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Mark Taper Forum
Kirk Douglas Theatre

THE CONVERT

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Literary Department
Center Theatre Group
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The iron claw of colonization is bracing to form a fist over Mashona and Matebeland of Southern Africa in 1896. The colony will be hard won, as the struggle between the white intruders and the African inhabitants is by no means a brief or simple one. Western cultural impositions and Ancient African traditions are making strange bedfellows, indeed, never sleeping with both eyes shut – for fear the other will strike.

The White man has begun a steady and unrelenting infiltration onto this interior African nation, and he is settling for the long haul. Here is where he will experience a dominance he could only witness with envy in his native land – the weight of his lower class status bearing his back to a bend. Here, on this foreign soil vast with fertile possibility he can reinvent himself, reclaim a title and position he never had though always felt he deserved. He comes with hopes of great wealth and luxury, armed with an inherent philosophy of his superiority over his African counterpart as his guide. He comes to prove himself an explorer, a knight, a discoverer of new and unfettered resources and exotics. He comes to declare himself a man. His strategy is a simple one: leverage his cultural practices above the natives, study them and then cheat them out of land and position, ultimately bend the African's back low to buoy his superior position as was once done unto him.

The African is caught off guard at first, sure this white storm is a passing one, that they will return to their homeland as other European traders before them. However, through sheer passage of time, the constancy of this pale man with no knees' presence, the loss of land and position by inexplicable contractual means along with the arrival of the Christian God there is a pulling at the very seams of an intricately woven fabric of life. There is an a grappling with home, place, space and voice –on one side are the ardent keepers of culture and land and language and on the other there are those sure of the white man's superiority, glad to be free of the strictures their forefathers, whom they seemed eternally unable to please and thus delighted to declare themselves the ambassadors of the new order; finally feeling significance and a purpose.

But the strictures of this new order – taxes, menial labor and Judeo –Christian morals imposed by an uninvited lord stirs the spirits of slain warriors, kings and queens who

hover closely above, whispering stratagems of vengeance to their kin, urging them to bide their time and strike; to reclaim their birthright.

In 1896 the colony soon to be hailed Rhodesia was crowning, destined to an unwelcomed birth; the sons and daughters of this ancient soil were on the cusp of a battle to reclaim their freedoms, unaware that their hard fought battle led by ancestral voices spoken through brave mediums would seal their bondage for the next eighty years. After which they would regain their strength and rise again, this time to assure a differing outcome, only to repeat the cycle of oppression on their own. The clash of voice, dream, God and song is destined to be mighty, bloody and age long.

CHARACTERS

Mai Kuda: A woman, mother of the earth, in her mid fifties

Jekesai-Ester: A girl in her late teens

Chilford: A man in his early to mid thirties

Kuda: A man in his early to mid twenties

Chancellor: A man in his early to mid thirties

Uncle: A man in his forties or fifties

Prudence: A woman in her early thirties

Setting

The Lounge of Chilford Ndhlovu's home, in the Boomtown of Salisbury (Present day Harare, Zimbabwe)

The home was once owned by British missionaries, now transferred to conquer native souls deeper in the interior, they left it in the hands of a budding, and bright native, a stalwart for the Roman Catholic church: Chilford Ndlovu. The room is modestly furnished, with great Victorian influence, though a very impoverished version. There is a threadbare chaise lounge in one corner and a simple wooden desk and chair in another, a small couch connects the two and a simple coffee table rests in the center of the room, the age of the furniture is apparent but all is impeccably placed and kept; the room is spotless. On the wall is a faded framed painting of the English countryside, and a crucifix.

Time

The late months of 1895

ACT ONE

Scene One

A young man and a girl run down the street, (perhaps from back of house), the young man holding the young girl's hand, they are moving at record speed. Both look about cautiously, the girl marvels at her surroundings, at times pausing to take something in and exclaiming

Jekesai: «Eeeeeey!!!» while snapping her fingers in amazement. At those moments the young man urges her to keep moving,

Young man: «Kasika! Kasika kani!»

They reach the house and disappear behind the back. Mai Kuda bustles into the room, she is a stout Muzezuru woman in her late fifties, she is dressed in a threadbare housekeeper's uniform, complete with apron and cap, she has eyes that can never drink up too much detail. She ushers in her charge, the young man in tow, talking rapidly to him and to a girl of about sixteen, traditionally dressed in a nhembe (a goat skin skirt) and very modest beads only partially concealing her breasts. She is barefoot. Jekesai has an unavoidable keenness and resolve in her eye. She looks around the room nervously.

IN SHONA

Mai Kuda: (Rushing them in) Kurumidza, Kurumidza! Babamn'ini varikupi?

[Come, come quickly! Where is Uncle?]

Young Man: Vaenda kudoroba

[He go towards town center]

Mai Kuda: Enda ovachingamidaza! Usamira mira!

[EYYY! GO and meet them as they come! Do something!]

(The young man rushes back out of the house)

Mai Kuda: Maiwee! (To Jekesai) **Huuya ndikupfekedze, azviite kuti Masta vakona wakadaro**

[I have to find some clothes for you, this Master cannot see you like this]

The Girl: Hindava

[Why?]

Mai Kuda: Kwete Mibvunzo! Anozvifunga murungu ndosaka!

[Don't ask stupid questions! He thinks he is a white that is why!]

The Girl: Anopenga here?

[Is he crazy?]

Mai Kuda: Ah Kwete, akango... (pondering) haa hameno... chimira panapa

[No he's no –I don't know what he is... Wait here

Mai Kuda exits.]

The Girl scans the room, she marvels at every part of it, it is obvious she has never been in such an enclosure before. She touches the chaise, and pulls her hand back in shock, surprised at the soft texture of the upholstery, exclaiming, «Eeeeey!»; she rubs the smooth cement floor with her bare feet; confused by its consistency she sinks to the floor, sitting in a manner typical of a young muzezuru girl, legs bent to one side, feet neatly tucked under her posterior, back inexplicably straight. Slowly as if in fear that someone was watching, she leans her face towards the ground and sniffs the floor; not smelling the cow dung texture she thought all floors comprised she verbally expresses her confusion

The Girl: Eh eh?

She touches the floor almost sensually with her hand. Mai Kuda bustles back in the room,

Mai Kuda: Urikuitei pas!? Simuka! Kurumidza! **[What are you doing on the floor, get up! Hurry up!]** Chipfeka hembe iyi! i **[Go put this on!]**

(she has a shabby dress, obviously many sizes too large for The Girl. The Girl stares at it in confusion.)

The Girl: Eeeeeey! Chichacho? **(what is that?)**

Mai Kuda: *(she shows her how to put it on, demonstrating on herself).* Simudza maoko, pfeka wakadaiso. **[Lift your arms, put it on like this.]** Famba! Ndaku gadzirisa imba - Kurumidza! **[Go! I must prepare the room – Hurry up!]**

(The girl exits, attempting to make sense of this strange garment).

Mai Kuda commences to sing and dance around the room with a mutsvairo in hand (an African broom), She enters a very spiritual seeming trance, singing and sweeping over all items of the room, as though cleansing them from bad spirits. She places objects we cannot quite discern in hidden places in the room, between the couch cushions, underneath the rug and continues her dance. Every now and then she stops and sniffs a brown powder from a small pouch and gains more energy and animation. Suddenly she stops and rushes into the next room at the sound of the door. Chilford Chiredzi enters.

Chilford sits immediately at his desk and pulls out a paper and pen from his worn leather satchel. He is a catechist in the Catholic Church, the only African who holds this position in the Mashonaland region. He is also an occasional assistant to the Commissioner of Native Affairs in the area of native disputes. He is a man of great deliberation and precision, never once placing anything in the wrong place, as though his calling comes with so much responsibility that it dictates his every movement. His English is that of one who has strained to sound as European as possible, though he can never fully escape his African intonations; his attempts to color his speech with as many British sayings and expressions as possible leads to several malapropisms of which he is wholly unaware.

After a time he begins to write, dipping his felt tip pen in its inkwell only when absolutely necessary, writing with economic movements. He is completely focused on his letter writing, his furrow creased, his breathing heavy. He pauses and sniffs the air curiously.

Mai Kuda pushes through the door with a tray of steaming food, She approaches Chilford heavily,

Mai Kuda: Good Evening Misti Ndlovu

Chilford: *(Writing frantically, not looking up)* Yes, good evening, could you just place it on the table.

Mai Kuda: It is not good to wait. It get cold.

Chilford: You know I do nothing until I write my evening letter. And what is that smell?

Mai Kuda: No smell Masta. Today you eat fast

Chilford: What? No, I have –

Mai Kuda: Today someone come, the one you say you want.

Chilford: *(finally looking up)* What? What is it Mai Kuda?

Mai Kuda: She come from the virrage (village), my brotha who die – he daughter – she come to work.

Chilford: I never said –

Mai Kuda: You say you need someone cook, someone crean rike at Fatha Hem's house.

Chilford: Yes, but I never said –

Mai Kuda: So I bring ha.

Chilford: I never said I wanted someone right at this once, I said it would be NICE to have someone to do both like Father – I never said –

Mai Kuda: You said it Masta. Then I say it will help us because my brotha –

Chilford: I know your brother passed and I am sorry about that but that did NOT mean I was going to employ your whole family// in its entirety –

Mai Kuda:// She need onry little, she smar (small) girl but she work hard – she strong, she crean the house good and you just keep ha in the back with me and she can just have sma pay to help ha motha with hut tax Masta.

Chilford: Mai Kuda – I cannot – I am very, very occupied// right now, (*A knock at the front door, he rushes to the door, voices are heard from outside*)

Uncle: Masta – it was him who took it Masta – prease!

Chilford: (*Agressively*) Now you WAIT! (*Abruptly shuts the door*). Now you see what I am dealing with. These peasants have put my very patience on a trial, one of them was waiting for me AT the commissioner's office, something about a goat and a girl, I DON'T even know what. And of course the native commissioner will look to ME to bring it all to a solve. Now I haven't the possible moment to sort with your niece// or whatever -

Mai Kuda: Prease, oh prease Masta, oh, you can pay her onry what moneys you have,
oh prease masta – PREASE MASTA!

Chilford: NO Mai Kuda and do not start –

Mai Kuda: *(now in a full state)* Oh, what can I do brotha Ngoni? How do I face your
spirit or that of our fathas and grandfathas fatha oh Maiwee jangu!

Chilford: Enough now! What, what did I tell you about those animists ritualisms? You do
NOT under any circumstances EVER speak to the dead. How many times Mai Kuda?
What is it I must do? Now – GO!

*Disdainfully Mai Kuda goes to the cross on the far wall, crosses herself, all the while
glimpsing over at Chilford like a reluctant child.*

Chilford: Say it –

Mai Kuda reluctantly begins to force words out of her mouth,

Mai Kuda: Hair Mary, fur of ghosts –

Chilford: GRACE MAI KUDA, FULL OF GRACE!!!

Mai Kuda: Fur of GRACE, *(trying to remember)* eh... eh...

Chilford: ...the Lord is with thee...

Mai Kuda: The Rord is with thee...eh...Hory in heden motha

Chilford: HOLY Mother in Heaven pray for our sins now and at the hour of our death

Mai Kuda: *(Relieved)* Yes. *(Joyfully)* Aaameeeen!

Chilford glares at her for a moment.

Chilford: You really are not taking your salvation very seriously; I fear that –

Mai Kuda: Prease masta – she a good, good gir, she – want to know about God in hewen too.

Chilford: She has heard about Jesus Christ?

Mai Kuda: Ya - she want to work for you Masta so she can rearn Masta.

