NSAKU

(interrupting)

... but what?

(pointing finger to some notables)

You. You, and you. You have to go now. Could you bring those people to me? I am going to slit their throats.

EXT. KINGDOM HOUSE COMPOUND - EVENING

The queen's mother and princess Ne-Makaya sit on bamboo chairs. A single guard watches over them.

Suddenly, some Ne-Nsaku warriors arise. They force the queen's mother and the princess to follow them. They free the warrior.

NE-NSAKU'S WARRIOR

(to the others)

Let him go.

(to the guard)

Inform your king that we detain his mother and his daughter. He has to surrender if he wants them to be released.

The kingdom messenger runs.

EXT. FOREST OF LOANGO - EVENING

Two Ne-Nsaku's men make the queen's mother and the princess sit by force. They tie their hands behind them.

INT. KING'S HOUSE - DAY

A messenger enters and finds King Ne-Nsundi talking with Prince Ne-Bondo.

A MESSENGER

Ne-Nsaku's men have kidnapped the Queen Mother and Princess Ne-Makaya.

KING NE-NSUNDI

My brother. Organize the warriors and send them to find my mother and my daughter.

EXT. FOREST OF LOANGO - EVENING

Ne-Nsaku approaches Queen Mother Ndikua and the princess Ne-Makaya.

NE-NSAKU

(to the princess Ne-Makaya)

I can free you right now, princess, but you must promise something.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

What?

NE-NSAKU

You are a beautiful and understanding woman. I am sure you know what I want.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

I don't know what you want, you pig.

NE-NSAKU

Please don't insult my intelligence. How can a pretty girl like you decide to marry a woodcarver?

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Do you know why? Oh, you don't need to answer. I love him, and I don't love you.

NE-NSAKU

Agree to marry me, and I will give you everything.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

I'd rather die than marry an assassin like you.

NE-NSAKU

As you wish, princess. In that case, I will first kill your grandmother, then your father. Oh, I forgot. I will also destroy your fiancé. As for you, I will leave you alive; then I will take you as my wife, willingly or by force.

A watchman out of breath reaches Ne-Nsaku and other warriors.

NE-NSAKU'S WATCHMAN

Honorable. The king's men arrive. They are on the other side of the river.

NE-NSAKU

How do they know we are here? They won't find the king's mother alive. I am going to slit his throat.

Ne-Nsaku takes his knife and approaches the queen's mother and the princess Ne-Makaya.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Please, don't kill my grandmother. Kill me, instead.

NE-NSAKU

It can be possible if you marry me
first

QUEEN MOTHER NDIKUA

Please don't, my granddaughter.

Ne-Nsaku slits the queen's mother's throat. The princess
cries out loud.

EXT. ON THE OTHER OF THE RIVER - EVENING

The warriors on the other side of the river hear them cry.
They rush to see what is happening.

EXT. FOREST OF LOANGO - EVENING

Ne-Nsaku leaves his men to go pee. He orders his men to watch
the princess, Ne-Makaya.

The king's men arrive and then surround Ne-Nsaku's warriors.
They kill them and save the princess.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

(to the warriors, crying)
Ne-Nsaku killed my grandmother.

A WARRIOR

Come with us. We will find him.

INT. KING'S HOUSE - EVENING

The warriors take with them the body of the Queen Mother
Ndikua.

When the princess sees her father, she rushes into his
father's arms. She starts crying loudly.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

Father. They killed my grandmother.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Yes, my daughter, I know. We have
to be strong.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA

I have never had confidence in that
man, Ne-Nsaku.

KING NE-NSUNDI

I swear, my daughter. As long as I
am alive, there will not be another
Ne-Nsaku in this kingdom.

(MORE)

KING NE-NSUNDI (CONT'D)

I know the rebels are still in the forest, and the war continues, but that will not stop us from burying our Queen Mother.

That is why the funeral ceremony will be restricted.

EXT. THE ROYAL COURT - DAY

SUBTITLE: QUEEN MOTHER'S FUNERAL.

