

Elusive Spring

**By
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About the Play

Theme and content

The play is a drama – told with elements of a political thriller – about the contemporary African condition as set in 2012 in an anonymous African country struggling with the imperatives of democracy and economic globalisation more than fifty years after independence from Britain.

The (working) title of the play – *Elusive Spring* – is a reference to “spring” as in the Prague Spring and the Arab Spring, times of political liberalisation and progressive transformation in moribund societies; in this case, “elusive” refers to the manifold moments of optimism in various African societies only to be compromised somehow.

Thematically, the play looks at the contemporary challenges of economic globalisation, migration and refugees, international concerns about security and national priorities in dealing with power and wealth imbalances through the independent eyes of a journalist, the Head of the Anti-Corruption Unit and an artist in a particular country, but generalised for many post-colonial, transition-to-democracy African contexts.

It provocatively explores themes of foreign and competing economic and security interests playing themselves out in a society struggling with democratic consolidation, with a ruling party that has liberated the country from a colonial master, but which now displays tendencies towards new tyrannies.

But, it is not simply a story of failed African states; the play deals with deeper causes and historical and current complexities against which personal themes of love, loyalty, commitment and friendship are played out. Under the veneer of democracy, human rights and development, in the murky world of politics where power and economic interests are contested, the personal and the political, the micro and the macro, the individual and the collective are juxtaposed and explored, raising hard questions that will – hopefully - stimulate much debate wherever the play is seen.

The play is, in part, inspired by the book, *It's our turn to eat* by Michaela Wrong, a real-life account about the central character, John Githongo, who was appointed by the Kenyan government to root out corruption, but for Githongo only to experience many obstacles placed in his way.

Characters

The play will require 8 performers, some playing a main character as well as minor characters, but all play a number of roles, including participation in a chorus. The key characters are:

1. Ousmane; a journalist with a British-owned but locally managed newspaper
2. Minister; responsible for Justice, but also the Acting President of the country
3. Ambassador; representing the British government
4. Puppeteer; whose puppet shows engage in Boal's “Theatre of the Oppressed”
5. Elizabeth; Second Secretary for media and culture at the British Embassy

Lesser characters (in terms of appearance) are

1. Jacob; the Head of the Anti-Corruption Unit

2. Julia; Ousmane's fiancée, who works for a woman's magazine
3. Kimani; a government spokesperson
4. Minister's wife

Style and set

The production is written in a filmic, multi-location, multi-time manner, with 3 or 4 storylines developed independently and intersecting on occasion and/or continuing in parallel with one commenting on, or giving texture to another.

The set and design of the play will need to take account of the multi-location, multi-time nature of the action, so that a split set, with two levels allowing for action in various localities will enhance the piece. A screen to project images as required should also be integrated into the set.

Music (preferably an original score) will be important element in facilitating transitions but also in setting moods.

Setting

The play is set in a contemporary African country, not one that is recently post-colonial, nor one that has a dictator but one that has a reasonably credible democracy where there is little question of elections being stolen, but where the ruling party engages in a host of initiatives to maintain power. The timing of the play is a few weeks before an election. The play is an exploration of the contestation over power and resources within a democracy – in the context of a globalised world - and the lengths to which people and institutions will go in pursuit of, or to hold onto power, for its own sake and for the benefits they derive from it, rather than in service of people, although the latter is the banner under which the maintenance of such power is propagated.

Actors

The cast requires 6 male and 2 female actors, but consideration should be given to non-gender and non-race based casting so that female actors could play some male roles too. The cast should comprise black actors, with particular design elements to indicate when the actors may be playing white characters.

Consideration should also be given to the use of masks/wigs to depict all the different characters (including the 5 "main" characters) so that there is no confusion for the audience when actors play a variety of roles.

For the more adventurous director, consideration could also be given to particular masks and/or items of costume e.g. a hat, to symbolise a particular character so that a number of actors could depict that character, provided they were wearing that character's mask and/or item of costume.

Rather than determining which parts are played by each of the 8 actors, this is left to the discretion of the Director depending on the available talent, presence, gender, physicality, etc within the selected cast

Scene 1

The stage is in complete darkness. There is no music. Only the sound of someone typing.

Downstage, upper level, right: lights come up on Fahiek (early 30s), sitting at a table, typing on a lap top computer.

Suddenly, two men in balaclavas burst in. One puts a bag over Fahiek's head. They man-handle him as they drag him out. The lights remain on the computer and desk. Then, one of the men runs back and takes the computer with him.

There is complete silence. Lights fade.

Scene 2a

Ground level, stage left. Romantic African music like that of Cesaria Evora. Lights come up on Ousmane and Julia dancing a slow dance. They are clearly in love, looking at each other, smiling, Ousmane whispers in Julia's ear. Ousmane manoeuvres Julia so that the scene ends with her having her back towards him.

Scene 2b

Upper level, stage right. Minister and Minister's wife are seated at opposite ends of a table about to have dinner. Each is reading a different section of the newspaper. There is no eye contact or other communication between them. Minister's wife rings a bell. Servant enters carrying two plates of food. He stands in the middle of the table.

Lights fade.

Scene 3

Ground level, downstage, right, appropriate music: lights come up on two men – Nkosi, a whistleblower and Duiwel, a hitman - are seated opposite each other at a table, each with a beer bottle in hand.

Duiwel: *(raising his bottle) To a brave man....*

They knock their bottles together, and Nkosi, a little embarrassed, takes a swig from his bottle. Duiwel doesn't drink from his.

Duiwel: It takes guts to do what you did.....

Nkosi laughs nervously, but doesn't say anything. He takes another swig.

Duiwel: Most government employees would be too scared....

Nkosi begins to cough and then struggles to breathe.

Duiwel: I'm sure the Anti-Corruption Unit appreciates the information....

Nkosi tries to stand up, struggling even more to breathe, reaches out to Duiwel, who simply talks nonchalantly. Nkosi falls into his chair, and ends up, lifeless, his head on the table.

Duiwel: Too bad they won't have you testifying in court....

Duiwel gets up, casually. He puts on a pair of latex gloves, goes to Nkosi, feels his neck for a pulse. He takes Nkosi's beer bottle and replaces it with his own beer bottle, having poured out a little of its contents, and having placed the bottle on the lips of Nkosi. He wipes his prints off everything he might have touched, looks around to make sure that there is no evidence of his presence, and then exits with Nkosi's bottle. Lights fade.

Scene 4a

Simultaneous scenes. Ground level, stage left, romantic music as lights come up on Ousmane and Julia. Julia is standing with her back to Ousmane. Ousmane is on his knees. He has a ring in his hand. Julia turns to face him. He offers her the ring. She is bowled over. She kneels too. They hug and kiss passionately as the lights fade.

Scene 4b

Upper level, stage right. Minister and Minister's wife eat in silence. They each still read their newspapers lying in front of them as they eat. At least once, they each glance at the other without the other returning the glance, continuing to read the newspaper and eat in silence.

Lights fade.

Scene 5

Ground level. Hip hop music that Mo is listening to, plays as he walks across the stage with earplugs connected to an i-pod. Suddenly, he is surrounded by three hooded men. He tries to run. The men block his way. He offers them his mobile phone and his wallet. As he offers these to them, Man X grabs him from behind. Man Y hits him in the stomach, and then in the face while Man Z watches. Mo falls to the ground. Man X and Man Y hit and kick him. Man Y takes out a gun and points it at Mo. Man Z gestures to him to put the gun away. They stand around Mo, and Man X pisses on him. Man Z throws an A4 envelope that lands on Mo.

Lights fade.

Scene 6

Upper level, Guerilla Theatre Group of (4 actors) dance a slow dance in pairs, with one partner holding a large – empty - picture frame as the other partner holds up a cardboard poster with newspaper headlines. The dance is choreographed in such a

way – and with appropriate lighting – that they come to face the audience in pairs, one holding an empty picture frame and the other, a newspaper headline.

The first pair faces the audience: one empty frame, and one cardboard headline saying “Human Rights Lawyer Disappears”

The next pair: large empty frame and a cardboard headline saying “Activist killed in car accident”

The first pair returns with a different empty frame and a cardboard headline saying “Whistle blower poisoned”

They dance until two men – government intelligence agents - enter from either side of the stage and begin to photograph and film the performance. The dancers put the picture frames and cardboards in front of their faces and move off-stage.

Lights fade slowly on the upper level with only the two agents left, and come up simultaneously on the ground level.

Scene 7

Kimani, a government spokesperson and Ousmane, a journalist are in Kimani’s office. Puppeteer, Ousmane’s friend, is with him.

Ousmane: And then they pissed on him.

Kimani: Did they take anything?

Puppeteer: This wasn’t a robbery, Kimani. This was a message.

Kimani: Mo’s a DJ. Why would anyone....?

Ousmane: This was a message to *me*.

Kimani: (*snorts*) Your brother gets beaten up to send *you* a message?

Ousmane: To get off their case....

Kimani: Maybe you should...whoever *they* are...it’s making you paranoid.

Puppeteer: (*to Ousmane*) I told you you’ll be wasting your time, Ousmane!

Ousmane: (*angrily approaches Kimani, thrusts the envelope on Kimani’s chest*)
Look at these and tell me if I’m being paranoid.

Kimani takes the newspaper clippings and photos from the envelope. As he looks at them...

Ousmane: All the recent articles I’ve written about the Military Acquisitions Deal. Who benefited...how they channelled state funds...how much they got.

Kimani: And the photos?

Ousmane: Julia's apartment....my car...

Kimani: (*under his breath*) Shit!

Ousmane: Tell your bosses...I get the message.

Kimani: (*defensively*) My bosses?

Puppeteer: The people who pay you to speak for them....

Ousmane: You can also tell them...I'm not backing off!

Kimani: What makes you think government has *anything* to do with this?