Chilford: Hmmm *(Beat)*. Is she a clever girl?

Mai Kuda: Yes, yes, she very creva gir

Chilford: *(Thoughtfully)* Where is she?

Mai Kuda: Right here Masta!

Mai Kuda runs out of the room and returns moments later, talking rapidly to The Girl, shabbily dressed in the oversized dress which is back to front. She takes in Chilford almost without looking directly at him.

Mai Kuda: *(in shona)* Masta havasikuda kunwza Shona, wazvinzwa!?

[Now whatever you cannot say in English just don't say it – he doesn't want any Shona spoken around him okay?]

The Girl: Hindava

Why?

Mai Kuda: Iwe itazvandakuudza! Unyepere kudzidza uyo (points at cross)

[STOP asking questions, just do like I say! And act like you want to know about that one –]

The Girl: Uyo Ndiana

[Which one?]

Mai Kuda: Mwari wechirungu, Jesu

[That one I told you they love – the white God – Jesu]

The Girl: Ndazvinzwa

[Okay.]

Mai Kuda: **Ndizvozvo, nyemwerera**

[Okay. Smile eh –]

The Girl smiles a little too brightly.

Mai Kuda: Here she is masta.

The Girl: *(curtseying in a manner typical of a muzeruru girl when greeting and elder respectfully)* Harro Masta.

Mai Kuda: She a good gir Masta, and strong to work.

Chilford: *(inspecting her keenly)* What is your name girl?

The Girl looks at her aunt, exasperated, not understanding his English

Mai Kuda: (*fiercly under her breath*) Zita rako

The Girl: Oh, Jekesai.

Chilford: Hmm... do you want to know the Lord?

The Girl looks to Mai Kuda, exasperated.

Mai Kuda: Ita, “yes”

The Girl: Yes.

Chilford: Yes?

The Girl: Yes?

Chilford: Mai Kuda, is this of most certain?

Mai Kuda: (*nodding profusely*) It is of true Masta! She has been bothering me to come end rearn (learn) from you for RONG (long) time Masta!

Chilford: Well then this is good. This is very, very good, very good indeed. (*Beat*) Well, the first of things that must be done is that name must be changed, you need a name that expresses a Christian faith – Mary – mother of Jesus – is the most blessed name – but I just named another girl that this afternoon, ahh, there is Ruth – but I hate names of monosyllables so – ESTER! Yes, that is it, that is your name. Ester, she was a woman of great, great courage, saved her people in fact, second only to the virgin Mary in Holy women in my opinion. And you look like one – indeed you do, you do.

Mai Kuda: *(to The Girl)* [Hanzi waakunzi Esta manje] [**He says your name is Ester now.**]

The Girl: Esta?

Mai Kuda: Unyemwerere futi uti «thank you»
[**Yes, and smile and iti “thank you.”**]

Ester: *(smiling too brightly)* Thank you.

Chilford: You are most welcome. Now we must settle matters quickly, I haven't finished writing to Father Helm yet, but I can tell him that we have another convert to report – that is great news indeed, the numbers have been on the dwindle of late, to say the most least. Does she have any friends she can bring along to the school Mai Kuda?

Mai Kuda: No, she just come from virrage.

Chilford: so anyway, I suppose if she is of little expectation of too much pay I will retain her for now, she will need to do the cleaning of this room, washing of my clothes and clean water for my bath. I must see if the Colterns still are in need of a maid, she can go there perhaps and perchance on weekends so as to alleviate her payment. And she must come to my school on every day for lessons in bible studies and math and language

Mai Kuda: Schoo masta?

Chilford: Yes, that will be of no charge.

Mai Kuda: Why schoo Masta?

Chilford: Why school? You are not in seriousness! She is sunken in the deepest deep of barbaric practices that is of why! We are trying to civilize our people Mai Kuda! How is that going to happen if she is not steeped in the most potent marination of biblical and academic studies (*Knock at the door*) Goodness of graciousness! HOLD ON! If she is under my roofing– she will certainly be joining my schooling. And she will be there, *every* day. Were you ever in a doubt Mai Kuda?

Mai Kuda: No...no Masta...but ah...she is a gir masta.

Chilford: And what of that? The sisters are all educated, and look at Mistress Prudence! There is not a nary to be discussing Mai Kuda.

Mai Kuda: Yes Masta. Thank you master.

Ester: Hanzi chi? [**what did he say?**]

Mai Kuda: SHHHH!

Ester: (*defiantly*) AIWA! Hanzi chi?? [**NO! What did he say?!**]

Mai Kuda: Hanzi urikuenda kuchikoro. School. [**He says you will go to school**]

Ester: Chikoro chevarungu [**School like for whites**]?

Maikuda: Eh ey. For whites.

Ester: (*excitedly*) Eeeeeey (*snapping her fingers*)!!

Mai Kuda: SHHHH! Thank you Masta.

Ester: *(instinctively)* Thank you master.

Chilford: You are of most welcome. Now go on and get her settled, I have to deal with this.

Mai Kuda: Yes Masta, thank you masta.

Ester: Yes Masta, thank you masta

Chilford: Yes, yes, just go now!

Mai Kuda and Ester scuttle out of the room nervously, Chilford goes to the door, finally allowing the fervent knockers indoors, they are two black men, shabbily dressed, one has a pair of miners overalls on and a miner's helmet in hand, we recognize him as the young man who brought Jekesai earlier, the other appears to be very upset, the miner thankful for Chilford's presence.

Chilford: Now, stand there...NO THERE! Now, in the first and foremost, you do understand, I am a mediator for your pagan concerns by the grace of God. So it is best for you to thank Him right now. THANK HIM!

1st Man: Thank you God.

2nd Man: *(Reluctantly and with great disdain)* Thank you God.

Chilford: Now. What exactly is the issue with the goats or whatever -

2nd Man: That one, that gir that the maid she bring – she is mine! She is my brotha’s chil Masta – now they ara trying to tek ha when she must be going to she ha new husband and be doing what she must be doing.

Chilford: What exactly are you –

1st Man: Don’t let him tek ha masta – she betta with you masta!

Chilford: What is going on here?

2nd Man: (*Increasingly agitated*) She her new husband brideprice, they ara wanting to bring ha here and stop the goats being paid! Thet GIR! Thet Gir is MINE masta! Give ha bek!

Chilford: How is she yours?

2nd Man: Ha fatha die – now I am the fatha – she is mine masta!

Mai Kuda burst through the kitchen door, screaming at the man

Mai Kuda: KANA! KANA!!! She is NOT! LIAR! Haasi mwanawako, Kunyepa! Kunyepa! Haunyare! Hautye vakayenda! SHAME [**You liar! You liar! Have you no shame? She is not your child! Do you not fear those who have parted?**]

2nd Man: UCHAF! UCHAF! NHASI [**TODAY YOU ARE GOING TO DIE!**]

Chilford: NOW HOLD ON!! WHAT IN THE EARTH IS HAPPENING HERE!
(*They all rush to speak at once*). NO! Mai Kuda, bring the girl to speak.

Mai Kuda rushes out to get Ester, who walks in fearfully.

Chilford: Now, what is going on here. I want to hear from Ester herself. No one else.

Uncle: *(Shocked at the disrespect of a girl speaking before him)* AHHH!

Mai Kuda: She cant in Engrish masta.

Chilford: We will make an exception. She can speak the venacular. You speak it back to her in English, she can begin learning right away.

Mai Kuda: Hanzi taurai neShona. **[He says speak in Shona]**

Ester: Chokwadi? **[Sure?]**

Mai Kuda: Chokwadi, *(Agitated, with urgency)* TAURAI KA! **[Yes! Speak!]**

Ester: *(in Shona, with defiance and animation. Mai Kuda interprets)* **[Saka, my father, he favored me best, even though I was the girl, so he wanted to choose a special suitor for me that I also choose first and that I loved. So many times these older men would come for me, wanting me as their third or fourth wife, then my father would refuse. Now he is dead, his younger brother, this one *(pointing at him with great distain)*- who my father he never even like him because he is always getting in bad stories – he is wanting to betroth me to a very, very old man and to take the goats for his needs. The brideprice. And me, I DON'T WANT THAT!!! So that is why my aunt and cousin have brought me here.]**

Baba vangu vaindida kupfura vamwe vana vese, ini ndirmusikana. Vaida kudatsvagira murume akakosha, wandaida inini futi.

Mai Kuda: My father loved me more than all, even though I was a girl. He wanted me to get a good husband that //I loved also.

Ester: //Kangani varume vaida kunditora se mukadzi, Baba //vachiramba.

Mai Kuda:// Other men would come and my father// refused.

Ester: //Avamanje – Babamudiki (*pointing at Uncle with disdain*) vakavengana nababa vangu nenyanya yokuita zvisina musoro. Vari kuda kundirooresa neChembere, kuti vatore mbudzi yeroora.

Mai Kuda: But now, this uncle since my father didn't even like him because to do mad things and now have me marry a very old man for goats for his needs, the brideprice.

Ester: Ini ka HANDIDI, NDIRIKURAMBA//. Ndosaka ndauya pano naMai Kuda

Mai Kuda: //And me I DON'T WANT THAT. So I have been brought here by my Aunt and cousin.

Chilford: This is your son Mai Kuda (*indicating 1st Man*).

Mai Kuda: Yes Masta.

Chilford: And this is your brother (*indicating Uncle*)

Mai Kuda: Yes Masta.

Chilford: *(To Uncle)* What do you have to say for yourself?

Uncle: *(In slow authoritative deliberation)* I am now the head of the family. I do not have to answer to E-N-Y-O-N-E. Not to this one *(indicating Mai Kuda)* or to you. This girl is always trying to cause a problem, thinking she is too much better than others, YOU ARE NOT! And I say she must behave like a proper girl and do what she must be doing in our ways. I am saying, this girl is now mine, eh EH! STOP shaking like that to me! *(To Ester who is shaking her head at him defiantly)* Hauna tsika iwe!

[You are too rude you!]

Chilford: Continue to be speaking to ME!

Uncle: She wants to be TOO rude – this one. I am saying – she is my child and I say where she goes and not go and she is coming back to Mazowe with me TODAY.

Mai Kuda: KANA!

Ester: *(Bursting out. In Shona)* KANA ARIKUNYEPA!, kana nechirungu zvinonzwika, Haasi Babavangu. Kachunhu kasinabasa, pasi //pegonzo chaiyo, Vakadzi vake nevanavake havamufarire. Ini ndingatoto mupfura semurume!

[KANA! He is LYING! EVEN IN ENGLISH I CAN SEE IT! He is NOT the father of me! He is a small thing, even less than a gonzo!// Even his children and his wives are not liking him! I can be a better man than him!!]

Kuda: *(trying to restrain her)*//Ahh AHH! Jekesai! Jekesai!

Mai Kuda: //Nyararai mwana! Nyarara mwana iwe!! **[Be quiet my child, be quiet!]**

Uncle: //AHHH AHHH!! (*Advancing towards her*) [*In Shona*] **[Wati chi? Kundipfura inini semurume, unga taura kudaro kuneni. Kundi pfura innin?]**

Ndichakuratidza kutindiani murume. Ndichakuratidzaso You talk to me rike that! Betta man than me! I show you today who is betta than who! I show you just now like this!

-

Chilford: BE OF SILENCE (*Jumping between them*) You! RECLINE YOURSELF PRESENTLY! RECLINE YOURSELF!! I WILL NOT TOLERATE SUCH BEHAVIOR IN MY HOME. UNDERSTANDING? (*Uncle and Ester back away from each other, both smouldering*). Now, Mai Kuda, this man, to whom she is betrothed, has he wives in the present?