The king, Princess Ne-Makaya, Prince Ne-Bondo, and other notables sit under the straw and bamboo platform. The Queen Mother's coffin is in the middle. In front of them, men and women perform a funeral dance.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Today, we finished burying my mother. We are so sad, but as I swore, those who killed her must pay.

(to the warriors)

Tomorrow, you will begin to hunt Ne-Nsaku and his men in the forest.

INT. MAVUANGA'S HOUSE IN THE KINGDOM - DAY

Ne-Nsaku and some rebels take hostage Mavuanga's family. When the kingdom's warriors get in, Ne-Nsaku leave, but they take Mavuanga's daughter with them. They disappear into the wildness.

EXT. FOREST OF LOANGO - DAY

It is early morning, near the border between two kingdoms. With Ne-Mpungi as an interim chief of the army, the King's men position themselves in the forest.

The arrows fly and whistle through the air.

The kingdom's warriors bang and bash the rebel's line, even if they have difficulties breaking through.

Swords clash against each other. Then, face to face, the kingdom's warriors and the rebels clash—Ne-Nsaku clash.

Men on all sides moan and scream in pain. Red blood flows from warrior wounds, and Ne-Nsaku sees that the situation is desperate; he flees. Some rebels escape across the border.

A frantic race begins. The King's men pursue Ne-Nsaku, who still have the Mavuanga's daughter, with him and enter the forest.

CONTINUED.

Ne-Nsaku ties the hands of the Mavuanga's daughter, lying her on her back.

The king's men, well-armed, walk with caution in the forest. One of them falls. Ne-Nsaku hears some noises. He checks, but he cannot see anything.

The king's warriors continue walking. One of the men walks alone on a mountain and sees Ne-Nsaku's men with the hostage. The noose is tightening on Ne-Nsaku and his men. The king's warriors surround them.

They reach them. One of the king's warriors unties the girl. They take Ne-Nsaku's body to the public place of the kingdom.

EXT. KINGDOM PUBLIC PLACE-DAY

Men, women, and children gather in the public place of the kingdom. One man plays tam-tam, and others sing and dance while chanting aloud.

PEOPLE

Ne-Nsaku is dead. Long live, King
Ne-Nsundi.

EXT. THE ROYAL COURT - DAY

The king sits. Two guards stand on both sides. On his left sits the prince Ne-Bondo. Notables sit on the two sides.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Ne-Nsaku is dead, now. Rebels have been defeated. In some days, everything will be back in order. We will have some talks with our neighbors. We have no difficulties annexing Mpangu, Nkusu, and Wandu. The governors of those provinces came willingly without resistance. Despite their earlier opposition, the area of Mbamba has been annexed.

NOTABLES

(together)
Long live king Ne-Nsundi.

KING NE-NSUNDI

Today, Prince Ne-Bondo has become the representative for foreign and social affairs. Mwe-Mbuku becomes the commander-in-chief of the army.

MWE-MBUKU

Majesty. After the war and the death of Ne-Nsaku, our army had to be restructured. We must eradicate all corruption, such as was introduced by Ne-Nsaku.

We will recruit and train new young men to become warriors of the kingdom.

KING NE-NSUNDI

(looks at Mavadidi and the princess Ne-Nsaku)

The troublemaker is gone. It could be different if I accepted what everyone was telling me. Anyway. We cannot rejoice in someone's death, but I promise your marriage will soon be celebrated.

EXT. KINGDOM PUBLIC PLACE - DAY

The King and all the notables sit in an open tent.

Dance is taking place. Men and women dressed in multicolored lines start dancing before the bride and the groom enter.

KING NE-NSUNDI

This kingdom has consistently been recognized for its justice and equity for centuries. No one is going to change that. Ne-Nsaku is gone. Who can the dog go and challenge the lion?

PEOPLE

Long live King Ne-Nsundi.

The King approaches the Princess Ne-Makaya and Mavadidi.

KING NE-NSUNDI

I unite you today. You will have a lot of children. No misfortune will locate you. You will feed them, and they will provide you with food. Your marriage is blessed.

PRINCESS NE-MAKAYA AND MAVADIDI

So, be it.

People are celebrating by singing and dancing.

FADE OUT