

YESTERDAY, I WAS KING

by

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Inspired By

"Things Fall Apart"

by

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1 EXT.COMMUNITY HALL - NIGHT 1

SUPER: UMOUFIA, 1889

A tall MAN, dressed in striped knit suit walks up to the entrance of the village community hall. This is OKONKWO, LATE 40's.

He stamps his feet to get the mud off his shoes before he enters.

2 INT. COMMUNITY HALL - NIGHT 2

The room is filled with smoke from the traditional tobacco pipes all the men are smoking.

8 MEN in the hall are deep in conversation. They acknowledge Okonkwo's presence and turn back to their discussions.

OBIERIKA, LATE 40's, walks up to Okonkwo.

OKONKWO

Any idea on why we are having this meeting? At such a late hour?

OBIERIKA

Didn't you hear? Those degenerates of Mbaino murdered one of our own.

OKONKWO

Who?

OBIERIKA

Udo's wife.

They both stare at Udo's empty seat not far from where they stand.

OBIERIKA

There's talk of war.

Okonkwo smiles at the thought of it.

An old WOMAN, late 60's, frail, dressed in a cloak walks up in front of the men. This is Chielo, the priestess. Accompanying her is a BOY, 13, skinny and frightened.

The men take their seats as silence fills the room. Chielo directs the boy to seat next to her.

OKONKWO

(whispers to Obierika)

Who's that?

OBIERIKA

(whispers back)

I have no idea.

CHIELO

Has you all might have heard. A great tragedy occurred recently. Udo's wife was attacked and her life taken from the nearby village of Mbaino.

MAN 1 (O.S)

(shouts)

We should take 20 of theirs!!

There is joint laughter. Chielo raises her arms to quiet the noise.

CHIELO

Now now, this isn't the time for war. However, if it was the gods would surely allow it.

Cheers.

CHIELO

But we have more pressing issues. The missionaries have asked for land upon which to build their "church".

Disgruntle murmuring.

CHIELO

I know I share the same concerns. But our options are limited.

Okonkwo stands up.

OKONKWO

(interrupts)

Forgive me but we can not let these people in. We might dress like them and use their guns or even speak their language but we aren't them. We have sacred values to uphold and the moment we let them establish a settlement on our land that will surely be the end of this great community. I say refuse their offer and if they want war, then war it is. We can start with Mbaino for practice.

Cheers. Okonkwo remains standing.

CHIELO

I understand your anger Okonkwo. We might have a solution though. One that doesn't involve a single drop of blood.

MAN 2 (O.S)
Let's hear it then?

CHIELO
The forbidden forrest.

Murmurs.

CHIELO
We offer them a piece of the
forbidden forest...

OKONKWO
... And let the spirits deal with
them instead. Brilliant.

Laughter from the crowd.

CHIELO
All in favour?

All men raise their hands.

CHIELO
Agreed. Now back to the case of
Mbaino. We sent a representative
and gave them options, safe to say
they chose the easy out.

Clapping from the men.

CHIELO
They offered us a virgin worthy
enough to take the wife's place and
this boy as an offering of peace.
Now one of you should take him
under your care until the gods tell
us what to do with him.

Silence.

OKONKWO
I'll take the boy.

Chatter.

MAN 3
You might be most fiercest warrior
in Umoufia, Okonkwo, but you are no
family man.

Okonkwo turns to him.

OKONKWO
Oh look, a chicken frowns at the
cooking pot.

(MORE)

OKONKWO (cont'd)
 (he raises his right hand
 revealing 3 bracelets
 that indicate the titles
 he has acquired)

This is a meeting of men.

MAN 3 provoked jumps up to attack Okonkwo but is held back by his peers. Okonkwo doesn't flinch.

MAN 3
 You're nothing special Okonkwo!
 Nothing!

CHIELO
 Silence!

The room quiets down.

CHIELO
 Okonkwo shall have the boy for safe
 keeping. I wish you all a happy
 harvest.

3 INT. OKONKWO HOUSE - NIGHT

3

Okonkwo leads the boy inside the house. They are greeted by his beautiful WIFE, EKWEFI, 30s, SON, NYOWE, 14 and DAUGHTER, EZINMA, 12.

The children immediately take a liking to the boy.

Okonkwo places his pistol by the table as he takes off his coat.

OKONKWO
 This is Ike. He'll be staying with
 us for a while.

Okonkwo takes a seat on the mat as his wife brings his supper.

EKWEFI
 (frightened)
 Okonkwo!

OKONKWO
 What is it?

He turns to the direction of her horror. Ike has the gun in his hands. He is surprisingly fascinated.

Okonkwo calmly walks up to the boy.

OKONKWO
 Ike, hand me the pistol.

He hands it back.

OKONKWO

This is a very dangerous thing to carry.

IKE

It's quiet heavy.

Okonkwo is bewildered.

IKE

When will I see my mother?

OKONKWO

I don't know. Go get something to eat.