Ousmane: The death threats. The tyre slashing. The phone calls in the middle of the night. I've reported them all and the police have done nothing! Except, *I* get arrested on charges of "verbally abusing a police officer".....

Kimani: Ousmane, we're a constitutional democracy, not some banana republic!

Puppeteer snorts.

Ousmane: Then explain the assassinations, the disappearances, the car "accidents"....

Puppeteer: (*shakes his head*) What happened to you Kimani? You used to be one of us!

Kimani: (*to Ousmane*) What is he doing here...?

Puppeteer: I'm here to make sure nothing happens to Ousmane...

Kimani: (*laughs*) You?

Ousmane: They've bought you Kimani. For thirty pieces of silver.

Kimani: (*stung*) And who pays *you* to sprout your Afro-pessimism?

Puppeteer: (*Laughs*) Exposing corruption...that's Afro-pessimism?

Beat. Ousmane and Kimani look at each other with a mixture of anger and sadness.

Ousmane: When *The Independent* had to shut down....because our "democratic" government decided it would no longer advertise in a free press that was too free with its criticism...some of us chose between working for

the State-owned *Herald* or the British-owned *Times*. A few – like you - became spokespeople for Government.

Kimani: You think *my* views are bought by my pay cheque. But you claim independence when you get paid by some British company...

Ousmane looks at Puppeteer; they both shake their heads, laugh.

Ousmane: (*snorts*) The favourite government defence...it's all the fault of the British colonial bastards.

Puppeteer: Even though they haven't ruled here for fifty years!

Kimani: They still own our mines....

Ousmane: Unemployment is at its highest...blame the British!

Kimani: Our economy's still linked into theirs...

Ousmane: Life expectancy declines 13 years during independence...blame the British!

Puppeteer: The widening gap between rich and poor...

Ousmane: The high crime rate, unprecedented corruption....

Puppeteer: The shit we see on TV...all the fault of the British!

Kimani: (*squares up to Puppeteer, triumphantly*) You don't get a visa...blame the British.

Kimani and Puppeteer continue squaring off, close to each other till half-way through Ousmane's following speech.

Ousmane: And if I do my job and report on the failures of our (*tongue-in-cheek*) "glorious liberation movement" turned government in a locally-managed but British-owned newspaper, then I'm an agent of British neo-colonialism.

Puppeteer: Let's go, Ousmane. You've made your point.

Kimani: What is your point?

Ousmane: Tell your bosses that I'm not giving up. The more they hurt the people I love, the more determined I am to expose them!

Kimani: Sure...feed the colonial stereotypes. Blacks can't govern. Africans are corrupt.

Ousmane: Kimani, I'm the messenger here! You want to kill somebody? Hang our department of statistics! The poor are getting poorer, sicker and are dying younger...

Puppeteer: You're wasting your breath, Ousmane. He's a spin doctor. He knows all this shit...he's paid to sing the "Blame the British" song.

Ousmane turns and he and Puppeteer begin to exit.

Kimani: *(picking up the envelope)* Ousmane....

Ousmane turns to face Kimani. Kimani holds out the envelope to Ousmane.

Ousmane: Keep them. They're copies I made for you. See them as divorce papers...I no longer consider you a friend.

Ousmane and Puppeteer exit. Ousmane turns around at the exit.

Ousmane: Oh...and perhaps you should re-read my articles. They trace the corruption links to British arms' companies. So much for being an agent of British neo-imperialism.

Fade to black.

Scene 8

Ground level. Enter chorus of three, their faces covered, dancing exuberantly to an African music soundtrack, each with an election poster. They form into a street pole with three posters above each other. The posters represent different parties with different colours, logos and slogans.

One: *Protect the Gains of the Liberation Struggle: Vote NAZU*

Two: *Vote Christian Democratic Party to do away with Corruption*

Three: *You have a right to know: Vote Good Governance Party*

Screen bursts into life (or live Actor located on Upper Level) with Opposition Politician (a woman) behind a podium in full flight addressing a rally.

As Politician speaks, figures enter and "tear down" (to be choreographed) the posters except the poster declaring "Protect the gains of the liberation struggle: Vote NAZU".

Politician: The heroes of our struggle for liberation are all around us. We honour them in the names of our airports. We remember them as we drive down streets bearing their names. Public buildings celebrate those who sacrificed so much so that we can be free.

And yet, how they must be turning in their graves! For in those government buildings, civil servants defraud the state and rob the poor! Schools that bear the names of our liberation heroes churn out

illiterates! Streets named after freedom fighters are lined with beggars, criminals, prostitutes, all testimonies to the failure of this government's economic policies. We buy tanks when we need tractors! Grenades when we're exploding from hunger!

We give shelter to refugees before we shelter our own people! People from neighbouring countries have jobs, while our people don't have work! We give grants to those fleeing war in their own countries, when we still have not declared war on poverty in our own country!

What would our bravest warrior – Ephraim Bidzogo - do if he were around today? He who refused to bow down to the colonisers, was hanged for it, and whose name now adorns our national airport. Would he not hang his head in shame as the ruling elite hops and skips to their holidays in the North, their shopping in the West, their doctors in the East?

Everywhere I go, I hear the same question - sometimes loudly, sometimes whispered, mostly etched on the faces of the wretched of our part of the earth: Who will liberate us from the tyranny of those who once liberated us? The answer my friends, is YOU! Only *you* can. Only...

A shot rings out. The screen fast fades to black or the Actor (if live) falls to the ground.

Scene 9

3-person chorus choreographed, wearing hoodies, faces covered. Some enter, carrying or lighting petrol bombs. Others have catapults and shoot projectiles with these. Still others throw stones. General impression of chaos, noise and uprising on screen too.

Scene 10

Minister seated behind a desk, on the phone. Kimani is pacing up and down, talking in hushed tones on his mobile too.

Minister: Yes, Mr President...we are in control. The looters are mainly targeting Chinese and South African enterprises. *(Pause)* And there have been a few attacks on African nationals from neighbouring countries. *(Beat)* No, Mr President, it's under control...no need for you to come back early. *(Beat)* Our best detectives are working on the shooting, Sir...of course, I'll keep you informed, Mr President.

Minister puts the phone down.

Kimani: It's spreading across the country, sir.

Minister: *(picking up the phone)* Call the State Legal Advisor...tell him to draft State of Emergency regulations.

Kimani: Sir?

Minister: Just in case.

Kimani: Yes Sir.

Minister: And set up a call with the CEO of the broadcaster.

Kimani: Now, sir?

Minister: Yes! Now!

Scene 11

Light classical music. Reception at the British Embassy. Chorus of 3 enters, each with 3-4 puppets attached to themselves, the puppets are dressed to represent the elite of local society. Reception noise. Some puppets have wine glasses. There is a lot of mingling as background. Additionally, or alternatively, these impressions may be conveyed on screen.

Ambassador downstage talking to Second Secretary, Elizabeth.

Ambassador: You chose an interesting time to come here, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth: I've always been curious...fascinated...by how this continent could produce both Idi Amin and Nelson Mandela. I want to experience it for myself.

Ambassador: *(wry smile)* Oh...you won't have to stay here long before you'll discover that Nelson Mandela is an aberration...

Elizabeth: Europe gave us both Churchill and Hitler...

Ambassador: *(considers her, then, with a patronising smile....)* There'll be enough time to discuss politics...I look forward to having your pretty face around here for a while!

Beat, Elizabeth is not sure how to take this last comment.

Minister enters with two bodyguards in tow. Minister and Ambassador greet and shake hands centre stage.

Ambassador: Good evening, Minister. Or should I say, Mr President?

Minister: *(with a broad smile)* Acting President. Evening, Ambassador.

Ambassador: Let me introduce you to Elizabeth Parsons, our new Second Secretary for Media and Culture.

Minister shakes Elizabeth's hand.

Minister: (*charming*) Welcome to our country!

Elizabeth: Thank you.

Minister continues shaking, holding Elizabeth's hand so that she is awkward. The Ambassador notices and cuts in.

Ambassador: I know you're busy, Sir, so I'm delighted that you've come.

Minister: I never miss a function hosted by our British friends.

There are subtle hints of irony and digs at each other during the conversation.

Ambassador: We have an opera singer from your country this evening....

Minister: Opera?

Ambassador: We gave her a bursary to study in London.

Elizabeth: (*naively, enthusiastically*) And now she works for the Royal Opera Company.

Minister: Like our country's top footballer...he plays for Chelsea. Although...*he* trained here. Like most of our doctors and nurses who now work in Britain....

Ambassador: (*choosing a positive spin, with a hint of sarcasm*) Indeed. Which is why remittances from the UK make up so much of your GDP! What's it now...17%?

Cutting into the awkwardness...

Elizabeth: You'll be very proud of Phumzile Moya.

Minister: I'm a jazz man. The President...he loves opera.

Ambassador: I believe he's in China.

Minister: Finalising the free trade agreement, yes.

Ambassador: And having his annual check-up?

Minister: You British have an expression...killing two birds...

Ambassador: In the midst of all...this?

Minister: (gesturing to the surrounds and the reason for the party) As with the Queen's birthday, the affairs of the State must continue....

Elizabeth senses the moment to leave.

Elizabeth: I'll let everyone know that the President...(smiles) that the Acting President has arrived, so we can start soon. (Exits)

Minister: Isn't she a bit young to be in charge of winning our hearts and minds?

Ambassador: Ms Parsons has a Doctorate in Cultural and Media Studies.

Minister: (wry smile) Is the BBC not effective enough in getting us to see the world as you do?

Ambassador: We prefer to think of it as spreading the values that unite the civilised world.

Minister: (wry smile) Indeed, against the forces of medieval religion and terror.

Ambassador: (smiles back) I've always appreciated your frankness, Mr Minister....

Minister: Which is why I wouldn't do well in the diplomatic service, Mr Ambassador.