Mai Kuda: YES!!! Many, many wives Masta. More then on my hends. (*Holds up all her fingers for inspection*)

Chilford: Ha! And you do not wish to become a wife?

Mai Kuda rapidly translates

Mai Kuda: Haudi kutimukadzi here?

Ester: KWETE! NO.

Mai Kuda: It is as the gir has said Masta. This man, he is my younger brother, I am knowing him VERY well. He is not honoring the spirit of my brother, this is not what he would be wanting for Jekesai...eh Esta.

Chilford: And you wish to become a member of Christ's Church?

Ester: (*Mimicking Mai Kuda*) Eh ye, YES.

Chilford: Well then she cannot return.

Uncle: (*Shocked*) You can't do that. This is not our way. -

Chilford: We are currently in Salisbury, a city under British jurisdiction, and not a village, your 'way' has no jurisdiction here. I have jurisdiction. You came to me, an employee of the Native Commission, with authority through Sir Rhodes directly from Queen Victoria herself to settle your familial dispute, I now see it was a dispute with Ester.

Uncle: Esta? Ndiani Esta?— who is that?

Mai Kuda: (*smugly, pointing at Jekesai*) SHE is the one!

Chilford: BE OF SILENCE! Where you failed to find an understanding, is that not only am I a mediator of native affairs - I am a man of God. I will not be on the stand by and release allowance to you to practice polygamy and the selling of a young woman's body and soul to satisfy your flesh's ridden ills under my very nostrils. You picked the wrong one my man. These are the VERY aspects of our ways' that must die if we are to advance. It is not of WONDER the white speaks of our savagery. Dispute settled. I will write up a report and have it filed by the Native Commissioner and you best be glad I am not insisting on your arrest for fraudulent charges.

Uncle: AHH – Ayewa! [No!] He has already paid some of the brideprice! You cant do this!

Chilford: Your pagan debts are of no concern of mine. Be of leave. NOW

Uncle: (*Utterly shocked at Chilford's lack of sympathy*) AHHH AHHH!! YOU! YOU are NOT one of us! You are BAFU!! Asitakuitira zvinhu uchaona. **[But we are doing things]** You shall see! Pane NGOZI ichakuvinga! When revenge is taken, I will be sure to let YOU know!

Chilford: Spare your threats. Do leave before I am forced to notify authorities of the commission.

Uncle: Uchaona! **[You shall see!]**

Uncle reluctantly retreats and leaves.

Ester: Eeeeeey!

Ester's eyes brim with tears of gratitude, her relief is palpable. She stares at Chilford with a deep admiration.

Ester: (*Still in disbelief to Mai Kuda*) Eeeeeey! Saka Babam'diki vaenda? **[So Uncle is gone?]**

Mai Kuda: (*To Ester*) EHey! GONE (*she dances a bit in glee, singing a short shona chorus*) Thank you chokwadi **[surely]** Masta. (*Quickly*) AND JESAS!

Chilford: Please Mai Kuda, what am I telling you about all of these histrionics? If you are in such a mood of thanks perhaps you could teach Ester "Hail Mary" (*pointing at crucifix on wall. Mai Kuda's face falls, grudgingly, heavily, she takes Ester to the crucifix*) And please do not ever allow such an ambush upon me in the future near or far. Ever. Understanding?

Mai Kuda: Yes Masta. (*To Ester, pointing at crucifix*) Hanzi uchadzidza miteuro waJesu

[He says you must learn the prayer of Jesus]

Ester: (*eagerly in Shona*) Ndiye Mwari akadzinga BabaMudiki, Ndiye Jesu? Mubvunze, Mubvunze!

[Is this the God that he use to chase away Uncle? This Jesus? Ask him, ask him!!!]

Mai Kuda: Eh eh! Mira! **[Wait]**. Masta, she is asking if Jesus help you chase away her uncle

Chilford: Yes he did indeed. He gives me the authority to stand up for the weak, to protect the downtrodden. Indeed he did. She *is* clever Mai Kuda.

Mai Kuda translates

Mai Kuda: Ndiye eh he. -

Chilford: (*Observes the girl keenly*) I see your strong will young girl. Very useful in Christ's army.

Kuda: Ndakuenda Mama. **[I am going mother]**

Mai Kuda: Fambazvakanaka mwanawangu

[Okay, bye my child]

Ester: (*Runs to him*) Waitazvikuro mukoma!

[Thank you so much older brother]

Kuda: Eh ey. Chisara zvakanaka **[You stay well here]** (*He smiles at her as they old each other's gaze for a moment, it is clear they are very close. Finally he exits*)

Ester: *(To her Aunt, pointing at the Crucifix)* Ngatidzidze munamato

[Let's learn the prayer]

Mai Kuda: *(surprised at Ester's keenness)* Chiita wakadai **[Do like this]** *(crosses her self), Ita... Hair Mary fur of Ghost*

Chilford: *(who had turned to his now cold meal jumping up)* GRACE MAIKUDA
GRACE!!!!

SCENE TWO

Early evening, months later. Ester cleans the room, now dressed in an oversized maid's uniform, an obvious hand me down from her aunt. She polishes the furniture clumsily, placing large amounts of polish on the floor and furnishings and does not rub them in thoroughly, leaving large shiny clumps everywhere. She sings merrily to herself.

Chilford enters with Chancellor Muzonda, a fellow member of the Catholic Church and Interpreter for white mine owners, they grew up together at the Catholic Mission in Bulawayo. A bit of a scoundrel, he is an African opportunist, the beginnings of the black upwardly mobile, his interest in his Christian God is a nominal one, whatever is needed to garner the white man's trust, study his mechanisms of power and control and exult his learnings upon his own people, to his own capitalistic ends. He, like Chilford speaks strained and malapropism-ridden English; though his is perhaps a touch less strained.

Ester rushes out of the room to return shortly with a tray with a tea pot and cups

Chilford: . But you must share this newfound wealth man! I have not had a piece of meat in a week!

Chancellor: I have a herd of connections my brother, a HERD!

Chilford: Of course, you always do!

Chancellor: If you are looking for the usual supply from the usual resources you will be ridden with disappointment. But you must always be in awares, with the right amount of monies – all is available, always! And why were you inquiring about maize meal earlier?

Chilford: It is finished, I am in need of more.

Chancellor: Chilfy – you CANNOT be telling me in honestys. What did you do with it? It was near ten kilograms!

Chilford: I shared it with the children and the families at the mission-

Chancellor: AGAIN! What is this in you Chilfy? To be parting with such coveted commodities with common folk, WHY? Are they your kins? Are they?

Chilford: These people are in the most needs of dire. Jesus commands we care for the poor! I cannot sit upon my loins and witness it when food is in my possession. Now let me be spared all your learnedness, I just need some meat man!

Chancellor: Let us consider it done. I will save you of your hunger. AGAIN.

Chilford: Thank you brother (*They drink tea*)

Chancellor: You must really deepen your thoughts about joining me in more interpretating and trade – this devotion to the church is of nobility but the monies –

Chilford: Of yet again brother? I have told you many a time – I am not of the slightest desire to do anything BUT work for the Lord my God in His holy church. I am already strained and distracted by this additional Native Commissioner employment – your suggestion by the by –

Chancellor: It has been of some assistances no? In the area of revenue?//As I said it would

Chilford: //Yes - but

Chancellor: No buts to be had old boy! I am helping you grow on the ladder of prestige – we are still a rarity – African and highly educated – you best be in obedience to my wise ideals or die a pauper!

Chilford: Considerable exaggeration as of always. I am and was just fine with the church employment, don't act like I am in some state of distress or living beneath my ranking - look at my home (*gesturing*) how many Africans can boast of such an accommodation –

Chancellor: An inheritance from British missionaries.

Chilford: In the exact! And its origins are neither in here or in there! But were I not such a church devout would it be in my possession?

Chancellor: Most of certain not! Chilford Ndlovu: the Church's favorite savage (*sips his tea*). Though on that front – you may have some competition. I just read in the morning Chronicle that Herbert Mhuloyi in Cape Town was just ordained into the Jesuit Brotherhood!

Chilford: NOT NEVER!!

Chancellor: Yes! The very first African Priest, in Cape Town!

Chilford: I...I... am very disturbed by that! I was told we weren't allowed to be considered for Priesthood -

Chancellor: I am knowing; you have been in a rants about being the first native priest and heading a church since we were...?

Chilford: TEN – or near abouts. And they were always saying that wasn't possible right now because that level could only be attained in Europe! I am talking to Father – first thing. What is that smell (*Sniffing the air suspiciously, Chancellor shrugs and lights a pipe*) An African priest! I have grown a congregation, Father Bart is not of the most sharpness you know! Without me there would be not a nary to report! Yet *he* is the priest! I started a *school*, albeit a small one –
(*His arm making contact with a large amount of polish on the chaise*) NOT AGAIN!
ESTER!!

Ester comes forward fearfully

Ester: Yes Masta?

Chilford: WHAT have I most constantly told you of rubbing wood polish on cloth? This is for the FLOOR and the WOODEN DESKS! Things of wooden making, do you understand? You are ruining this furniture!

Ester: (*Quickly cleaning off the polish*) Sorry Masta.

Chilford: It must never be done again.

Ester: Yes Masta.

Chancellor: (*Chuckling in disbelief*) Ahh...savages. Direct from the village?

Chilford: Yes.

Chancellor: Well what else are you to be expecting? I heard of a maid at one of the mine owner's homes, she built a fire in the middle of their wooden panel floored lounge. Broke up the wood with an ax and made use of it for firewood.

Chilford: Goodness of graciousness. And the house?

Chancellor: Burnt to the ground of course.

Chilford: GRACIOUSNESS!

Chancellor: Yes, yes, yes

Chilford: You will never do such a thing will you Ester? Thanks be to God this floor is made of cement. Though that still seems to bear befuddlement upon her – she is of course accustomed to cow dung floors, I have caught her sniffing at it a few times.

Chancellor: (*laughing*) Of course. She, I am certain, had never seen it in the priors.

Chilford: But I have explained. (*To Ester*) You know it is cement, not cow dung now yes?

Ester: Cement! EEy ye! Ahh... yes!

Chilford: Good. (*To Chancellor*) Now -

Ester: But Masta, why is it?

Chilford: Why is it what?

Ester: A cement end not a cow dung?

Chilford: Because we do not want the excretments of a bovine in our homes when we can use a sturdy permanent substance.

Ester: What that it is?

Chilford: What?

Ester: Pemanant

Chilford: Permanent is meaning it will stay forever.

Ester: Foreva?

Chilford: Yes.

Ester: Rike Jesas?

Chilford: No. Not that long, it will as you can see, start to chip away and crack and need replacing –

Ester: Rike with cow dung Masta, I repace it verrry nice. This one it not be rooking as nice -

Chilford: Yes, but -

Ester: So it is the same, it need repracing too?

Chilford: Yes but - NO! Not as much. Cement is superior. *(Beat)* Are you in understanding?

Ester: *(Unsure if she can answer honestly in the affirmative)* Ahhh...

Chilford: Just say “yes” Ester.

Ester: Yes.

Chilford: Good.

Chancellor: (*Bemused*) She is an inquisitive one eh?

Chilford: Yes. It is in general, a thing of goodness, but at times I feel we run in the circular.

Chancellor: Ahh...savages. (*Beat*) Oh, that gives me a reminding. You cannot be out brandishing your Holy Church ways to the kaffirs just nows; what you did out there – must not be repeated.

Chilford: And why ever not? You mean the natives I addressed on the road to come to mass?

Chancellor: Yes!