Ike follows Ekwefi with the rest of the children to the kitchen.

As Okonkwo eats his wife returns.

EKWEFI

The children like him already.

OKONKWO

(mouth stuffed)

That's good to hear.

She moves closer.

EKWEFI

Will he live long enough to have his own children?

OKONKWO

What do you mean by that?

EKWEFI

You know what I mean. It's sad what happened to Udo.

OKONKWO

Am to keep him safe and that's all I know for now. We should pay Udo a visit, see how's he's holding up.

EKWEFI

Did the gods ask for you take on this responsibility.

OKONKWO

I did.

EKWEFI

(disappointed)

I see.

She walks away. Okonkwo doesn't seem bothered.

4 EXT. OKONKWO COMPOUND - DAY

4

SUPER: THREE YEARS LATER

The children play in the distance. Okonkwo looks on as he picks out which yams to drop in his baskets.

Ike runs over to him excited. He's bigger now.

IKE

Father, do you need any help?

OKONKWO

It's ok, you boys did enough by harvesting the yams, leave the hard part to me. Carry on.

Ike heads back.

EKWEFI

I guess he will live long enough to have his own children. The gods have been merciful.

OKONKWO

Yes they have.

EKWEFI

You did good on this one.

She leaves. Okonkwo lets out a small smile.

Okonkwo spots Obierika approaching in the distance.

OKONKWO

(shouts)

Ekwefi?!

EKWEFI (O.S)

What is it?

OKONKWO

Bring out the palm wine, we have a visitor.

He dusts his hands as he reaches out for a hand shake.

OKONKWO

Long time, old friend. I hope your harvest is as great as mine.

OBIERIKA

I can see.

OKONKWO

Why the dull mood?

OBIERIKA

We need to talk old friend.

OKONKWO

Sure, sure.

Ekwefi brings the palm wine on a tray.

OKONKWO

Let's seat under the shade and talk
it over some palm wine.

They seat on the ground under the shade of a big tree.

Ekwefi leaves the two men after serving them.

OBIERIKA

How's the family?

OKONKWO

As you can see all is well. I have
no complaints.

OBIERIKA

And the boy? I can see he has taken
a liking to you.

OKONKWO

So have I. He's taught my son how
to be a real man, you know? Like us
back in the younger days. I was
honestly frightened for that boy
but Ike has turned it around. They
are like brothers.

OBIERIKA

I see.

OKONKWO

Obi? What's wrong my friend? What
did you want to talk about?

OBIERIKA

A decision has been made Okonkwo. I
thought I should be the first to
tell you before they come.

OKONKWO

(smiles)

Tell me, what did they decide old
friend.

OBIERIKA

They are going to kill him. They
are going to offer him as a
sacrifice.

Okonkwo is silent.

OBIERIKA

Anytime now, they are coming for
Ike.

Silence.

OBIERIKA

I wonder sometimes if all this is necessary. The killing to appease the gods. You know these missionaries have a story in their book about this one man their god told to sacrifice his own son and just as he was about to take his life. In that instant minute, their god had a change of heart. And it got me thinking. Why can't ours do the same.

OKONKWO

Because that's a fairytale. This is reality.

OBIERIKA

Don't go with them. When they come for that boy, I am begging you not to go.

Okonkwo doesn't respond. They proceed to drink their palm wine in silence.

5 INT. OKONKWO HOUSE - NIGHT

5

Okonkwo lays on the mat, quiet. There's a knock at the door.

He doesn't answer. Ekwefi comes from the other room to see who it is.

EKWEFI (O.S)

How may I help you?

MAN 3 (O.S)

We'd like to talk to your husband.

EKWEFI (O.S)

Some men are here to see you.

He reluctantly walks to the door as Ekwefi stands back.

MAN 1

Can we have a word away from the wife?

Okonkwo steps out as he shuts the door behind him.

6 EXT. OKONKWO HOUSE - NIGHT

6

OKONKWO

What brings you here.

MAN 3

I think you know what brings us here. Am sure a little crow by the name of Obierika passed by earlier to give you the good news.

OKONKWO

Yes, he did and so I ask what brings you here.

MAN 1

We are here for the boy. It's been decided.

MAN 3

We are making an offering tonight. You've really bulked him up, the gods will surely be pleased.

OKONKWO

Where will it take place?

MAN 3

The forbidden forest of course.

OKONKWO

I see.

MAN 3

The boy!

OKONKWO

Let me get him!

Okonkwo returns to his house.

7 INT. OKONKWO HOUSE - NIGHT

7

He passes his wife as he goes to fetch him. She looks nervous.

OKONKWO (O.S)

Wake up, Ike we have a journey ahead of us.

IKE (O.S)

Father, where are we going?

OKONKWO (O.S)

I'll let you know on the way there.

Okonkwo later leads the boy out. Ekwefi grabs him by the arm.

EKWEFI

(whispers)

Where are they taking him?

OKONKWO
We'll talk later.

She won't let go.