Ambassador: I hope you don't mind my frankness, Mr Acting President...the assassination of the leader of the opposition is causing much consternation in Whitehall.

Minister: We're not exactly happy either.

Ambassador: The instability...it scares off investors.

Minister: This is a storm in a hiccup. Whitehall knows we're one of the most stable democracies on the continent.

Ambassador: Which is why our companies love doing business here. And which is why it would be good to find the perpetrators as quickly as possible!

Minister: Not to mention that she was your chosen one!

Ambassador: She wasn't *our* chosen one! We fund her party because we are committed to multi-party democracy here. We funded your party in the first few elections. You don't need us anymore.

Minister: Since you appreciate frankness, Mr Ambassador, we both know that what Whitehall is really worried about is our relationship with China. You're intervening in our politics by supporting a party that favours business with Britain rather than China.

Ambassador: (*soothingly*) Mr Minister, I can assure you, the days of us intervening in your politics are gone. But yes, the world is a much smaller place now. *You* trade more with China, *we* lose jobs in Britain. You give in to the climate change fanatics, and it affects our investment and economic growth. You allow a terrorist network to operate here, and our security is threatened.

Minister: You know our position on terrorist networks...

Ambassador: Absolutely! We deeply appreciate your cooperation in the war on terror...

Minister: We've opened our borders to migrants and refugees from all our neighbouring countries because fortress Europe has shut its borders...

Ambassador: And we compensate you handsomely for doing this.

Minister: Except, we're now experiencing a rise in violence as refugees from Somalia, Sudan and other countries at war, flood our country.

Ambassador: Which is why we've made available military advisers, equipment, the latest spy technology...

Minister: We have an election coming up. There's voter pressure for tighter border controls. The Opposition is killing us on that one.

Ambassador: And, since the Arab spring, there's voter pressure on us to send some signals to governments that are perceived to compromise democracy. It's a political thing...it will blow over.

Minister: We had *nothing* to do with the shooting of the opposition leader!

Ambassador: If you need any help with the investigation...

Elizabeth enters hurriedly, concerned.

Elizabeth: Sir, we have to evacuate the Embassy.

Ambassador and Minister look at Elizabeth surprised.

Elizabeth: There's been a bomb threat. We just received a telephone call.....

Bodyguards make a show of protecting Minister. Noise and panic as everyone scurries off stage. Slow fade.

Scene 12

Puppeteer, with puppet of Judge in wig on one hand. Puppet of George Bush on the other hand, but audience doesn't see this till later. Chorus/crowd of 3 or 4 watches him, their backs to the audience.

Puppeteer: (as Judge) The International Court of Justice is now in session. You may be seated. Except the Accused. Please stay standing. For you, sir, stand accused of gross violation of human rights.

Chorus: Yes!

Puppeteer: Of contravening international law and conventions.

Chorus: That's right!

Puppeteer: Of plunging a country into war!

Chorus: Amen!

Puppeteer: Of torture!

Elizabeth enters and stands at the back, watching.

Chorus: Yes!

Puppeteer: Kidnapping!

Chorus: Yes!

Puppeteer: Detention without trial!

Chorus: Tell him!

Puppeteer: Of being a grave threat.

Chorus: Yes!

Puppeteer: To democracy!

Chorus: Amen!

Puppeteer: To peace!

Elizabeth enters, and stands at the back, observing.

Chorus: That's right!

Puppeteer: To human rights!

Chorus: Tell him!

Puppeteer: So, how do you plead...*(showing Bush puppet to crowd)* Mr Bush?

Chorus erupts with laughter, hooting, whistles, not having expected Bush to be on trial.

Puppeteer: *(As Judge, with smile on his face)* Silence!

Chorus laughs even louder.

Puppeteer: Speak up, Mr Bush.....

Chorus: Guilty! Guilty! Guilty!

Puppeteer: Silence please...innocent until proven guilty...this is not Guantanamo Bay!

Chorus laughs.

Puppeteer: *(as Bush, with American drawl)* First, I do not recognise this court....

Chorus jeers, boos.

Chorus member 1: *(standing up)* Just because you don't recognise your mother, doesn't mean she's not your mother!

Chorus: Yeah! That's right! Tell him!

Puppeteer: *(as Judge)* Silence!

Puppeteer: *(as Bush)* Second, this court is for dictators, tyrants and despots, not for us democrats!

Chorus member 2: Tell *that* to a hundred thousand dead Iraqis!

Chorus: *(clapping)* Yeah! Tell him!

Puppeteer: Fourthly....

Chorus: What happened to Third?

Chorus laughs.

Puppeteer: (as *Bush*) I only use that to refer to the terrible world you live in!

Chorus boos.

Puppeteer: (as *Bush*) If it weren't for America bringing and defending democracy globally, the world would be an even more terrible place!

Chorus jeers, boos.

Puppeteer: (as *Bush*) Tell them, Tony, tell them! They pulled me out of retirement. Tony, they took me off my ranch to face these charges. Tony....? Tony...?

Chorus laughs, claps as the lights fade.

Chorus exits, with only Puppeteer and Elizabeth left. Puppeteer goes up to Elizabeth.

Puppeteer: Let me guess....you're a corporate sponsor, and you've come to pledge a million dollars to our theatre company.

Elizabeth: (giggles) I wish...

Puppeteer: British accent...you're from Oxfam, and you want us to do a show about...AIDS.

Elizabeth: (smiling, extends her hand) Elizabeth Parsons, British Embassy.

Puppeteer looks at her. His charming exterior disappears. He doesn't shake her hand, but turns around and walks away. Then he turns back to face Elizabeth who is really confused and a bit shaken by his response. Fast fade.

Scene 13

There are four conversations taking place simultaneously during this scene. They are inter-spliced with each other. 13a. is Minister and Kimani; 13b is Ousmane and Julia; 13c is Ambassador and Elizabeth and 13d is Minister and Jacob, Head of the Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU).

Scene 13a

Minister is behind his desk. Kimani is standing in front of him. Minister is looking through the contents of the envelope Ousmane gave Kimani.

Minister: So what do you think?

Kimani: I don't know, Sir.

Minister: (angrily) You don't know!

Beat. Kimani doesn't answer, looks down. Minister stands up.

Lights come up on Ousmane typing. He stays typing throughout these scenes, with another actor holding up a newspaper headline from time to time, indicating the stories that Ousmane is writing.

Minister: You don't know if this government uses violence to intimidate some reactionary journalist?

Kimani still doesn't answer.

Minister: What is your job, Kimani?

Kimani: I'm the government spokesperson, Sir.

Minister: That's right! You speak on behalf of government...

Kimani: Yes Sir.

Minister: You articulate and defend the government's official position no matter what your own views might be.

Kimani: Yes, sir.

Minister: And if someone asks you if this democratic government uses dirty tricks against its opponents, what would you say?

Kimani: I'd say no, Sir.

Minister: Have we briefed you to say we use violence against our opponents?

Kimani: No, Sir.

Minister: Have we issued a media release to say we do?

Kimani: No, Sir.

Minister: Have you heard any Minister suggesting that we use violence against our opponents?

Kimani: There was the Minister of Police...

Minister: We sacked him...that's why he's the ambassador to Indonesia. Have you heard any other minister...?

Kimani: No, Sir.

Minister: You know why, Kimani?

Kimani: Yes, Sir.

Minister: Because we don't! *That* is our official position. And your job is?

Kimani: To articulate and defend the official position, sir.

Minister: Exactly. Now go and do your job...so that I can get on with doing mine!

Kimani turns to go.

Minister: Kimani....

Kimani: *(turning around)* Sir?

Minister: Set up an interview with your friend Ousmane. Tell him I'll give him an exclusive.

Kimani: *(lighter)* Yes, Sir!

Lights fade on Julia and Ousmane and come up on Minister and Kimani.

Newspaper seller with headline walks across the stage with headline: "Government threatens media"

Scene 13b

Ousmane is sitting on the edge of a bed. Julia is standing.

Julia: I'm sorry, Ousmane. I can't do it.

Julia takes the ring off her finger and offers it to Ousmane who gets up.

Ousmane: Can't do what?

Julia: It's too dangerous....

Ousmane: To marry me?

Julia: The death threats...and then...this thing with Mo.

Ousmane: *(tries to take her in his arms)* Honey....

Julia: *(backing away)* I don't want to be a widow in a few months' time.

Ousmane: You won't be....

Julia: Ousmane...please....

Ousmane: If they were going to do something to me, they would have done it already.

Julia: Sooner or later they'll forget that you're an award-winning journalist with an international reputation, and Bidzogo's grandson!

Ousmane: Don't do this, Jules. Please.

Julia: I love you Ousmane, and I admire you. It's why I fell in love with you. Your integrity. Your passion...and your commitment. But...your work...it's too dangerous.

Ousmane: What do you want me to do?

Julia: Nothing.

Ousmane: You want me to resign?

Julia: No!

Ousmane: Then what...?

Julia: Our country needs you to do what you do...

Ousmane: And I need you...

Julia: I can't...I'm sorry.

Ousmane: Can we not speak about this?

Julia shakes her head. Sniffs. Ousmane goes to hug her.

Ousmane: I'm as scared as anyone. But I need you...I need to feel your love...to be human amidst all this...evil!

Julia: I can't, Ousmane...I'm sorry.

Ousmane: Can't we talk about this...after the elections?

Julia: You might not be here after the elections! They assassinated the leader of the opposition for goodness' sake!

Newspaper seller with headline: "Opposition assassination linked to arms deal"

Once he exits, Minister picks up the phone and dials. Lights fade on Minister and come up on Ambassador and Elizabeth, seated on opposite sides of Ambassador's desk.

Ousmane still types.

Scene 13c

Ambassador: And what does it say...exactly?