Chilford: How is that different from what I am always doing? Bringing the natives out of darkness and into ligh –

Chancellor: Were you not of the hearing of the latest lingos?

Chilford: What?

Chancellor: It is of the apparents, that we are now referred to as *Bafu*, it was shouted to us as we walked away from them into the Commissioner office, did you not hear?

Chilford: Oh, yes I have heard it in the prior. So what, and I ask, with a full heart of trepidation is a *bafu*?

Chancellor: A traitor – a white man's native. And they are killing us.

Chilford: What? That is considerable exaggeration!

Chancellor: Eh, eh brother!?! There is a bloody uprising in Bulawayo-Matebeleland man! Maids killing white families in their sleeps! Do you think the hesitation will arise to knock your black block off?

Chilford: Ahh....the Matebele man. Beasts.

Chancellor: Those are your peoples.

Chilford: *Were* my peoples. Now my peoples are any and all who embraces Christ as Lord.

Chancellor: What I am telling you is be of care. It is best you not do any saving of black souls for a while. Just for safety.

Chilford: Is it not under control as yet? In Bulawayo?

Chancellor: *Rhodes*, he's quite a man eh! (*brimming with admiration*) He came down HARD on the savages! Quickly arranged reinforcements; they are doing hangings publicly in Market Square – But even stills we better be in hopes it stays there – we are not safe.

Chilford: Are you in seriousness with this? Bulawayo is more than four hundred kilometers away! Here? The Shona? Oh, cometh.

Chancellor: Don't be putting it past these Shona here! They just addressed you as a traitor! When a man comes into your house and takes it over, and you are a man – there is no way you can take that lying down! And with the white mans, he is not just taking over the house, he is saying – this should be over here and this looks better there and this floor must be made out of wood and not cow dungs and here is where you release your bowels and here is where you lie with your wife – only ONE wife by the bys! It is as if to say, what we did before was somethings of a mess.

Chilford: What is your preference Chancey? Are you wanting to go back to your father's ways?

Chancellor: Not even a jotting! *He* is a good samplings of the very problems of our peoples! He was a FOOL and I can be telling you why – there he is – a chief in the Karanga area –

Chilford: I know and he refused to submit when they came –

Chancellor: Not only did he refuse! He rebelled. And where is he now? Many other chiefs still enjoy their sovereignties, why? Because they think like myself. They embraced and accommodated. He went and broke the laws they set up, sent his mens to steal the cattles back that they had taken. When they came to talk to him man to man what did he do? Refuse to meet them – send his mens out with their little spear and shield. Foolish. Of course the white man returns with his guns. I was there, with my father in his kraal, about ten years of age, but who really knows, and there he sat, on his little throne of lion hide. I had spent my whole life with such respects for him, I thought he was God. I thought if he was to tell the sun – today it would not be shining, it would obey. But that day, hmmm, I saw my father was just a small, powerless African man, resisting a tide TOO much bigger than him. I watched those men destroy EVERYTHINGS. Baba and his mens were powerless against their guns, and they had African men helping them to the boot! Would we have white mens helping us if we were fighting white mens? Ha! Of that one I am in doubts. But there they were, having their

way on our womens. My sister. *(Beat)* Anyways. That day I saw fear on my father's face, I saw it and I knew who I was to be paying attention to – and it was not the African. It was this white man with no knees coming to take what he wanted and make even our own help him do it. My father, died like a coward, begging for his life. After that I asked these white mens if I could go with them. I wanted to learn their ways, I could see ours were of no use. They laughed but they took me as their servant boy for a time and after that –

Chilford: After that is when we met at Father Helm's.

Chancellor: So keep your shirt buttoned, we are in understanding as to why the African will never succeed, but they *will* fight, I am just saying, just saying. *(Beat. Chancellor puffs on his pipe and pulls a bottle of whiskey out of his coat. To Ester)* Girl, go get glasses. *(Ester rushes out)* Ah, in fact – *(he proceeds to pour whiskey into Chilford's tea)*

Chilford: Ahhh!

Chancellor: Oh have some living! *(He pours some in his own cup, swirls and drinks)* But the white man, huh, the white man will never wholly befriend us of course. *(Chuckling)* Their utter holy fears of our touching their womens. Even when they jump on ours without a thoughts!

Chilford: ...well....

Chancellor: *(chuckling)* You know it is true old boy. *(Ester returns, with glasses on a tray, she stops, confused as she sees Chancellor pour more in his tea cup, she retreats with glasses),* Drink up! I got this in exchange for some translating I did at Beatrice Mine, don't of dare waste a drop!

Chilford: *(Finally drinking)* Yes...well, it does take the edge off a rather rough day...Herbert Mhuloyi, HA! Cannot believe it. And I had only four pupils today. FOUR!

Chancellor: Change is a kind of a tricky business my friend.

Chilford: Well it is a must! Ester was at school weren't you? What did you learn today? Tell Master –

Ester: *(she steps forward happy to take the stage after the mortifying polish incident, she recites)* I berieve in God the Fatha Armighty, creata of heawen end eth. I berieve in Jesus Christ, his onry son oura Rord. He was born of the vegin Mery, He suffered unda Pontius Pirate, was crucified, died and buried, He decended in hero, on the third day he was rose agen, He accented into heawen and was sitted at the right hand of the Fatha. He will come agen to judge the riving and the died.

Chilford: Dead.

Ester: Dead.

Chilford: Isn't that to impress old boy? She has only been here two months but look what she can absorb in one day, one day! Now we still have some trouble with the consonants, VVVVV my dear, keep working on the VVVVV sound! *(Ester proceeds to imitate Chilford's facial movements in an attempt to accomplish the sound. She fails and proceeds to pronounce V as W)*

Chancellor: And the Ls.

Chilford: Yes, the Ls are still elusive to her; look at my mouth, my girl *(Chilford proceeds to over enunciate the L sound with his mouth open wide and the tip of his tongue touching the roof of his mouth)* LLLL, see what my tongue is doing? LLLLL

(Ester proceeds to copy him, though her tongue keeps rattling at the roof of her mouth, producing a reverberating RRRR sound).

Chancellor: It's of a damn nuncance that rattling R in the venacular.

Chilford: *(To Ester)* Practice, practice! *(To Chancellor)* I know but she is doing so well! She is my best pupil ever!

Chancellor: Where are you from girl?

Ester: Mazowe

Chancellor: You are Muzezuru - Shona?

Ester: Yes.

Chancellor: Muzezuru...hmm.

Chilford: What man?

Chancellor: Proceed with cautions.

Chilford: Oh I do! Ever prayerful that she is the real thing.

Chancellor: DO you understand that the things your family teaches you are things of pagans, that they are in darkness and now it is your calling to draw them into light?

Ester: Yes. I am to bring them to Jesas! Jesas is so good! He make so I can not be marrying an old man end now going to school end learning to be reading end writing end staying in a NIIICE house. JESAS! He is the mosting High God!

Chilford: (*Pleased*) Yes! He is the MOST High God. I ask her that daily in fact, just to be of sure, you know what has happened in the past!

Ester: Master, I am real, for sure Masta!

Chilford: Yes, we shall see of it Ester we shall see. But, I have had her but for some months and look at the progress! – I may just have, I dare say too soon, a PROTÉGÉ! Finally! (*Almost bursting out of his skin*) Oh, oh! And Ester – sing the song – sing the song I taught you

Ester: (*Proudly, her chest pushed out, begins to sing “Amazing Grace”, her voice beautiful and melodic. Chancellor is slowly drawn in and more and more impressed, Chilford beams proudly and conducts her with his hands*)

Amazing Grace, how swee the sound
Thet save a rench rike me!
I once was rost, but now I found
Was brind but now I see!

Chancellor: Well that is quite alright!

Chilford: Isnt it! She sings beautifully for the boot! She just has an unbelievable ability to absorb, almost on the instant, it is almost afrightening! If I were to fall down to our people’s ways of thinking I would think her a witch!

Ester: (*terrified*) I not witch Masta, not a witch, NO!

Chilford: Settle down old girl, I am just talking. But really, I cannot wait to be showing her to Father Helm! I was beginning to think you and I and the few others true anomalies, but look, here she is, a testamony to all the others out there, wading and wallowing in the

bushes; we can be ironing out all the traditional creases and create a state similar to the Great Britain itself with a whole new culture and peoples! Go draw my bath girl.

Ester: Yes, Masta. (*she leaves*)

Chilford: And she is a hard worker for the boot, she commenced working at the Colterns a few weeks ago, they are speaking highly of her as well.

Chancellor: Indeed (*beat*). So you are really wanting to be a priest old boy?

Chilford: Of course.

Chancellor: You do know what is alls involved in Priesthoods?

Chilford: What? The Eucharist, Confessionals, catechism, I am ready for all of that. I was born –

Chancellor: Don't be a daft, I means the other thing.

Chilford: What? Celibacy?

Chancellor: *YES!!*

Chilford: Oh, please, what possible problem could I have with that one? I have been practicing that anyhow!

Chancellor: OH COME COMES!

Chilford: What?

Chancellor: You are meanings to say, that you have never once had a little romplings with that plumped bottomed thing *drawing your bath*?

Chilford: (*Jumping up*) You must have fallen off of your wits old chap! What in the earth! Do you really imagine - really – really – to start with - the sin involved – not to be mentioning how it is quite impossible for me to be finding – such primitiveness attractive – and –

Chancellor: Oh come, come. Come, comes brother. Really, really, really. Even the dukes and the Earls have a few a romplings when they comes to inspect the new colony! Haven't you noticed the light browning children running around with the loose coiled hairs?

Chilford: (*unnerved*) I have no interest to be in pursuit of this conversation one inch further.

Chancellor: Be steady! Just asking. She is an attractive little things. I wouldn't mind a goes if you don't object.

Chilford: I DO object, I am trying to bring her to GOD you imbecile, so have your GO somewhere else. Have you not a fiance?

Chancellor: Ah...yes...and so...?

Chilford: (*disgusted*) And so. Pru deserves better Chancy, she does, she really does

Chancellor: Oh for goodness, curb your loving affections for her. She is made of the toughest stuff, tougher than you and me to be in honestys! She knows me for what I am.

Chilford: (*Perturbed*) Do leave man. I need to write my daily report to Father. And leave out the front. Don't go near my potential protégé.

Chancellor: Settle down chappy, she is just a common girl. But on that one, you are right, I bests be having a movement (*getting up, checking his pocket watch*) we were to go to that wretching marriage lessons on these hour.

(A knock at the door)

Chancellor: Oh of goodness, that mights be her.

Chilford gets up and answer the door, Prudence enters

Prudence: Chilfy! Is Chancey about? He was not where we were to meet –
CHANCEY! Father Bart awaits!

Chancellor: I knows, I knows my wifes to bes. Chilfy held me ups with all his chatterings. You knows how he gets!

Chiflord: Ahh!

Prudence: I know how You get! Ohh, is that tea, God I would Love a cup, but No, we havent a moment, Chancey! You must take this with all seriousness! It causes me distress when I must come looking for you so!

Chancellor: My darling dears, Never be within distress on my front, I will Never lets you downs. Let us be gone.

Prudence: *(Enamoured)* Chancey! *(Noticing Ester who has returned and is staring at her with deep curiosity)* Ohh! A new one! Hello! I am Mistress Prudence! What is your name?

Ester: Esta

Prudence: Ohhh! Ester! «If I perish I perish» Love it Chilfy! Okay let us be gone
Chancey. Toodles Chifly!

Chilford: Yes, goodbye.

Chancellor: *(Following her out, to Chilford)* Stop all the soul saving eh! We must be of
cares, we MUST be of cares! I will see you in the morning, His holiness.