EKWEFI
Don't go with them.

OKONKWO
I must!

He pulls away and leaves.

Ekwefi breaks into tears as she falls to floor in dramatic fashion

8 EXT. OKONKWO HOUSE - NIGHT

8

IKE
Who are these men?

OKONKWO
These men are going to take you to your mother.

MAN 3
(to Ike)
That's what we are here for, to make sure you get back home.

IKE
(to Okonkwo)
Are you coming along?

The men wait for Okonkwo's response.

OKONKWO
Yes. Let's get going.

The two men lead on, as Okonkwo and Ike follow.

9 EXT. EVIL FOREST - NIGHT

9

Moonlight beams over the thick crowd of tall trees. An eerie mist fills the narrow path the men walk.

Okonkwo and Ike maintain a good pace behind the two men.

IKE
I wonder whether mother will recognise me, do you think she will?

OKONKWO
No mother can forget her son.

IKE
Can I come back to visit?

OKONKWO

Sure you can. You're like a.. Am proud to have had you as my son. Don't you forget that.

He grabs his head under his shoulder for a quick embrace and then lets go.

IKE

What if I want to stay?

OKONKWO

You can't, you need to see your family.

IKE

But you are my family too.

OKONKWO

Your real family.

The men stop in their tracks and turn to Okonkwo and the boy who have also stopped.

OKONKWO

This is where my journey ends.

Ike looks terrified.

OKONKWO

Go on.

Ike takes small steps as he looks back at Okonkwo.

OKONKWO

Go on. Be brave my son.

Okonkwo struggles to hold back the tears as Ike meets up with the men. He can't find the courage to turn back.

The men in turn nudge Ike forward as they slowly walk behind him.

They each reveal the machetes they've been carrying under their coats.

Man 3 raises his high enough and with BRUTE FORCE lands the first STRIKE upon Ike's right shoulder. Before Ike can react, Man 1 STRIKES again with his machete. They then take turns cutting the boy.

He lets out a loud cry! But that only entices the men to strike harder!

Using the last of his strength he shoves them out of the way and runs for Okonkwo who watches on helplessly.

Ike holds onto him for dear life.

IKE

Father! Father! They have killed me!

Okonkwo holds onto the boy with one arm. His shirt drenched in the boy's blood. He can see the two men walking towards him to finish the job.

OKONKWO

You have to be strong Ike.

Okonkwo reaches for his pistol tucked behind his waist as he looks at the men approaching. Ike cries in great pain.

OKONKWO

You can't show weakness.

He places the pistol on side of the boy's temple. And pulls the trigger! BANG!

Ike falls to the ground.

MAN 3

Now where's the fun in that?

Okonkwo looks on helpless as the men drag the boy's body away from the path and into the thick trees.

MOMENTS LATER.

All three men are walking back. Okonkwo in front of them.

The two men chuckle and laugh as they reminisce moments of the horrible act.

MAN 3

(laughs and imitates)

Father! Father! They have killed me.

Man 1 laughs at Man 3's exaggerations. Okonkwo ignores them but clearly shows he's irritated.

MAN 3

Who's the chicken now?

Okonkwo halts and turns back to the men. He points his gun at Man 3.

MAN 3

You know you can't kill your own. Gods forbid it!

BANG! Between the eyes. Man 3 drops dead. Man 1 pulls out his machete to strike Okonkwo. He dodges his swing and grabs him by the neck into a chokehold. As he squeezes the life out of him, he takes hold of his machete and stabs him multiple times from the back with one arm. He then lets go of his lifeless body.

He stands over their lifeless bodies dazed and confused. He lets out a loud cry.

10 INT. OBIERIKA HOUSE - NIGHT

10

There's a loud knock at the door. Obierika reaches to answer it. It's Okonkwo drenched in blood from head to toe.

He lets him in bewildered.

OBIERIKA

What happened?

OKONKWO

I killed them. They killed my son and I killed them!

OBIERIKA

What have you done, Okonkwo?

He seats him down.

OKONKWO

(talks to himself)

Don't show weakness. I can't show weakness. I am not weak!

OBIERIKA

Calm down.

OKONKWO

I have to talk to Chielo. I need to make this right.

OBIERIKA

There is nothing you can do, you've committed the ultimate sin, brother. You've committed murder. Your house and crops will be burned to the ground. Your animals killed. And you and your family exiled.

OKONKWO

I should have listened to you old friend.

OBIERIKA

You have to leave tonight. I'll try to reason with the counsel on your behave. But you must leave tonight.

Okonkwo shakes his head as he holds back his tears.

There's a loud knock at the door.

OBIERIKA

Who could that be?

He walks to the door slightly opening it. Realising who it is, he steps aside and bows his head.

Chielo walks in slowly, accompanied by TWO MEN. Words can not explain the anger on her face. She looks down upon Okonkwo with intent.

Okonkwo can't dare meet her gruesome gaze.

CHEILO

What have you done?!

FADE TO BLACK

THE END.