Elizabeth: (*emotionally, reads*) "Dear Mr Faye, you have applied for entry clearance to visit the United Kingdom to participate in the Festival of Puppetry for Social Transformation. However, you have failed to submit evidence of strong family ties in your home country. I am not satisfied that you are genuinely seeking entry for a limited period or that you intend to leave the United Kingdom at the end of the visit. I have therefore refused your application". This guy is the leading puppeteer in this country and has been invited all over the world....

Ambassador: The language could be more polite.

Elizabeth: This is not about language, Sir! We're accusing him of being a liar! We've judged and sentenced him...accusing him of being a potential illegal immigrant. No wonder people hate us!

Ambassador: (*snorts*) Hate?

Elizabeth: He didn't want to speak to me when he heard I was from the Embassy.

Ambassador: I wouldn't worry my pretty little head over it! He's just an artist...he's hardly going to harm our interests.

Elizabeth: He was doing theatre about Bush and Blair being on trial at the International Criminal Court. You should have seen the audience response.

Ambassador: Then I'm glad we refused him entry. We're sitting on our own powder kegs of recession and racial tension. We can do without incendiary propaganda!

Ousmane still types.

Newspaper seller with headline walks across the stage with headline: "British arms company accused of bribery"

Scene 13d

Minister with Jacob, Head of the Anti-Corruption Unit

Minister: All I'm asking comrade, is that you release the report after the election.

Jacob: Is that why you wanted to see me?

Minister: (*holding up a glass*) And to have a drink, of course. Your favourite...Blue Label.

Jacob: Thank you, Minister, but I can't.

Minister: (*Charming*) What's with the "Minister" thing? We're friends, comrades....

Jacob: Abraham, I can't do it.

Minister: (*wry smile*) It's after hours. You can have a drink.

Jacob: The report is ready for distribution. It will be released at a media conference on Friday.

Minister: (*angrily*) You can't do that!

Jacob: (*calmly, firmly*) The Constitution requires us to investigate without fear or favour.

Minister: Jacob, we deployed you to head the Anti-Corruption Unit for goodness' sake! You're one of us!

Jacob: I have to be independent, and I have to be seen to be independent.

Minister: Yes, yes, yes, you had to resign from the party when you took the job. That's what the law requires...

Jacob: The law also requires me to be impartial.

Minister: And we all appreciate the great work you're doing. We must root out corruption at all levels. I'm not saying you must bury the report.

Jacob: You just don't want the public to be informed till after the election.

Minister: Surely you don't want the Christian Democratic Party – puppets of the west – to rule this country!

Jacob: It's not what I want. It's what the Constitution requires, what the law demands...a government for the people, free of corruption.

Minister: (*snorts*) Like where, Jacob? Italy? France with its "facilitation" fees? Britain with their cheating MPs? Come on comrade... we're not perfect, but we're doing something. *You're* doing something.

Jacob: You *know* that we have evidence of companies linked to four senior ministers who directly, or through their families, all benefited from the arms' deal.

Minister: I can assure you they won't get appointed to Cabinet after the election!

Jacob: There are grounds for criminal charges.

Minister: We'll make them ambassadors to Chad or...Eritrea as punishment....

Jacob: The party also benefited hugely through its investment arm.

Minister: Jacob, Jacob, Jacob....you see my problem? All this...evidence... is untested in a court of law. You're going to release this report and it will affect us in the election and then after the election, the "evidence" may not stand up in court.

Jacob: The way the Executive is appointing judges sympathetic to government...maybe that will be the case.

Minister: Comrade...you surprise me. You're beginning to sound like the opposition.

Jacob: I want to release this report *before* all the witnesses get killed off. I want them in a Witness Protection Programme.

Minister: What are you saying, Jacob?

Jacob: A key whistle-blower was assassinated....

Minister: If you're talking about the Mogale case, my understanding is that it was alcohol poisoning.

Jacob: The toxicology report certainly showed that it was poisoning...

Ousmane typing.

Newspaper seller with headline walks across the stage with headline: "Ruling party's election campaign funded by arms deal bribes"

Scene 14

A group of 3 social activists are preparing a banner for a march. It says "No to 'democratic' dictatorship". As they do so, they discuss election strategy.

Keith: Our position is still that we boycott the election.

Majoli: We don't agree. This is the best chance we've had in 25 years to change the government. They're weak, they're on the back foot, they're trailing in the polls...that's why they have to kill the opposition.

Keith: How can we even think of participating in an election when the leader of the biggest opposition party has been assassinated?

Majoli: Because it's backfired on the ruling party. The mood out there...people are angry!

Nonu: The trade unions have had enough! Enough empty promises, enough corruption...we want to send the elite a clear message this time.

Keith: By voting for the opposition? How do we know they won't also serve the neo-liberal agenda?

Nonu: We told our people to support the liberation movement in all previous elections. And look where it's got us!

Keith: They freed us from the British!

Majoli: Which doesn't mean they have the right to rule forever.

Nonu: We should have formed our own party.

Keith: Too late now!

Majoli: Which is why we have to go with the opposition.

Keith: Who's funding the opposition?

There is general silence.

Majoli: Probably some foreign funding...

Nonu: The private sector...they give to the ruling party *and* to the opposition...to keep their options open.

Keith: Yes, but who? Do we know the *actual* campaign funders?

Nonu: We don't really know who funds any of the parties....

Keith: Exactly! So we mobilise our members to vote for the opposition because they're making all these election promises, but when they come into power, they make policies that benefit their foreign government funders and their private sector backers. (*Beat*) China doesn't have elections, but they've done more to

lift their people out of poverty than any democracy on our continent!

Nonu: It's not like they don't have corruption...

Majoli: Or nepotism.

Nonu: Or human rights....

Keith: Bourgeois democracy sucks!

Majoli: Bourgeois democracy is what we have.

Keith: It's just a way of co-opting us! We think we have all these freedoms and human rights because they're in our Constitution, but we don't! It's the way the system keeps us from revolting so the rich can get richer!

Majoli: So what do you suggest?

Keith: Like I said...boycott the election. That will send a strong message that the system needs changing, not just the government! (*Beat*) Where's your bathroom?

Nonu: Down the passage, second door right.

Keith exits.

Majoli looks after Keith as he exits, and shakes his head. The discussion takes on a whispered, conspiratorial tone.

Nonu: You still think he's a spy...

Majoli: Not a spy...a plant...by National Intelligence.

Nonu: We know the social movements have been infiltrated...but you can't be serious about *him*?

Majoli: His arguments sound great but look at his conclusions. He's an *agent provocateur*, taking the radical position every time. He wants us to boycott the elections. Who benefits from a low voter turnout?

Nonu: (*the penny drops*) The ruling party....

Majoli nods.

Lights fade.

Scene 15

Three men in balaclavas and Julia with a gag in her mouth. Two behind her, one in front with his hand outstretched. She hands her mobile phone to him. He scrolls down the contact list and finds Ousmane's number. He nods to the two other men. They pull her across a table (she tries to resist, but they are too strong), so that she is bending with her abdomen on the table and arms stretched in front of her, with one man holding her arms at that end. The third man stands near her face, dials Ousmane's number. Ousmane is at his desk, typing. He picks up his phone and says "Hi babe". Second man, standing behind Julia, loosens his belt, with the obvious implication that Julia is about to be raped. Lights fade as Julia lets out an anguished scream. Ousmane hears, gets up and shouts "Julia, are you alright?" and, as the lights fade and Second man thrust into Julia from behind, Ousmane lets out a similar scream. He rushes out, (heading to her apartment).

Scene 16

Puppeteer is doing a Boal-type, Forum Theatre intervention. He has two puppets, Official on right hand and Farmer on left hand.

Official hands Farmer a document.

Official: Just sign here.

Farmer: What's this?

Official: It's you agreeing to sell.

Farmer: But I'm not agreeing.

Official: You have to....

Farmer: Our family has had this land since the British left.

Official: Well, now the government wants it. Sign.

Farmer: I'm not signing!

Official: If you don't sign, government will take away the land without any compensation.

Farmer: They can't do that!

Official: They passed a law.

Farmer: I voted for them!

Official: So they know what's best for you!

Farmer: Where would I go?

Official: (*smirks*) Anywhere you like. This is a free country.

Farmer: How much are they paying?

Official: 20 000.

Farmer: 20 000? That's...nothing!

Official: Take it or leave it. Like I said, government will take your land anyway.

Farmer: What do they want to do with it?

Official: They need it.

Farmer: For what?

Official: That's none of your business.

Farmer: I feed my family off this land.

Official: You can find other land.

Farmer: For 20 000?

Official: Move to the city. Get a real job.

Farmer: There's no work in the city. At least here I can live off the land.

Official: Maybe you can work for the new owners.

Farmer: Government's selling the land?

Official: Leasing it...for 100 years.

Farmer: To who?

Official: Okay, if you must know...a Chinese bio-fuel company.

Farmer: Bio-fuel?

Official: (*patronisingly*) They plant stuff, and then they make fuel from it, to run their cars and their factories and their mines....

Farmer: But we're not growing enough food for our own people.

Official: Government will make a lot of money, and then they will develop the people!

Farmer: That's what they always say...but only a few get rich.

Official: Like I said, you could work for the Chinese company....

Farmer: I want to work for myself and my family! And anyway, the Chinese bring their own people to work here. And when they do take us, they pay slave wages! The British took away our land, and then we got it back when they left. Now our own government is taking it away again, and giving it to foreigners!

Puppeteer: (*as himself*) This is a true story that's happening in the north east of our country. Does anyone have similar stories?

One: My land was taken away for a golf course.

Two: I lost my fishing permit. It was given to a company owned by the Minister of Fisheries' wife.

Three: My shop closed down when a South African supermarket moved in.

Puppeteer: So what are you going to do about it? What are we going to do about it?

Elizabeth enters and stands to the side.

Three: What can we do? They've got everything. Money, newspapers, guns...

One: Some fishermen wanted to challenge the Ministry in court. But we couldn't afford the lawyers.