Chilford: Be of leave Chancellor!

Chancellor: *(Chuckling)* I am gone, I am gone!

They Exit

*Chilford closes the door behind Chancellor and goes to his desk, and commences reading
his letter.*

SCENE THREE

*Evening, several months later. Mai Kuda paces the room looking anxious, she checks a
few times for Chilford's arrival. She replaces the indiscernible objects from their hiding
places with fresh ones. She sneaks a little snuff out of her pouch. Finally he enters, with
Ester in tow; her gait now more formal, she has visibly become more like Chilford in
poise and manner.*

Mai Kuda: *(nervously)* Good evening, Masta.

Chilford: Good evening Mai Kuda, I will have my supper in the present *(To Ester)*
What I am in an attempt to explain is that you may NEVER be doing that in the future.

Ester: But Master –

Chilford: But Master what? Are you in understanding of what I have said?

Ester: In honesty?

Chilford: Of COURSE in honesty!

Ester: I am not in understanding.

Chilford: How is that?

Ester: You told me that we must never be in the tolerance of a misquoting of the Bible in our presence,

Chilford: Yes but –

Ester: you told me that under that circumstance we must be quick to correct, to be of certainty that the Lord's word is never in distortion – that is what I am in belief that I did.

Chilford: Yes but NOT to Father Bart!

Ester: May I be asking why?

Chilford: Why? Is it not in the obvious? (*They stare at each other for a couple of beats, she does not answer*) He is a white!

Ester: He is.

Chilford: So you MAY NEVER correct him.

Ester: This is because//he is a white

Chilford: //Because he is a white. Yes.

Beat

Chilford: Be in belief, it is for your good. You can correct our people in all times and any.
(*Softening*) You were in the right, it was Jacob and not Esau who wrestled with the angel;
I am in disbelief that he was in the ability to confuse this. But that is neither in here or in
there. . I hope you never do that to the Colterns. Do you?

Ester: No Master, we are not speaking too much.

Chilford: Good.

Ester: But there was a time I asked Mistress Coltern why she did not greet Baba Chiamba
in the respectful way.

Chilford: NO! Their garden worker?!

Ester: Yes.

Chilford: NO!

Ester: Yes.

Chilford: What is it you were meaning in the exact?

Ester: She just speaks to him like as to a child. She did not shake his hand or curtsy. It
filled me with concern.

Chilford: ESTER! You are in understanding that those are the traditions of OUR people not of the European –

Ester: Yes but –

Chilford: So you MAY NOT be in expectation of their adherence to our ways.

Ester: But it was just so full of disrespect.

Chilford: She need never respect him! He is of her employment and she is a white!

Ester: But –

Chilford: There are no buts here young girl. Are you in understanding.

Ester: *(Beat)* So I am to allow the disrespect of a good man and an elder.

Chilford: It is of no concern to you, and no harm is done. Did he lament?

Ester: Who Baba Chiamba?

Chilford: Yes.

Ester: No, he did not lament.

Chilford: In the exact. Because he is not concerned. Never again. What in the earth was her response.

Esster: She just observed me deeply for a time and walked away.

Chilford: God of goodness. Never again. I know their thoughts are most high for you. Maintain that. Your ability to work in the Church goes in the hand of getting along with the white. They are the ushers of the Lord's word. Without them, where is it you and I would be? It brings on a shudder to be imagining.

(Beat)

Ester: So never am I to correct them or admonish them as Saint Paul instructs?

Chilford: NO, never. We must learn from them and teach their ways to our own. Respect them Ester, and trust them, they bring much to be learning. Are you in understanding?

Ester: I am not Master.

Chilford: Ester!

Ester: Master, according to the word of the Lord my God in the Holy Scriptures we are to admonish one another, there is no Greek, no Jew, no male, no female in Christ--

Chilford: It is not – it is not so simple as –

Ester: «Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching»

Chilford: Ester! I am aware what the Scriptures say! But, you will learn in time – *(searching as to how to appease her)* It, it is as the scriptures say, Longsuffering – Longsuffering. Allow the Lord to speak on how to handle these whites and their ways, and not be quick to correct them. That is it, meditate on it, LONGSUFFERING.

Ester: (*thinking deeply*) Alright. (*Beat*) Yes Master.

Chilford: (*With great relief*) GOOD, good, good, good! Now you may go settle for the evening.

Ester: Thank you Master.

Mai Kuda: (*Whispers to Ester, in Shona*) Don't go far – stay in kitchen okay?

Ester: (*In English*) Yes Aunt. (*She exits*)

Mai Kuda: Oh-ahh... ahhh, I have something to tell you Masta

Chilford: (*Put upon*) What is it?

Mai Kuda: Can we have time to go to the virrage Masta?

Chilford: Who?

Mai Kuda: Myserf end Jeke – ahhh Esta Masta.

Chilford: What sort of time?

Mai Kuda: A week Masta.

Chilford: A week! How am I supposed to manage on my own for a week?

Mai Kuda: We can send someone to come and herp (help) from Masta Chancera Masta.

Chilford: Why do you need to go for so long?

Mai Kuda: Kurova Guva

Chilford: And WHAT is that?

Mai Kuda: (*shocked*) You don't know what kurova guva it is?

Chilford: NO! I have not lived among – the people since I was a small boy, how am I supposed to know every backward ritual's name?

Mai Kuda: It is when the relative they have been dead a year, then they do ceremony so that he can return to the family.

Chilford: Who? Who can return? The dead relative?

Mai Kuda: Yes Masta. Not him dead, but his spirit Masta.

Chilford: You must be joking. You still in belief of that rubbish Mai Kuda? After all our time together? After all those masses with Father Bart? You still believe in communing with the dead?

Mai Kuda: (*distressed*) It is our way, Masta, we must be treating the dead properly.

Chilford: Oh Holy Mother. WHERE did she go?

Mai Kuda: She is in the back.

Chilford: Bring her here in the immediate.

Mai Kuda exits, distressed. Chilford looks equally disturbed, Mai Kuda re enters with Ester in tow.

Chilford: Ester. *(Beat)* You read so beautifully in mass on Sunday.

Ester: Thank you Master.

Chilford: Did you believe what you were saying?

Ester: Of course Master.

Chilford: What were you saying?

Ester: I was reading from First Samuel fifteen verse twenty two. *(Reciting)* “But Samuel replied: ‘Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king.’”

Chilford: Very good. So are you rejecting the word of the Lord like Saul now Ester?

Ester: *(firmly)* No I am not.

Chilford: So why do you wish to go to participate in a pagan ritual Ester?

Ester: I...I... Master, it is our way.

Chilford: IF you participate in pagan acts you are a pagan. Are you a pagan Ester?

Ester: No! I am a Roman Catholic. But –

Chilford: BUT WHAT?

Ester: I have duties, to my family, I –

Chilford: HAVE you taken Christ as your Lord and Savior?

Ester: OF COURSE!

Chilford: SO why is it you are going to do this?

Ester: Christ does not instruct me to abandon my family; my mother, she, she needs me
Master -

Chilford: NO SHE DOES NOT! «Let the dead bury the dead and follow me» WHO
SAID that eh? ANSWER ME!

Ester: Jesus.

Chilford: IN THE EXACT! I cannot believe you are doing this, like all my other
converts! How can you think it is that you can function on both of the fence sides? You
CANNOT! I chose to go with Father Helm when I was nine years old and I haven't
looked back SINCE! I left behind my mother and *all* my family to respond to the upward
call of Christ! Do you have ANY knowing of what I have forsook? Things beyond my
imaginings. The storytelling at the feet of my grandmother – my brothers and sisters of
my blood – who KNOWS what has become of them! I left them for my call – embracing
all who respond to the name CHRIST JESUS as my kin in their replace. My own mother!
Her, her - cookings of kaffir corn and and mixed beans - her, her kind...embrace, yet
savage - but good and kind and - MY OWN *FATHER* I – (*collecting himself for a few
beats*) There is no other way for us Ester, there is no other way for those who are called,
you must fully respond – forget it – as I have – it is in the past. Leave it! You MUST,

you MUST, YOU MUST! (*Beat*) What is it you want to do Ester? What is it you want for your future? (*Beat*) ANSWER!

Ester: I want to translate and teach.

Chilford: Do you think that comes with an ease? Do you know how much I still must do to attain a position of priesthood? To arrest their fears that I will not turn and run back into the bush and grab hold of four wives? To THINK I imagined you ready to take the title Protégé!

Beat

YOU MUST NOT GO Ester. You must not. It is not what your Lord and Savior is wanting of you. (*Beat*) But the Lord sayeth “I placeth before you life and death, blessings and cursings, therefore choose life” Deuteronomy 30 verse 19.

Mai Kuda: Uhh Masta WHY? Why you no just ret her GO Masta? She can come beck end sing to Jesus

Chilford: (*to Mai Kuda, not taking his eyes off of Ester*) BE OF SILENCE! Ester what is it you are going to do?

Silence ensues for several beats as Ester decides, her face is still but her eyes betray her state, she is distressed and torn. She finally speaks, her voice is deep and still.

Ester: (*slowly*) I will stay.

Chilford nods his head profusely and falls back in his chair, his eyes still locked with hers.

Mai Kuda: (*lamenting*) Aaaaah ah, ah, ah, Maiweeee zvangu ini, Ndoti chii Kuna Mai, Ndoti chii nevazukuru? Usadaro Jekesai! Unodiwa na Maivako, Ndiwani iwe? Who are you now?

[What will I say to your mother and grandmother? What do I say? Ahh my God, you can't do this Jekesai! Your mother needs you!! Who are you? Who are you now?]

Ester: Aunt//I must, I must heed to my calling. I am a new creature -

Mai Kuda: //AIWA! Taura neChishona! KIRI-CHA Kuitasei!? Haunyarere?! HAUNYARE MWANAWANGU!! SHAME. **[No! Speak in Shona! CREATURE! Have you no shame, have you no shame my child!!]**

Chilford: STOP NOW Mai Kuda, we will send you with supplies for her mother, I will make sure of it, but Ester can no longer participate in this type of thing. Ester, you have saved the money you have made working for your mother have you not?

Ester: I have

Chilford: Be sure to be passing it on to your aunt. I will send some of my own supply of mealie meal and greens, and that last cut of meat Mai Kuda, be sure to take it along, allow that to make it clear that Ester is, here, with me now. That will be all, Mai Kuda, I will be taking dinner at my leisure, I must write this letter to Father immediately.

Mai Kuda: (*thoroughly distraught*) Yes Masta. Eeeee azviiti, Chokwadi. It is NOT Good for sure.

Ester turns and walks out abruptly, Mai Kuda follows heavily behind her. Chilford goes to his desk and begins his usual ritual, his hands are shaking however. He stops and after a moment reaches under his desk for some whisky, grabs a glass and takes a long drink. He slowly seems to calm as he leans back in his chair and closes his eyes.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

Weeks later. Ester and her cousin Kuda sit in the lounge, a large bible open before them on the coffee table. At points in the beginning of this scene Kuda will speak in Shona and Ester will respond in English

(Both snapping their fingers at each other like a ten year olds)

Kuda: //Eeyy! Kunyepa! Kunyepa! Jekesai!

Ester: //Eeyy, chokwadi, its true! I wasn't even *liking* those mangoes ka!

Kuda: AHH *(Jumping up)* Kunyepa! Kunyepa! *(motions eating with Hands)* Waidya uchidya uchidya uchidya kusvikira mudumbu makomuchirwhadza uchichema *(pretends to cry and squats as one moving their bowels)* "Oh! Oh! Mama! Mama wangu! I am dying! Call the n'anga chokwadi!"