Two: Justice is for the rich.

One: To be rich, you must have political connections.

Three: If you're poor, you have no rights, no power, nothing.

Puppeteer: So how do we empower ourselves? What can we do to change our lives? Discuss that in your working groups for the next 45 minutes and then we'll regroup and share our ideas.

One, Two, Three exit. Puppeteer and Elizabeth speak. Puppeteer is still cold towards Elizabeth.

Elizabeth: I spoke to the Ambassador.

Puppeteer: I don't want a visa...

Elizabeth: I understand that you're upset.

Puppeteer: I don't want to go to your country...or anywhere in Europe where I'm assumed to be a criminal because of the colour of my skin.

Elizabeth: I'm really sorry about your experience. But *because* of that, I believe we can make it better for other African artists.

Puppeteer: That would be a pity!

Elizabeth: Are you serious?

Puppeteer: Now more of them will be making work for the British market! And we all know what European promoters want. (*With sarcasm*) Exotic Africa, happy clappy, dancing natives...taking this Africa to Europe so *they* don't have to travel to the dark, diseased, dictator-ridden, devil-worshipping continent.

Elizabeth bursts out laughing.

Puppeteer: (*thrown*) What?

Elizabeth: (*covering her mouth with her hand, still laughing*) I'm sorry....

Puppeteer: Did I say something funny?

Elizabeth: That was a lot of "d's".

Puppeteer doesn't know how to react initially, then smiles.

Puppeteer: That's not very "d" for diplomatic...

Elizabeth: I know. I'm sorry. Look, I get it that we've treated you badly, but like you don't want to be criminalised in Europe, I don't want to be treated like just another British neo-colonialist. I think you're doing important work, and if there's anything I can do to help...

Puppeteer: What makes you think I need help?

Elizabeth: I don't think you get government funding for the kind of work you do...

Puppeteer: (*sneeringly*) The only time *they* support the arts is when they need entertainment at some state function or when they co-opt musicians to attract crowds to their election rallies.

Elizabeth: So...is it the French Institute?

Puppeteer: (*snorts*) *Those* neo-colonialists! They fund things that fly the French flag or promote their language.

Elizabeth: The private sector wouldn't sponsor this kind of work.

Puppeteer: They do sport. Mass markets, high visibility stuff.

Elizabeth: So how do you survive?

Beat.

Puppeteer: *(as serious as he can get, whispers)* I get funding from Al-Qaeda.

Elizabeth: That's not funny! We had a bomb scare at the Embassy the other night.

Puppeteer: And it won't be the last. Thanks for bringing the "war on terror" to our country!

Elizabeth: I have some budget to support your work....

Puppeteer: You're not listening...*(slowly)*. I...don't...want...your...funding!

Elizabeth: *(exasperated)* What do you want me to do? Spread my legs and let you have your way with me...to make up for the way Europe raped Africa?

Puppeteer: I'm going to pretend you didn't say that.

Elizabeth: I'm only trying to help...

Puppeteer: And how does it help me to have to put your logo on everything I do, and have government dismiss it as serving some British agenda?

Beat.

Elizabeth: I'm sorry...I guess there's a lot I still have to learn.

Beat.

Puppeteer: How much do you have?

Lights fade.

Scene 17

Ousmane with hood over his head, on a chair, his arms tied.

Ousmane: *(angrily)* Charge me! If I've done something wrong, then charge me, you cowardly bastards! Or kill me...! You'd better kill me...if I leave here, I will avenge my brother...*(breaking down)*

and Julia. You'll see...your blunt swords have sharpened my pen!
(*Shouts*) Bastards!!

Two men enter with keffiyehs wrapped around their heads so that only their eyes can be seen.

Man One: Mr Zigoro...

Ousmane: (*tries to get up from his chair*) Bastards!

Man One: Ousmane...it's okay. We're not who you think we are.

Ousmane: Who are you?

Man One: We're going to take off your hood now.... But just relax, okay?

Man Two takes off Ousmane's hood. Ousmane is surprised by whom he sees.

Ousmane: Who the hell are you?

Man One: We're going to untie you, but first, just listen to what we have to say.

Ousmane: What do you want?

Man One: We've been following your work. You're a brave man.

Ousmane: Who are you?

Man One: Let's just say...we're a group of concerned citizens.

Ousmane: Concerned about what?

Man One answers by changing the subject.

Man One: A colleague of ours has disappeared. We believe he has been kidnapped....

Ousmane: Which is what you've done with me.

Man One: I apologise for the cloak and dagger stuff, for bringing you here like this. We couldn't take the risk of your knowing where we are...

Man Two: Not because of you...but in case National Intelligence gets to you.

Man One: We think your office is watched and your phones bugged.

Ousmane: Yes, they are.

Man One: So, getting you here was a little dramatic, but we hope you understand. We also wanted to impress on you what's happening in our country.

Man One nods to Man Two who unties Ousmane.

Ousmane: Your friend...he's been renditioned?

Man One: That's the nice word the West has for the illegal abduction of people, to detain them without trial, torture them. In blatant contravention of the Geneva Conventions.

Ousmane: And he's been taken from here?

Man One: From this country, yes. Of which he is a citizen.

Ousmane: What makes you think he's been kidnapped?

Man One: *(giving Ousmane a DVD)* Our colleague was a computer expert. He set up webcams in his apartment for security purposes. When he didn't come to a meeting or answer his phone, we went to his place and found evidence of a break-in. This is a recording linked to the webcams. It shows two men taking him and his computer.

Ousmane: Why? What are you guys involved in?

Man One: If you're thinking that we're involved in terrorist activities, the answer is no!

Ousmane: Then why....?

Man One: Mr Zigoro, as you know, since 9/11 and since that bomb at the Israeli Embassy two years ago, Muslims are guilty until proven innocent. We are part of a global network that supports Muslims who have been treated unfairly...

Ousmane: What kind of support?

Man One: It depends...legal aid, financial assistance, a place to sleep.

Ousmane: Including terrorists?

Man One: One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. One nation's brave soldiers, is another nation's occupying force.

Ousmane: I was at the British Embassy the other night...when there was a bomb threat. I don't support terrorism.

Man One: The British accused your grandfather of being a terrorist.

Ousmane: He didn't plant bombs on trains. Or fly aeroplanes into buildings.

Man One: No, but he supported the armed liberation movement against the British occupiers. We're not asking you to support our cause...

Ousmane: What are you asking?

Man One: We believe that the state has a secret unit...Trained by the Americans and supported by them and the British. We know they monitor the activities of local Muslim organisations but this unit also engages in renditions. We think the ruling party is now also using them to carry out extra-judicial killings and intimidation of its political opponents.

Ousmane: And you want me to find proof of this.

Man One: Perhaps in the process, you'll find those who beat up your brother and raped your girlfriend.

Beat.

Man One: Here's a mobile phone. If you need to reach us, there's a number programmed into it that goes to no-one in particular. Leave a message and someone will get back to you. *(Beat)* I'm sorry that we have to do this...but could you put the hood back on? We'll drop you in town....

Lights fade.

Scene 18

Minister's wife has a packed suitcase. She walks up and down. Then sits. Enter Minister.

Minister: *(seeing the suitcase)* You going somewhere?

Minister's wife: An old school friend came to see me today. Fatima Bidzogo.

Minister: Daughter of Jeremiah Bidzogo...the great anti-colonial editor.

Minister's wife: Mother of Ousmane Zigoro...

Minister: Yes, the journalist who now works for the British Times. His grandfather must be turning in his grave.

Minister's wife: His brother was badly beaten up....

Minister: I'm sorry to hear that.

Minister's wife: His fiancé was raped...

Minister: That's not good.

Minister's wife: Please tell me you had nothing to do with it.

Minister: Felecia...!

Minister's wife: And no lies. No political speak. No obfuscation. Just tell me the truth!

Minister: How can you even ask such a question?

Minister's wife: The family believes that government is trying to intimidate Ousmane because of his investigations and reporting.

Minister: Nonsense! Absolute rubbish!

Minister's wife: So the beating of his brother and the rape of his fiancée within a week – these are just coincidences?

Minister: We're all suffering from the violent legacy of British colonialism.

Minister's wife: Abraham, I'm your wife! You don't have to give me empty political speeches!

Minister: I'm just saying...violent crime is not unique to the Bidzogos.

Minister's wife: Ousmane's brother was given articles written by him. And photos of his fiancée's apartment. Ousmane was called from his fiancée's phone while she was being raped. These weren't normal assaults.

Beat.

Minister: I will personally look into this!

Minister's wife: Just tell me the truth, Abraham!

Minister: Felecia, there is no way that we would condone such actions!

Minister's wife: What's going on? Opposition politicians are being shot. Whistle blowers – even members of our party - meet with freak accidents. Those critical of us are threatened. Is that what we fought for? Is this what my father spent 20 years in jail for?

Minister: Your father was a people's hero, but my father was no less an activist....

Minister's wife: And they must both be turning in their graves to see what we're becoming! Our people are poorer, sicker, more unemployed and more afraid than when the British ruled here!

Minister: You sound like the opposition.

Minister's wife: So are you going to shoot me too?

They look at each other in stony silence.

Minister's wife: I'm leaving. I'll be with one of the children...

Minister's wife then picks up her suitcase and walks past Minister towards the exit. Minister grabs her by the arm.

Minister: You are not going anywhere!

Minister's wife: Let me go!

Minister: You already embarrassed me by resigning from the party's Women's Association!

Minister's wife: I could no longer serve other women in good conscience with a husband who's a serial philanderer!

Minister lets her go.

Minister: You and the kids want for nothing...

Minister's wife: Except to be able to sleep at night!

Minister's wife exits.

Scene 19a.

This scene has two components, Puppeteer performing a one-man show, portraying an Arm's Dealer, using a British accent, and Ousmane and Julia. Puppeteer wears an overcoat with a large number of weapons inside which he flashes from time to time, or takes out one at a time. Puppeteer is on the ground level, Julia and Ousmane on the upper level.

An actor with a Union Jack wrapped around him marches across the stage, with a placard saying: "This play is brought to you courtesy of the British Embassy"

Puppeteer: *(opening his jacket for the audience like a flasher)* So, what would you like? I've got rocket launchers, fragmentation grenades, sterling sub-machine guns, automatic pistols. With serial numbers, or without. I don't care what you fucking do with it; I'm just the salesman. Like if you have AIDS and I sell you

ARVs, you should use it to save your life, right? But if you want to feed it to your cat, that's your prerogative. I'm just the salesman. I can get you helicopters, guided missiles, drones. I can even throw in a submarine or two. You don't have a sea? No problem, I sell it to you, you lease it to your neighbour with a coastline. We all win, right?

Actor walks across the stage, with a placard "And now for a word from our sponsors: Buy British weapons: Gives you more stiffs than an upper lip!"

Puppeteer: Yes, I know most of your people are poor. Most live on a dollar a day. But let me tell you something. Last year, the world only spent 1,6 trillion dollars on arms; that's 235 dollars for every person on earth. How many days in a year? 365, exactly! So people like me...we live on less than a dollar a day! We understand poverty, which is why you need weapons! To keep hungry people in their place! But we also create jobs. Buy our weapons, and you'll keep British jobs! But we're not selfish; we can offer you offsets. If you buy a submarine...I know you don't need it, but I'm just saying...if you buy a submarine, we'll build a soccer field in a township, so your unemployed have something to do.

Lights fade and come up on Julia and Ousmane.

Scene 19b

Julia is lying in a bed. Ousmane is sitting next to her, holding her hand. They do not say anything to each other, but clearly, there is a lot of pain and anguish between them, and about Julia's situation.

Lights fade and come up on Puppeteer.

Scene 19a

Actor walks across the stage with placard: "Just in case you arrived late, this play is brought to you by the British Embassy"

Puppeteer: It's tough running a country, and people show no appreciation. We understand! And we understand that your party needs money...to pay its staff, pay the rent, have the odd celebration and of course, to win an election, so you can continue to help yourself to the state coffers! By the way, I LOVE how you people do elections here. The loser becomes President, and the winner, Prime Minister. We'd be very happy to offer you, your party, anyone you think is deserving, a little commission. If you buy a submarine – and I know you don't have a coastline – but if you buy a submarine, the commission will allow a lot of people to retire comfortably...just saying.

Lights fade and come up on Julia and Ousmane.

Scene 19b

Ousmane is trying to help Julia to sit up. She is clearly in a lot of pain.

Lights fade and come up on Puppeteer.

Scene 19a

Actor crosses stage with placard: And now for another word from our sponsors: "Let them eat (British) guns"

Puppeteer: Help yourselves! No hand outs! No humiliating aid rubbish! This is good fucking business. You don't have money for all the arms now? No problem. Take a World Bank loan. Or get it from the towelheads. Or the slant-eyes. I don't care. We all want peace, right? But then no-one wants to fucking pay for it. And let me ask those hippies out there: where does AIDS come from? From making love! Which is why I prefer to make war! War's good business! Look, I'm no Mother fucking Teresa, and I admit, I often arm both sides in a conflict. But that's to ensure fairness. Who wants to watch a soccer match where only one team is allowed to kick the ball? Sorry, I 'm going on...so...what would you like? Really? Really? And...how many submarines do you want?

Lights fade and come up on Julia and Ousmane.

Scene 19b

Julia is sitting up. She takes Ousmane's hand.

Julia: I want you to promise me something.

Ousmane listens, but doesn't say anything.

Julia: I want you to do whatever it takes to change this government. There is nothing more that they can do to me now...what they have done, is worse than death. *(Beat)* What they are doing to our country...it's up to all of us to stop them.

Lights fade and come up on Puppeteer

Scene 19a

Actor walks across stage with placard: "Brought to you with the generous support of the British Embassy"

Elizabeth: *(smiles)* You're going to get me fired.

Puppeteer: Then I'll be doing you a favour.

Elizabeth: Who's your audience for this?

Puppeteer: Today, it looks like just you. Doesn't look my friend could make it. But tomorrow...anyone who'll listen.

Elizabeth: You wrote it quickly.

Puppeteer: I've had it in my bottom drawer for a while. (*smiling*) I was just looking for the right sponsor.

Elizabeth: (*smiling*) We really don't need all that acknowledgement.

Puppeteer: I'm trying to be transparent.

Elizabeth: No, you're not! You're trying to make a point.

Puppeteer: And which point is that?

Elizabeth: You're trying to provoke us to see whether we really support freedom of expression or not.

Puppeteer: And do you?

Elizabeth: This is mild compared to what some of our artists say back home, and *they* get public funding.

Puppeteer: As they should in a democracy. But what about when the natives in the former colonies do it?

Elizabeth: I'm cool with it.

Puppeteer: So why did you say I'll get you fired?

Elizabeth: I'm not sure the Ambassador will roll in the aisles.

Puppeteer: Exactly! He's happy to support anything critical of our government in the name of promoting freedom of expression and defending democracy, as long as we don't criticise his little Britain!

Beat.

Elizabeth: You don't need our money...that's the other point you were making.

Puppeteer: Or your visa. There are lots of others I can prostitute myself to.

Lights fade.

Scene 20

Jacob, the Anti-Corruption Unit Head is sitting on his desk in his office. In front of him is a man who has set up an appointment with him.

Jacob: *(suspiciously)* Who did you say you are?

“Blake”: Blake.

Jacob: Blake who?

“Blake”: Blake Garba.

Jacob: You said you work for an NGO that monitors corruption...?

“Blake” Yes...er...how foreign aid is abused by our government.

Jacob: Which NGO is that?

“Blake” *(Beat)* You won't know us...we're small.

Jacob: I know all the NGOs working in the anti-corruption field. And if I don't, I want to get to know all of them.

“Blake” Why are you asking all these questions? I'm trying to help here...

Jacob: I don't know you...

“Blake”: So you're suspicious.

Jacob: You told my secretary that you have some urgent information for me.

“Blake” I don't blame you...*(he starts to take off his top)*

Jacob: What are you doing?

“Blake”: You think I'm wearing a wire....*(bare chested by now, starts to unloosen his belt)*

Jacob: *(shocked)* You don't have to do that!

“Blake”: I'm one of your biggest fans....! *(pulls down his trousers, so that he only has his underpants on with his trousers at his feet).*
See, I'm clean.

Jacob: *(smiles)* I believe you, it's fine.

“Blake”: There are intelligence officials everywhere. You can never be too sure.

Jacob: How can I help you, Blake?

“Blake”: I know you’re busy, so thank you for seeing me at such short notice.

Jacob: *(showing a little irritation)* I don’t have much time....

“Blake”: *(reaches for an A4 envelope)* You don’t have to read this now....I’ll leave my contact details with your secretary.

Jacob: Just tell me what this is about.

“Blake”: It’s a long story...and you’re busy. *(pointing to the envelope)* It’s all in there. But I don’t want to leave without taking a selfie with you....please! The country’s top corruption buster!

Jacob begins to open the tightly sealed envelope. “Blake” gets in quickly; he takes out his mobile phone and puts his arm around Jacob’s neck, with his face up close to Jacob’s face.

Jacob: You should put on your clothes...

“Blake”: This will be quick. They’ll be so envious at work.

Blake takes up various suggestive poses in relation to Jacob, all the time taking selfies. The telephone rings to indicate that Jacob’s next appointment as arrived.

Jacob: Okay, I think that’s enough.

“Blake” We’re great admirers of your work.

Jacob: My next appointment is here.

“Blake”: *(as he dresses)* No problem....It’s explosive stuff in there. I’ll make another appointment with your secretary to follow up in the next few days.

“Blake” exits.

Jacob picks up the envelope, opens it and takes 3 sheets of A4 paper out of the envelope; they’re all blank. Jacob is puzzled.

Lights fade.

Scene 21

On the screen – or if actors are available as a chorus, or actors with puppets bearing banners – a march is happening; loud, energetic, vibrant. Banners are carried with slogans like: “Feed the hungry: Diet the Fat Cats”, “Our Human Rights: Made in China too?”, “Change Business, Not Climate!”, “Limit Corruption to Computer Software!”, “Globalise Freedom, Nationalise Justice!”, “Occupy Occupations! Jobs Now!” There is lots of singing, dancing, perhaps each slogan having at least one chant with one person saying the first part, and the rest saying the second part.

Scene 22

Minister is on the phone as the above scene fades.

Minister: I don't care what the fucking Broadcasting Act says, I'm saying take it off the air! Now! We're trying to contain the uprisings, and what do you do? You give it massive television coverage! Now it's happening all over the country! What's wrong with you people? We deploy you to these institutions so that some reactionary doesn't do damage to us, and now it's our own bloody people doing the damage! *(Beat)* I don't give a flying fuck what your Board or the Board chairman have said...we pay your salary! And I'm telling you that if you still want a job next week, you'd better start proving that you can handle it! Take this as your third and final warning! *(Slams the phone down)*

Scene 23

Ambassador and Elizabeth. Elizabeth has just told him of the play by Puppeteer.

Ambassador: *(seriously)* And you've told me this, because?

Elizabeth: Because I didn't want you to learn about it from anyone else. I gave him the funding in good faith.

Ambassador: No, you gave him the funding because you were embarrassed about him not getting a visa.

Elizabeth: Maybe....

Ambassador: *(angrily)* Take responsibility here!

Beat.

Elizabeth: Yes, I gave him the funding because...because I wanted to re-establish a relationship of trust after the visa debacle.

Ambassador: Why? He's a nobody-artist for goodness' sake....who's now using our money against us!