[You lie, you ate and ate and ate until your stomach was hurting then you would cry, Oh! Oh! Mama, mama! I am dying! Call the traditional healer surely!]

Esther : Ah! I never called for the witchdoctor!?! For what? You were the one eating too many!

Kuda: Aiwa, Ndakamatora kupaiwewe *(pointing at her emphatically)* chete chete-
[No, I got them to give to you. Only.]

Ester: *(Quick to object)* Eeeeeey, getting them for me! *(Snapping her fingers)!*

Kudakwashe! You are making many stories today ewe!

Kuda: Ichokwadi! Ndakatiza imbwa yemurungu! I was happy to bring you mangoes.

[I outran the white man's dogs!]

Ester: Yaah! Well Thank God the white man's dogs were never catching you-Jesus be praised!

Beat, Kuda stops laughing

Kuda: Hmmm. So. This your Jesus - (*indicating Bible*) I am hearing you are bringing many people to the church.

Ester: Ya, God is to be praised! We baptized Mai Tatenda on Sunday!

Kuda: **Mai Tatenda!** Ichokwadi? **[For sure?]**

Ester: Ey ye! Ah...Yes! I started talking to her one day at the market, gave her my testimony, now she is a believer, her name is now Abigail, after a virtuous, wise wife of King David.

Kuda: Ohhh ohhh.

Ester: Yes. I wish to bring you and all of my family to Christ also.

Kuda: Ohhh nai. And who is this Christ you want to bring me to?

Ester: (*Her voice resounding with sudden power and authority*) There is so much power we can be having through Christ, these way of our people, he has come and brought the white man as our teacher to guide us from those ways.

Kuda: Ohhhh. What is it that is wrong with our ways?

Ester: Look at what happened to me, the bondage I was in. I was freed by the Lord my God. Now I can choose what I do, I go to school, I follow the Lord as my guide and he empowers me.

Kuda: Doesn't Mwari empower us also? Doesn't Mwari protect us and guide us?

Ester: Cousin, this is the same Mwari who says I can be married off by my drunken uncle without a choice? This is the same Mwari who says that we must kill babies if they are born as twins? This is the same Mwari who says we must be married to our brother in law when our husband he die –

Kuda: But he guides our paths, he shows us how to take care of our family. He give us something to stand on, something strong – so we can have an order.

Ester: What order is that brother? An order that has us worship the dead? Even relatives we did not like or even trust? Christ came to earth and proved himself to us in the flesh, in character.

Kuda: The ancestors look down on you, to protect you, to care for you to –

Ester: NO Cousin! If they are dead, they are dead.

Beat

Kuda: So this Jesus of yours is dead

Ester: Jesus ROSE from the dead, BECAUSE he was clean of sin; he died for us, he went through that for you and me Cousin. He Loves you Kuda, he created you and he LOVES you so much.

Kuda: Ooooh oh? (*Beat*). So what is it this Jesus he want of me?

Ester: He want you to accept Him into your heart, to have relation with Him.

Kuda: (*ponderous, looking deeply into Jekesai's face*) Ooooh oh? So what is it I must do now?

Ester: (*excited*) Yes! Indeed! Foremost, we must put a change to your name.

Beat

Kuda: Oright.

Ester: What do you think of Phineas? You look like one, you do, you do.

Kuda: Eh he

Ester: (*Looking heavenward*) God be praised! That is your name then: Phineas.

Now, Phineas, you must take Jesus Christ as your Lord and savior – I will speak the sinner's prayer and you speak it after me and -

Kuda: I can't do that.

Ester: What? Don't be of worry, He is a God of great grace, it is not at all hard Phineas, I will further explain who He is and -

Kuda: I know who He is –

Ester: No you do not as yet, but as I explain –

Kuda: I KNOW who he is. He is the one who make you a Bafu, a lover to the white man.

Beat

Ester: What is this now cousin?

Kuda: (*Explosively*) YOU KNOW WHAT YOU DO! How ken you not go to your own fatha his kurova guva?

Ester: Cousin –

Kuda: NO! You want to be a white now and do rike they be doing. But you are NOT!

Ester: Cousin, I know I am not a white – but I am a Roman Catholic and that is of the first and the foremost –

Kuda: MARARA! [RUBBISH!] You are a muzezuru of the first and the foremost. The daughter of many lines of muzezuru, but you want to sit in this BAFU idiot's home acting rike you ara a white; telling my motha to call you this BAFU name of yours! And when was the last time it is you see *your* motha?

Ester: I send her monies

Kuda: She no want your monies – she wants to see who it is she has born in her face! We should have ret babam'diki give you to the old man.

Ester: How dare you say that?! It is not only for those who bore me that I live! I do good for our people every day, teaching AND feeding them EVERY DAY and that is more than I would be doing as some old goat's tenth wife!

Kuda: MARARA!!! At least then you would know who it is you are. Now you are lost. Forgetting the ways of your peopo. Loving on the whites. What good ara they doing eh? Bringing, this Jesas. You say he give and give till he die. What ara they giving eh? They ara teking end teking and you want to love them for that? I work in Beatrice mine, EVERY DAY they mek me work for little little money for what? I not see my wives or my chirdren since the last rains for what? This thing they say they want from the ground, this shiny metal. Before they come, we neva work like this, for this thing, digging end digging rike our arms they are not of our own. Onry digging for food for our families. Now we do what they say because we need these monies they bring to GIVE BEK TO THEM in the hut tex to live in a smar hut and they ara riving in the BIIIG houses they mek US buiud. Then they say – ‘Oh – here is this God who is coming from they sky to mek you crean from a sin – you love on him end be heppy. Oh – and onry one wife for one men.’ End you love them? You ara a bafu end a fool cousin. This bafu and these whites; we ara not retting them to stay. End YOU, you must rememba who it is you are before too late. End I will NEVA want this (*picks up bible and throws it to the ground*) It is the poison of the white man. It kill the spirit of your forefather inside you. So now you ara empty and they can fir (fill) you with anything they want. NEVA. **Zita rangu** [my name is] **Kudakwashe Chiangawa Murumbira.CHETE [Only]**. That is my name. (*Turns to leave*) But you must watch yourself Jekesai – the people are not taking the white man's poison ENYMORE end you don't want to be with these ones when it come

Ester: When what come?

Kuda: Ha (*Beat*). Just hear what it is I say.

Prudence stands at the door as Kuda opens it, she is poised to knock

Prudence: Oh! Maswera sei youth? [**How are you**]

Kuda: (*hurriedly*), Ndaswera. **[I am fine]**

He leaves

Prudence: (*entering with an air of regality*) Well he seems to have a couple bees in the bonnet! (*Noting Ester's state*) Are you alright?

Ester: (*Attempting to collect herself.*) Yes, thank you, I am fine. How are you Mistress Prudence?

Prudence: I am...quite well. Who was that?

Ester: My, my relative.

Prudence: Oh yes, family, they are always cause for distress, that is at times their sole design! "If I perish, I perish»...ESTER! Yes?

Ester: Yes

Prudence: Yes! That is how I keep trying to remember your name, I love that story!

Ahhh!The Market is a bloody madhouse today. It better settle down, or I don't know how we are to get all the provisions for the wedding! There is some unbearable tension in the air, I can truly FEEL it! Most of the stalls aren't even open! People just milling about. Is he here by the slightest chance?

Ester straightens out the room, she moves with methodic precision

Ester: Master Chancellor? He is not.

Prudence: Ahhk man. I was sure he would be, he is nowhere to be found! He was to meet me at the wretched Market an hour past. Now heavens what!

A couple beats pass

Ester: Would you be liking some tea?

Prudence: Why yes, that would perhaps take a bit of a load off.

Ester exits, Prudence sits and picks up the bible, she smooths out the pages absentmindedly

Prudence: *(To Ester offstage)* We are to meet with Father Bart every week for this marriage lessons and he keeps disappearing on me! I don't know at this point if Father will marry us at all! Chancey better have some lovely thing for me to replace my distress that's all I can bloody say! He is probably – oh! Never mind.

Ester enters with tea tray

Prudence: Oh! That was rather speedy!

Ester: I had it prepared for Master Chilford's return.

Ester pours and serves the tea

Prudence: *(sipping a cup of tea)* Not too bad, you must not put so much milk, it completely suffocates the essence of the tea, and more sugar.

(Ester jumps up and brings a sugar basin to Prudence, who places three large heaps into her tea)

Prudence: Mmmmm (*sipping tea*) that's much better, I can grab hold of my bearings again. Mmmmm.

Beat

Ester: So...the market is in disturbance?

Prudence: Or something! God only knows! Even Mai Gwatiro, I go to her for my vegetables, she was truly off, glaring at me, acting all strange! It better not be that Bulawayo uprising stuff, I have been very good to everyone, very good. *I still speak the bloody venacular, unlike Chilfy, the Great Black Tragedy.*

Ester: You still speak it?

Prudence: Of course, do you not?

Ester: Not, not too much. Master doesn't like me to speak it too much, only when converting others.

Prudence: And how do you feel about that?

Ester: It fits in well with my goals.

Prudence: Which are?

Ester: I want to learn how to speak English very well, so that I can teach and preach like Master. I want to do what he has done for me, for others, to bring our people out of darkness into light, as Master says.

Prudence: Oh yes, I know what *Master* says, of course, he must seem like the brightest spark you have ever perceived I am sure! Let me let you in on a little secret – I have Far more schooling than him.

Ester: You do?

Prudence: Oh yes! I went to Natal to the Ndana school for girls, I was such an impressive student that the sisters got me a place there. The boys will never ever tell you this, but I am far more educated than both of them. In black or white terms.

Ester: Maiwee! (*Snapping her fingers*)

Prudence: HA! See, there is still some native left in you somewhere!

Ester giggles bashfully

Ester: Eeeey, so your family, they let you go all the way to Natal?

Prudence: My family! Oh dear, my family disowned me Long ago!

Ester: (*disturbed*) They disowned you?

Prudence: Oh yes, like you, forced betrothal, Catholic church conversion blah and blah, so boring to relate, yes, they disowned me. But! I am and will always be a Matebele, a daughter of warriors, and proud of my people-

Ester: Proud of the Matebele? But they do evil things, they killed settlers// and -

Prudence: //Oh mercy. Do you think we are not also being killed by the whites? Do you suppose there is any good that can come from how they have taken the land? I am not defending murder, nor do I advocate an eye for an eye, but my dear, justice must come to pass – and it will be brutal, and it will be very, very ugly.

Ester: But Master says our people need to heed to the settler! They are worshipping dead ancestors// and heeding charlatans –

Prudence: //Indeed if they are ancestors they must be dead. Do you have anything to say?

Ester: Matichi? Ah... ah – I beg your pardon. What do you mean?

Prudence: I mean I am SO disappointed! Though I saw Chilfy clearly at work in you I always thought I saw a little fighter in you, an independent spirit. But ALACK! I have sat here with you for a good many minutes and am yet to hear *you* speak.

Ester: I am not in understanding.

Prudence: Thus far, I have heard Chilford, “Masta this and Masta that” I have heard Biblical ideology in its least synthesized form, but I am yet to hear *you*. I cannot wait! I am fascinated to finally meet you. I really, really am!

Ester: I...

Prudence: Yes? (*Reaches into her bag and brings out a pipe, and match and proceeds to light it*)

Ester: (*Aghast*) Maiwee! Munoputa mbange?!

Prudence: Its not mbange my dear, ha, wish it were, it is merely tobacco, something I picked up from an American Sister, Sister Alice, she was quite a rebel. I like rebels. Course I am not really much of one, if I was, I would never marry. (*Smokes*) I am still waiting...