Elizabeth: With all due respect Sir, this wouldn't be the first time...We've supported groups with arms and political parties with funding who eventually turned against us.

Ambassador: Then let's learn from our damn mistakes, Lizzie, not bloody repeat them!

Elizabeth: Like I said Sir, I gave it to him in good faith...he doesn't normally do this kind of work.

Ambassador: You're so naïve, Elizabeth! *(Beat)* You're an attractive woman. I was really looking forward to having you around for the next few years...but I don't think I can trust your judgment.

Elizabeth: I'm sorry that you feel that way, Mr Ambassador.

Ambassador: Are you sorry for what you did?

Elizabeth: Giving him the money?

Ambassador: Now that you know what he's done, what he's going to do with it...

Beat.

Elizabeth: No sir, I'm not.

Ambassador: I thought so. *(Beat)* I'll be sending a letter to the Ministry tomorrow morning, asking them to transfer you back to London.

They look at each other for a moment. Then, Elizabeth stands up.

Elizabeth: So, just to be clear, we don't support anyone who's critical of us...we support freedom of expression as long as it doesn't affect us.

Ambassador: We support stability, Elizabeth. The economy needs political stability...the average housewife in Manchester doesn't care about freedom of expression or democracy in Africa...she cares about her quality of life! If democracy can deliver stability, then fine. But some places are not ready for democracy...

Elizabeth: Is this one of those places?

Ambassador: Why do you think we're here, Elizabeth?

Elizabeth: Because of our historical relationship with the country...because we once colonised it?

Ambassador: What I meant is...what do you think our job is...being here.

Elizabeth accepts that she is unlikely to save her job.

Elizabeth: (deadpan) It's to bring western civilisation to the barbarians, Sir.

Ambassador's initial response is to snort, and then he checks himself.

Ambassador: Are you mocking me?

Elizabeth: Why do you think that, Sir?

Ambassador: Because if you are, you'll never work in an embassy again! Now leave!

Silence. Beat. Elizabeth gets up. As she is about to exit, she turns around.

Elizabeth: Mr Ambassador...just so you know, I've drafted a letter to London with details of sexual harassment. The flirtatious, sexist comments, the unwarranted touching, the sexual innuendo...

Ambassador: Are you threatening me?

Lights fade.

Scene 24

Minister sits at table between Priest and Imam who are seated facing each other, on either side of him.

Imam: Our religious communities lived in peace until American preachers came here after 9/11 and began to paint Islam as devil-worship!

Minister: Well, it didn't help when a Christian schoolboy was stabbed to death by a Muslim classmate.

Imam: They were fighting over a girl. It had nothing to do with them being Christian or Muslim. Their religious affiliations were used by some Christian politicians for their own expedient ends.

Minister: It was an honour killing. The Muslim girl's family didn't want her to see a Christian boy.

Imam: (smiles) If it was an honour killing, the *girl* would have been killed!

Priest: It is true that interfaith tensions have risen because religion has become increasingly politicised in our country.

Imam: And government plans to close the refugee camp is adding to the tensions.

Minister: That camp is a hotbed of extremism!

Imam: You mean “Muslim” extremism. And yet, your government has done *nothing* to stop the Christian hate-mongers.

Priest: Mr Minister...why exactly have you brought us here?

Minister: Imam Farouk, we’ll pick up this conversation later, if you don’t mind. (*Beat*) I invited you here as two of our most respected religious leaders...we need your help to stop the violence that is going on around the country at the moment.

Priest: With all due respect, Sir, people are not rioting and looting because they are Christians or Muslims...they’re doing it because they’re poor, hungry and jobless.

Imam: I agree with Reverend Bennet.

Minister: All I’m asking is that you take a public stand against the violence. It’s in no-one’s interests that infrastructure is being destroyed, that people are being hurt, and some are even killed.

Imam: You want us to deal with the symptoms of your government’s lack of service delivery, its corruption and arrogance of the last 40 years!

Minister: I know, Imam Farouk, that you are still harbouring some bitterness towards us since the Wikileaks thing....

Imam: We’ve known for a long time about the surveillance of the Muslim community by National Intelligence.

Minister: We have no choice. The Americans threatened to cut off access to their markets unless we cooperated.

Priest: Mr Minister, this is our problem. Your government has abandoned principle a long time ago. Now it’s all just politics!

Minister: Gentlemen, I understand that we have our differences. But on some things, we’re not so far apart.

Imam and Priest look at each other, and then at Minister quizzically.

Imam: Like?

Minister: Like some moral issues....

Priest: Poverty is a moral issue. Yet your government only serves an elite.

Minister: I'm talking about homosexuality. You know there was a strong lobby for a clause decriminalising homosexuality...like the South Africans have.

Priest: The churches lobbied against it.

Imam: So did we.

Minister: Exactly. Which is why we took the stand we did. First, because it's against African culture, an import from the west, and second because our faith institutions were against it. *(reaches for an envelope)* Now gentlemen, I have something to show you, but it requires the utmost discretion on your part. *(taking photographs out of the envelope and passes them to Imam and Priest)*. These landed on my desk. *(Beat)* As you can see, they are photographs of the Head of the Anti-Corruption Unit...caught in very compromising positions with a homosexual.

Imam and Priest are clearly disturbed by what they see. Minister smiles. Lights fade.

Scene 25

The Head of the Anti-Corruption Unit is seated at a table addressing a media conference. He is less gung ho than we've seen him before. There are many microphones on the table.

Jacob: In summary then, after an exhaustive investigation into the arm's deal and the numerous allegations of corruption, the Anti-Corruption Unit finds the following:
One: that there is no basis for the allegations that various government ministers or their families benefited directly from the acquisition of the military, navy and air-force equipment purchased three years ago
Two: there is no conclusive proof of the ruling party itself benefiting through payments made to it by any of the companies that won tenders to supply the government with the military equipment

The lights begin to fade.

Three: we did, however, find that some of the offsets promised by the winning companies have not been realised, and accordingly, we strongly recommend that government takes appropriate steps to penalise these companies as per the contractual stipulations.
Four:...

Fade to black on this scene.

Scene 26

Ousmane waits. It is dark. He struts up and down.

Kimani enters. He makes signs to Ousmane, putting his hand to his ear, signifying a mobile phone and then drawing his finger across his neck.

They talk in whispered tones.

Ousmane: It's off...like you said.

Kimani: It's bugged....

Ousmane: I know.

Kimani: I left mine at home. They can't know we met.

Ousmane: What do you have?

Kimani: I've been...investigating...

Ousmane: And?

Kimani: It's true. They're called "4X4's".

Ousmane: Meaning?

Kimani: They can go anywhere, do anything, I'm not sure.

Ousmane: Which department do they fall under?

Kimani: I don't know...

Ousmane: (*disbelievingly*) Come on, Kimani!

Kimani: I don't think they fall under any department. They're secret units.

Ousmane: Someone must give them orders. Pay them!

Kimani: Sure.

Ousmane: How do you know this?

Ousmane: I overheard two ministers in the Security Cluster talk about the 4-by-4's. I heard one say, "this is something for the 4-by-4's to take care of". When they saw me, they changed the subject. I

know someone high up in one of the Security ministries. So I asked them for more information on the 4X4's as I've been asked by the Presidency to prepare a holding statement in case a story broke around it. I took a complete chance.

Ousmane: You're crazy! They're going to know...

Kimani: I'm going to be out of a job after the election anyway.

Ousmane: Have you got something?

Kimani reaches into his groin area and pulls out a wrapped up piece of paper.

Kimani: I'm not sure if this is a smoking gun...but...

Ousmane: Thanks, Kimani!

Kimani: Don't forget your interview with the minister tomorrow.

Ousmane: You kidding?

After a moment of looking at each other, Ousmane steps forward and embraces Kimani.

Scene 27

Minister is on the phone to the British Ambassador.

Minister: Hello Mr Ambassador...this is a courtesy call. I'm phoning to let you know that our security forces have arrested a man in connection with the assassination of Mrs Vava. *(Beat)* Yes, we're delighted too...it's a major breakthrough. He's Serbian, actually. A military man...we detained him as he was about to board a plane. *(Beat)* Yes, but here's the thing...and in the spirit of friendship, I'm calling to let you know that we've established a link between him and Milipeace...yes, the British arms company. *(Beat, beat as the Ambassador talks)*. Well, investigations are at a sensitive stage, so I can't divulge any more than that, but it would appear that Milipeace didn't like the opposition leader's opposition to the military deal...Sure, we'll speak again.

Kimani enters. Minister sees him and down the phone down; smiles to himself, delighted that the Ambassador is flustered.

Kimani: Mr Minister, Mr Zigorro is here for his interview.

Minister: Yes, send him in.

Ousmane enters. Minister stands up, offers his hand, and is at his charming best throughout the interview. Kimani exits.

Minister: Mr Zigorro, I'm glad you could make it. Please have a seat.

They sit opposite each other, Minister behind his desk. Ousmane takes out a tape recorder.

Ousmane: Thank you. Do you mind if I record this interview?

Minister: Please...go ahead. (*attempts to joke*) Provided I can still say I was quoted out of context....(*Beat*) You and Kimani have a history.

Ousmane: We worked together at the *Independent*.

Minister: So, how can I help you?

Ousmane: I'd like to ask a few questions about the Anti-Corruption Unit's Report.

Minister: Sure.

Beat.

Ousmane: We've received information that undue pressure was exerted on Mr Jacob Sithole so that he substantially watered down his report.

Minister: I'm afraid that I cannot help you there. As you know, the Anti-Corruption Unit is an independent entity....

Ousmane: So you have no knowledge of any political pressure...

Minister: This is the first I've heard of it.

Ousmane: Our information is that Mr Sithole is being framed with compromising photographs.

Minister: I cannot imagine that to be the case. The Head of the ACU is a highly respectable man, married, two children, a churchgoer...

Ousmane: Are you saying that you have no knowledge of such photographs?

Minister: Absolutely!

Ousmane: And are you denying that government placed any pressure on Mr Sithole to tone down his report into corruption around the military acquisition deal?

Minister pulls the tape recorder closer to him and deliberately speaks into the

microphone.

Minister: I want to go on record...this government has had nothing to do with any pressure being exerted on the Anti-Corruption Unit and with any so-called photographs allegedly used to frame the head of the ACU. We reject with utter contempt any scurrilous allegations in this regard and take strong exception to the malicious slander and defamatory insinuations that have characterised this dirty election campaign conducted by the opposition! *(to Ousmane)* Is that clear enough for you?

Ousmane: Yes, thank you! *(taking out a piece of paper)* Mr Minister, in the light of your denial, perhaps you'd like to comment on the following....

Minister: What's that?

Ousmane: It's a transcript of a recording with the Head of the Anti-Corruption Unit made when he met with you....

Minister: *(Snorts)* There was no recording!

Ousmane: Can I read some excerpts to you?

Minister: *(a little unsure of himself, but still in control)* Sure! Go ahead!

Ousmane: You: All I'm asking comrade, is that you release the report after the election.

ACU: Is that why you wanted to see me?

Then, later...

ACU: The report is ready for distribution. It will be released at a media conference on Friday.

You: You can't do that!

ACU: The Anti-Corruption Unit is not accountable to the Executive. We have a Constitutional role to perform.

You: You're feeding us to the opposition!

Minister: Where did you get this?

Ousmane: It landed on my desk.

Minister: *(sneers)* Yeah, right!

Ousmane: Are you confirming that this conversation took place?

Minister: I am confirming nothing!

Ousmane: *(goads him)* You: Jacob, we deployed *you* to head the Anti-Corruption Unit for goodness' sake! You're one of us!

Minister: There is nothing there that implicates us!

Ousmane: (*reading*) ACU: You must know that we have evidence of companies linked to four senior ministers who directly, or through their families, all benefited from the military acquisitions deal.
You: I can assure you they won't get appointed to Cabinet after the election!

Minister angrily picks up the tape recorder and switches it off.

Minister: You listen to me, you little fucker! And listen carefully...first, there is no recording. If there was a meeting, I was there, and I would have known! This is a conversation that exists in someone's imagination! Now...get the fuck out of here! Your time is up!

Ousmane: (*getting up*) Just a final question, Mr Minister...

Minister: Get out!

Ousmane: We're printing a story on the "4-by'4's"....

Minister is visibly taken aback and then regains his composure.

Minister: The what?

Ousmane: The covert unit engaged in renditions with the CIA...and in attacks on opposition figures. Do you want to make an official comment?

Minister looks at Ousmane incredulously.

Minister: (*shakes his head*) You're one crazy bastard!! (*Taking the tape out of the recorder*) If you print anything about this meeting without any proof (*holding up the tape*) that will be the end of your sensationalist, British-loving, opposition-biased drive! Now fuck off!

Ousmane exits. Minister paces a little, thinking. He picks up the phone.

Minister: Kimani...I want you to call a press conference, for 5 o'clock. (*Beat, irritated*) Yes, I know it's in two hours...just do it! (*calming down*) Tell them I have an announcement to make about the assassination of the opposition leader.

Lights fade.

Scene 28

Music, lights come up on Minister seated, conducting a media conference. He is charm personified. The table/podium has numerous microphones on it.

Minister: I want to thank you all for attending this media conference at such short notice. There are two important matters that we'd like to share with the public.

The first is that we recently discovered a rogue security unit operating on the fringes of government. Very serious allegations have been levelled against this unit and so we have launched a full investigation. We are at a very sensitive stage, so you would appreciate that I cannot say more at this point, but I want to assure the public that should these allegations be proven, heads will roll, no matter how high up it goes.

We came across the existence of this unit in our investigations into the assassination of the leader of the Christian Democratic Party. A query from a journalist has forced us into making this announcement sooner than we had planned.

However, I am pleased to announce that this Unit had nothing to do with the death of Mrs Vava. Which brings me to my second point. The police have made a major breakthrough in their investigation, and they have arrested the alleged hitman whom, I can reveal, is a foreigner, with a military background.

It's a bit early in the investigation, but it would appear that the apparent motive for the assassination is the opposition leader's much publicised pledge that should she come to power, she will reverse the Military Acquisitions Deal – or MAD as you media people like to call it. We are all aware that it will be British arms' companies in particular that would lose out if this were to come to pass.

Again, I'm not able to take any questions at this point, but we'll certainly keep you informed of developments.

Lights fade.

Scene 29

Ousmane and Elizabeth at a coffee shop.

Ousmane: The Ambassador can't be too happy about the Minister's media conference...

Elizabeth: Off the record?

Ousmane: (*smiles*) Of course.

Elizabeth: Publicly, they're denying it of course, but are completely outraged by the insinuations. But they're investigating to see if one of the arm's companies could have been involved in the assassination. And if so, what kind of spin they're going to put on it. It will be a huge embarrassment if there's any truth in it. Your articles linking British companies to corruption are bad enough...but this...

Waitron: Hello...can I take your drinks order?

Elizabeth: Still water for me.

Ousmane: I'll have a flat white.

Waitron: Will you be having anything to eat?

Ousmane: Not for me.

Elizabeth: No thanks.

Beat.

Elizabeth: Aren't you scared? Your brother, your fiancé...

Ousmane: Of course!

Elizabeth: Your life could be in danger.

Ousmane: This is why I wanted to see you.

Elizabeth: I must warn you I have no credit with the Ambassador.

Ousmane: But you can get me into the Embassy, right?

Elizabeth: What are you thinking?

Ousmane: (*lowering his tone, talking conspiratorially*) Tomorrow morning, the newspaper will be publishing an explosive story that has the potential to bring down this government. I think the safest place for me in the next few days might be inside the Embassy.

Elizabeth: Are you serious?

Ousmane: I'd rather not...it will feed their propaganda about "British neo-imperialism". But we're also running a big story about the assassination linked to Milipeace.

Ousmane's phone rings.

Ousmane: Sorry, I need to take this. Hello? *(Pause)* What? When? *(Pause)* Shit! *(turns off his phone)* *(to Elizabeth)*. They just found the Head of the Anti-Corruption Unit...apparently, he hanged himself.

Lights fade.

Scene 30

This is a mixture of various media reports that reflect what happens in the weeks leading up to the elections and the immediate aftermath.

Actor crosses stage with Newspaper Headlines board: Sensational recordings expose government

Television newsreader from the State Broadcaster, sombre.

TV Newsreader: Less than twelve hours after his return from a state trip to China, President Chaliva today announced a judicial inquiry into the so-called media-gate affair where illegal recordings were made of what sound like conversations between a senior government minister and the former head of the Anti-Corruption Unit....

Actor crosses stage with Newspaper Headlines board: Ruling party support plummets.

BBC World Service Reporter doing an interview with Ousmane.

BBC: Reporting live from the British Embassy, this is BBC World Service. Normally reporting on the news, this time, award-winning journalist, Ousmane Zigoro, is at the centre of making the news with some sensational reports. Ousmane, take us through the highlights of how we come to be where we are today....

Ousmane: A few days ago, the head of the Anti-Corruption Unit gave me a copy of a recording that he'd made of a conversation he had with the then Acting President. He said I could use it if anything happens to him. He also gave me recordings of a number of other incriminating conversations with government ministers which he had made wearing a recording device under his clothes. I received some information from a...solidarity network...about photographs of the head of the ACU in compromising positions and after his media conference, I decided to follow up on these in an interview with the Acting President....

Actor walks across the stage with Newspaper Headline board: Opposition in crushing electoral victory!

Voice pops as interview interviews 4 people – could be two actors on either side of the interviewer playing 2 characters each.

Voice Pops 1: I think people will see now that they have the power to change things. They won't just accept bad politicians any more.

Voice Pops 2: For the first time in 40 years, I'm feeling really hopeful about the future. Free at last!

Voice Pops 3: I just hope we'll see some real change now. Where the new government puts the stomachs of the people first...not their own stomachs!

Voice Pops 4: We've had the Arab Spring but in sub-Saharan African, everytime we think things are changing for the better, after a few months or years winter returns. I really hope that this time, this elusive spring will bloom into a long summer.

Lights fade on general upbeat, positive, celebratory tone.

Scene 32

Ousmane pushes Julia in a wheelchair (or she's on crutches). They walk slowly, with the music that played at the beginning when they were engaged, playing again. They are chatting, happy.

New Official enters, approaches Ousmane.

New Official: Mr Zigoro?

Ousmane: *(half suspicious)* Yes?

New Official: I'm sorry to disturb your walk...I'm Jimmy Kubeshe. I'm with the new government. We really appreciate your contribution to change in our country, and we'd like to offer you a job as the head of government's communications department.

Julia looks at Ousmane with a smile, she's keen for him to take it.

Ousmane: I'm a journalist.

New Official: There are many journalists. We need someone of your calibre.

Ousmane: You've read my opinion pieces?

New Official: All of them!

Ousmane: Then you would know that I don't agree with a number of your policies....

New Official: Like?

Ousmane: Your immigration proposals...tightening border controls...refugee camps, for starters.

New Official: Those were our election promises...we're in government now. Everything's up for negotiation.

Ousmane shakes his head.

New Official: We'll pay really well.

Julia: Does he have to give you an answer now?

New Official: No...but we'd like to announce it soon. Mr Bidzogo is a national hero. *(gives Ousmane a card)* Give me a call.

Julia: He'll think about it. I'll make sure he does.

Lights fade

New Official: *(extending his hand)* Thank you.

Ousmane starts pushing Julia in the wheelchair, without shaking New Official's hand.

New Official: I look forward to hearing from you.

Lights fade to black.