Ester: (*truly stumped*) Ahh...

Prudence: Really? Nothing? Oh my!

Mai Kuda is heard entering from the back, she walks in with a bag of maize meal

Mai Kuda: Ah. Harro Mistress Prudence.

Prudence: Yes, hello Mai Kuda, Makadini?

[How are you?]

Mai Kuda: Ndiripo! **[I am fine]**

Prudence: *(In shona)* Have you seen my man?

Mai Kuda: No! I have not surely!

Prudence: Varume vanonetsa. **[Ahh, and these men, so trouble/rude]!**

Mai Kuda laughs.

Prudence: *(In English)* Well, let me be off then, I should get back to the mission before dark and inform Father of some other colorful reason for Chancellor's absence *(gathers herself)* Thank you for the tea Ester dear.

Ester: Most welcome.

Prudence: We shall speak again I hope! *(To Mai Kuda)* Amangwana Mai Kuda!

Mai Kuda: Amangwana!

Prudence exits

A tangible tension rests in the air between the two women. Finally

Mai Kuda: Kuda ayenda? [**Kuda left?**]

Ester: Yes. Kuda left some half hour ago.

Mai Kuda: Ahh, sei? Ndai dai kumupupfu.

I wanted to give him mealie meal (*holding up the small sack*)

(*Looking out the window Mai Kuda drops the sack and pulls out some snuff from her bossom, she proceeds to sniff it, Ester watches her distastefully*). Ataura newe here? **Did your cousin...did he talk to you?**

Ester: Yes he *talked* to me.

The women sit and stand in strained silence,

Ester: Aunt I-

Mai Kuda: (*Objecting*) Mmmm, Ah Ah Ah ! 'Aunt' **Chiichocho? [what is that? Aunt?]**

after several strained beats, Mai Kuda begins to sing and sway gently

Mai Kuda:Ini ndiri Jekesai

Anenge achindi tevera

Ndini Jekesai

Jekesai chepasi

Jekesai cheupenya

Ester, very distressed crosses herself, goes to the crucifix and begins to pray “Hail Mary” in repetition, with quiet intensity,

Ester: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee,
Blessed are thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus
Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for our sins, now and at the hour of our death

Mai Kuda and Ester sing and pray more and more fervently. They appear to be in some sort of existential battle. Suddenly the door opens and Chilford enters, they notice him and quickly adjust, Mai Kuda grabs her bag of maize, mumbles a quick

Mai Kuda: “Good evening Masta”

Chilford: What in the earth? Whatever histrionics Mai Kuda!

Mai Kuda: No, no histras masta, no histras (*she hurriedly leaves the room*)

Chilford: Graciousness. What was it you were doing?

Ester: I was praying to the Virgin Mother.

Chilford: Right. Good, good. What ever was that?

Ester: It was nothing Master. She was just singing a song of...of my childhood.

Chilford: Of your childhood.

Ester: Yes. Nothing of harm Master, nothing of harm.

Chilford: Well, I will grab hold of your word on that one

Ester: How...how was your day Master? Mistress Prudence -

Chilford: Yes, yes I just saw her (*beat*). My day went very well, very well indeed. In fact I have some news of wonder. (*Brandishing a letter*). Father Helm is coming! I received this letter today! He is traveling as we speak to inspect our work here. This is most thrilling.

Ester: Oh! That is full of marvel!

Chilford: Most indeed! Do be sure the home is most clean, I am in hoping he will make a stop here.

Ester: Most certainly Master.

Beat

Chilford: I will share this with only you Ester. I am most hoping to be bracing my desire to be pursuing Jesuit Brotherhood –

Ester: Oh! To be asking Father Helm?

Chilford: Yes! I have been most fearful of doing so thusly but now he is walking into my very footstep, well, it must be being a sign. (*Beat*) Am I in wrong?

Ester: No! Never in wrong Master! I am thinking that is most right, and to speak in most honesty, most deserving.

Chilford: Thank you. *(Beat)*. I am, I am also in the hopes of telling him that I have, indeed, and finally found my first, true protégé.

Ester: *(deeply touched)* Master, this...this brings me great, great joy...I...am of deep thanks...I...

Chilford: Yes, you are most welcome. You have worked so well with the new students, I marvel at what you did with those natives by the market--there you were, a woman at that, getting them to promise attendance to mass! It is nothing, nothing short of a marvel.

Ester: Thank you Master.

Chilford: Thanks unto you, for fighting the good fight.

(Beat)

Ester: Master?

Chilford: Yes?

Ester: I am wanting to ask you – how did you manage - ?

Chilford: How did I manage what?

Ester: What happened with you and your – without your family...and to leave, how -?

Chilford: How *what*?

Ester: (*Cowering*) It is nothing. It is nothing.

A few beats of silence

Chilford: Do tell Mai Kuda I will have my dinner at my leisure.

Ester: Yes. Of course. (*She turns to leave*)

Chilford: And Ester?

Ester: Yes Master?

Chilford: In time, you will learn whom your true family it is. For myself, Father Helm is my father, my family here on earth. God giveth us that right, to pick our Earthly family, as Jesus did with his disciples. I picked. That is *how*. Are you in the understanding?

Beat

Ester: Yes Master

She exits

SCENE TWO

Late at night, the room is dark. Ester is on her knees, praying before the crucifix. She has not changed for bed. A fervent knock on the door. Ester jumps up. Chilford enters in his night robe, holding a torch.

Chilford: Who is there?

Chancellor: *(from outside)* It's Chancellor old boy, open!

Chilford: Oh for goodness graciousness man, it's rather late.

Chancellor: Open up, good man!

Chilford: Alright. Goodness Graciousness.

Chilford opens the door, Chancellor enters looking frazzled, Chancellor's brow is covered in sweat, he has a large wound on his temple and is very out of sorts.

Chilford: What happened old boy? Ester obtain him a cloth

Ester: Yes Master

Ester Exits

Chancellor: Things are not good brother.

Chilford: What happened to your head man? Have a seat man!

Chancellor: The rebellion: it has spread – now it is certain, to us in Mashonaland.

Chilford: The Shona? Never! They are too docile! That cannot be of truth.

Chancellor: IT IS, the first white family was already slaughtered. By a maid in Hartley.

Chilford: Great goodness! Never!

Chancellor: Yes! And I was out drinking and in hearings of an attack on the road between Umtali and Salisbury, the Shona rebelling have taken over that road, just as what occurred in the south and -

Chilford: The road – OH GREAT GOODNESS, Father! He is on his way on that road -

Chancellor: I am knowing, that's why I am rushing here. I went to the station and, please, Chilfy, you must sit for this -

Chilford: NO, Chancy please!

Chancellor: Father Helm was on the road attacked by savages and//

Chilford: //NO! NO! No, no, no, no, no, no –

Chancellor:// – the police arrived but not in time to save him –

*Chilford falls to the couch – crumbling at the very words, sobbing into his hands,
Chancellor paces around the room, Ester stares at Chilford with pained sympathy*

Chancellor: *(Finally)* Girl go get some whiskey and glasses

Ester exits.

Chilford: *(Sobbing, reaching for Chancellor)* Can it be possible? Can it really be possible man? CHANCELLOR! Answer me?

Chancellor: *(To Chilford)* It is. You have to be strong, this is not seeming behavior, and in front of the womens.

Chilford: Seeming for what? For an African man? I swear, if I could shake that signifier off right now I would!

Mai Kuda enters, wailing out and physically expressing traditional mourning behavior

Mai Kuda: Oh Maiwee zvangu ini! Toita sei! Toita sei shuwa! Ahhhh....musandidaro kani! Baba Hem, // Baba Hem musandidaro shuwa kani! [**Oh my God! What must we do! What can we do! AHHH....dont do this to us surely! Father Helm, Father Helm, how could you leave us sure!**]

Chilford: //What are you doing? Do you even know what happened?

Ester: I told her.

Chilford: You didn't even know him! What are you flailing yourself about for?

Chancellor: Settle down Chilford. It is a cultural way to mourn with those who mourn.

Chilford: Silence! I can't bear to hear about this culture. This culture that nurtures barbarians, that culture? (*Refusing the whiskey being offered, near hysterical*) We have to get his body! We must tend to it as Chuma and Susi with Livingstone, salt it and cure it in the sun so we can get it back to Great Britain as they were doing – get it to his people, away from this land of Barbarians! What are we going to do? What are we going to do without him? What? This is *his* work, *his* mission!//Oh Father, Father, Father!

Chancellor: //Settle old boy, settle, settle, settle

Several beats pass, Chilford eventually settles enough to observe Chancellor

Chancellor: Ahhh (*He attempts to dab the wound with a cloth*)

Chilford: (*between tears*) Did these barbarians come after you as well?

Chancellor: They are on the turn, turning into some types of primal beasts. This was my warning – anymore work with the white devil and I am a gone; I am a known Bafu. And you my friend, best stay in the deeps until this goes away – there are some who are looking for you.

Chilford: Who could that on the earth be?

Chancellor: (*Angrily*) Who? All the many you have angered with your brimstone fires! I was warning you of this! This wound on my head is more of yours than of mines.

Chilford: Eeeyy, what is this?

Chancellor: You listen to nothing I am telling you! You were proceeding to convert and impose the bible against traditions in the street with that savage protégé of yours were you not? Were you not?! Now LISTEN TO ME! Bernie Mizeki is also a gone.

Chilford: What, man? The Anglican catechist? Dead?

Chancellor: He was dragged out from his hut in the middle of the night and stabbed.

Chilford: NO!

Chancellor: Yes – they are killing – us. They are killing anyone who they feels threaten their senses of pagan order.

Chilford: WHO has dare done this?! Who in the earth is THEY?!

Chancellor: Paramount chiefs! Lomagundi, Makoni, Mapondera, Mashayamombe – he is the big one – and of course the spiritual mediums, it appears they have been planning this since word of the Matebele got out. And now (*Indicating the wound on his head*) it is free for one and alls. I am going perhaps to Bechuanaland, they always need translators. No need to be letting these kaffirs have any more of a go at me. (*Beat*) So. What are you going to do now?

Chilford: What now? What now is...(*cracking*) I don't...I don't know.

Ester: We continue.

Chancellor: (*Mumbling*) Huh, you people want to die –

Chilford: (*Not hearing him*) What? What do you mean Ester?

Ester: We continue to do the work Father Helm put in our hearts and trained us to do, to bring people to Jesus so they never do this sort of thing again, and are not looking to the sword as a freedom source. You live by it, you die by it, and we can teach that and be appeasing their heathenism through Christ.

Mai Kuda: You wirr (will) neva.

Ester: Pardon Aunt?

Mai Kuda: You wir neva mek the peopo do something different. That is why him his head it is breeding. You can't.

Chilford: What is this you are saying Mai Kuda?

Ester: Aunt// – please, *don't* -

Mai Kuda: //Peopo feer [feel] that the white man – he tek e-v-e-r-y-th-i-n-g end they want those things, they want those things beck. They see this white man God and say ‘Oh, this is why we rose [lose] everything’ – so they don’t want that God.

Ester: Jesus Christ our Lord and savior not “that God”

Mai Kuda: You can say it many ways, but to the peopo that is the white man’s thing. It not for us. If you take a – what do you say – shumba –

Ester: (*reluctantly*) Lion.

Mai Kuda: Ya, if you take a rion from it’s mother and make it to play among peopo does it start to think it is now a person? One day it will rook at its refrection and become a rion again and it wir tear those peopo to pieces who made it forget who it is. That is why I say... you wir neva.

Beat

Chilford: When was the last time you went to confession?

Mai Kuda does not respond

Chilford: Answer! I say, when was the last time it was you went to confession Mai Kuda?

Mai Kuda: I neva to go.

Chilford: And why is that so?

Mai Kuda: I don't know what that it is. To talk to a white man about this and that things of me – for what? So, I never to go.

Chilford: SO that's what you think is it? That is what you have been believing by and by! You never really converted did you Mai Kuda? I never ONCE saw you pray unless I INSTRUCTED you. You SLEEP during church – don't think I don't notice, nor have you converted ONE of your fellow village folk. And... come to be thinking on it...you have been...oh MY GOD! You have been sniffing that stuff haven't you? That witchdoctor snuff stuff? Is that where you go? You go to the witchdoctor do you not? DO YOU NOT?

Mai Kuda: She is a *n'anga* – not a witchdoctor, and yes...to her I go.

Chilford: HA! SO you ARE a pagan, and seemingly proud! WHAT else? What is that smell? Now I am SURE you are responsible for it! (*sniffs the air fervently, jumps off of the couch, and pulls back the cushion one of Mai Kuda's concealed objects drops to the floor. Now fully revealed, it is a snake carcass*). God of goodness, (*stopping to examine the object, holding it up*). What is IT??!

Mai Kuda does not answer

Chilford: You have been bringing witchcraft INTO MY HOME?!

Mai Kuda: It not witchcraft. It muti, medicine. It protect from bad spirit.

Chilford: *(Aghast with anger)* God of goodness. You SAVAGE! SAVAGE! GET OUT OF MY HOUSE

Ester: Master!

Chilford: Get! Go! You are the very reasons we don't advance, you pretend to walk into the light but you are still in frolicks without a care in the pits of darkness. *(Advancing towards her)* GO! I can't bear to look into your face!

Mai Kuda: *(Rising slowly and exiting)* Honai honai, ndobasa revarungu. Kutaura zvakadai nevakuru vako. Zvakaoma chokwadi. [**Look at this, the work of the whites. To talk like that with your elder. It is a shame for sure!**]

Ester rises and follows after Mai Kuda, distraught,

Ester: You cannot be speaking to her like that, Master, please –

Chilford: DO you wish to leave me also? I CANNOT have heathenism under my very nostrils! Not in my home! What are *you* Ester? Do you attend to witchdoctors as well?

Ester: Master, no of course I do not but she is a mother to me, an elder -

Chilford: Not in the spirit! Do you wish to be going somewhere?

Ester: *(Ester torn, looks over at Mai Kuda who has stopped and is looking back at her, caught between these two places she looks back at Chilford and finally decides)*

No where Master. *(she sits slowly)*

Mai Kuda: Ahh! You are lost. Marasika shuwa. [**You are surely lost!**]

Chilford searches the room frantically looking under rugs and between cushions for more objects, he finds another snake, a wildebeast's horn and a monkey's mandible, complete with teeth

Chilford: GOD OF GOODNESS! AHHHK! GOD OF GOODNESS! YOU SAVAGE!

Mai Kuda: Was not your own fatha a «witch docta» as you say? Was he not?

Chilford: *(Stunned into silence for a beat, with carcasses in hand, finally, chillingly)* Get. Out.

Mai Kuda: *(Clapping her hands in pained acceptance)* Maiwee. Zvakawoma, shame.
Mai Kuda exits

Chancellor: *(Shaking his head)* Ya ya ya ya ya...kaffirs...full of nonsenses, perhaps you should be keeping her in the handys however – times are quite afeared and she may help -

Chilford: They will never be changing! Savages! Beasts! HAI WENA!! SUKA!
HAMBABA! HAMBABA!!!*(he breaks into Matebele, his native tongue, yelling at the sky as though silencing demons, he starts to hyperventilate, and attempts to catch his breath, his knees give under him as he begins to collapse, Chancellor and Ester run to catch him)*

Ester: Master!

Chancellor: Steady Brother, BREATHE, BREATHE

SCENE THREE

Chancellor re- enters first, followed by Ester. Realizing he is not making to leave she speaks

Ester: He is in sleep now, he should feel far superior in the morning I pray.

Chancellor: Yes. I pray also. *(Beat)* Where is your aunt?

Ester: She...she has already departed for the village.

Chancellor: Ohhh.

Ester: Yes. *(Beat)*. *(Pointedly)* So in the morrow – *(gesturing towards the door)*

Chancellor: You send an ailing mans out into the wretched night all on his onesome. Why you do not be tending to me like to “Masta”? I too have pains to be relieved, Father Helm was of a dear nearness to my bosoms- and you reject me?

Ester: Master Chancellor as I have said in the past, I am a woman of God// so – please leave me.

Chancellor: // Come comes, I am of a sureness you do not say that to Chilfy when his needs are at a height as mine are now –I am sure you are more than willing to share this ample sweetness with him. I want some now. It is my turns. *(He begins to wonder in her direction)*

Ester: *(Moving away)* Master Chancellor, HAMBBA! Keep away from me! *(She turns quite fierce)* I will NOT be of your use.

Chancellor: Ahh, come comes...

Ester: *(Trying to verbally derail him)* You, your fiancé, Mistress Prudence – what would she be thinking of you your foul behavior!

Chancellor: Ah Ha! She knows, she knows me, my dears, be not of worry, she is in awares of my appetites.

Ester: You are not the smallest amount of a man as Master Chilford is! Look at your doings! He is sick in the room adjacent and you attempt such sin!

Beat

Chancellor: *(Stops following her)* You little savage. You think yourself somethings of a special because of *Masta* eh? “Please leave me, I am a woman of God” Ha! If I was wanting, I could just be having you, right here on this floors, there would be NOTHING you could be doing to stop me *(Sits on couch)*, you are a common savage girl. Now get me some whiskey. NOW.

Reluctantly, with eyes of fire, she goes to get him a glass, she places the glass in front of him.

Chancellor: Living here in this house, acting like you are his wife or somethings, you are not my pretty, you are a savage from the bush, it doesn’t matter how much English you are learnings, this cannot be changed. As if I am in dire needs of your dirty muzezuru womanhood. I have a woman, of CLASS. And many other for leisure. I was going to allow you to –

Ester, having had quite enough, turns to leave

Ester: Good Night Master Chancellor, I will be seeing you in the morrow.

Chancellor jumping up grabs her and throws her on the couch

Chancellor: DON'T YOU DARES walk out on me. I will crack you like a stick! Now you TEND to me until I say you may go. Understandings?

After several beats

Ester: Understanding.

Chancellor: Now finds a cloth and tends to this wound PROPERLY. (*She turns to go, as she does he stops her*) AH, remove my shoes for a starter.

(Painstakingly she does and then retreats to get the cloth and water, all the while Chancellor speaks)

Chancellor: I am sure you are servings those whites without this countenance ey? Ahh, it is quite a sadness, we are loving on them much more than ourselves eh? You should enjoy what I am lettings you dos here. Serving a true *masta*.

(She hovers above him with a cloth in hand)

Chancellor: Hmmm, we are goings to have a VERY good times tonight Protégé. . (*As her hand is about to make contact with the wound he catches it*)

Be of gentleness or I will crack you like a stick.

He lets go of her hand, grabs hold of her inner thigh and rubs it and closes his eyes, she freezes in horror and fear, he starts to lift her skirts as her hand and cloth hover over his wound, suddenly she lifts her fists high in the air and brings them down hard on his wound screaming

Ester: NO!!!!

Chancellor: AHHH!!! Whore UCHAWONA NASI!! **You will see today]**

She attempts to make a run for it, he quickly catches her as she is about to scream, he covers her mouth to stifle her scream, she puts up a good fight, fighting ferociously, and getting some good kicks in but she is losing fast, he soon has her pinned to the ground, he starts to pull up her skirts just as a loud bang is heard at the door. Chancellor stops, lets her go and cautiously approaching the door, Ester runs to the passage way door, prepared to make a run for it to Chilford's room.

Chancellor: *(To Ester)* Go to the room and do not come out, lock yourself and Chilford in there until they are gone and under NO circumstance are you to allow him to exit, wanwza? **[do you hear?]**

(She runs out)

Chancellor: *(Calling out)* NDIANI? **[Who is it?]**

Voice: Tipindewo! **[Allow us to enter]**

Chancellor: Ndiani asi? **[But who is it]**

Voice: Kana mukasandivhurira musuwo baba, zvinozoitika hazvinabo kunaka. **[If you do not open the door, it is not good what will happen].**

Chancellor gathers himself, straightening himself out, and opens the door.

Kuda enters, sullen, menacing and seemingly intoxicated with Uncle in tow. They are both armed with knobkerries (large, club-like sticks).

Uncle: Ah ha! It is Bafu numba 2! Where is it that you ara hiding your friend ey? The Number One Bafu! King of the Bafus! Where is it he is?

Chancellor: Ahhh Sekuru! Sei *muchitaura* kudaro? [**Ahh Uncle! Why are you speaking to me like this?**]

Uncle: AH, AH HEY YE! Now rook at him, talking with his mother's tongue now! All this while you ara talking like you were berthed from the Queen of the Whites land - what is that it is the land called Bafu? What is their kingdom it is called?

Chancellor: Ahh...mukoma musandidaro shuwa [**brother don't do me like this surely**]

Uncle: Eh EH!! NDATI! [**I said!**]

Chancellor: (*reluctantly*) Inonzi England. [**It is called England**]

Uncle: Oh yes! Ingrand! So you are the son to the Queen of Ingrand?

Chancellor: Ah...kana! Ndiri wepano! [**Ahh...not at all! I am of here surely!**]

Uncle: (*Slamming his knobkerrie on the coffee table threateningly*) AIWA! [**NO!**] Today! Today we ara in Ingrand. I want you to talk to me rike you ara talking to this white men I see you with EVERYDAY! Today I want you to talk to me rike those ones.

Chancellor: No problem Sir, whatever it is you are wanting.

Uncle: (*Sitting on the couch with regality*) Ahh...my son, see how the bafus they ara riving [living], rike Kings shuwa. Where is he, the King of the Bafus?

Chancellor: He is not here at the present.

Uncle: Where is he is at the present.

Chancellor: He has left for Bulawayo, our Father Helm has died.

Uncle: Ohhhh oh? A white?

Chancellor: Yes.

Uncle: Hmmm! And where is that bafu gir (girl) of mine?

Chancellor: I believe she is with him

Uncle: Ohhhh oh?

Chancellor: Yes.

Beat

Chancellor: Would you be liking something to drink? I believe there is some whiskey somewhere here – we can indulge.

Uncle: Ohhhh oh? Ah, ya, I would be riking that, for my boy here too

Chancellor: (*getting whiskey from Chilford's desk and glasses from tray*) I know things, ahh... things are looking hard these days, no beef, the work is not too much at the mines

Uncle: (*Drinking*) Ahhh...but this...ha....this is not a probrem for you bafu, I see you, You ara talking to the whites rike they are your friends, you ara putting on these nice clothing, you ara not talking to one rike me when you ara seeing me on the streets in the day bafu.

Chancellor: Ahh! Sekuru! You must be mistaking me! I am always going to get some katchasu with the miners and workers and having good time.

Uncle: (*Chuckling*) Hey hey hey hey hey...so maybe I is mistaking you. But ha, times they ara hard shuwa, you ara right, so, so hard. These whites, they bring many problems, is it not so?

Chancellor: (*laughing nervously*) Ah...shuwa

Uncle: Ya! They ara the ones bringing this rindapest, before they ara coming we NEVA have those sickness, that ara kiring [killing] ALL the cattles. Then the drought, we NEVA have this: no rains for so long. The ancestas they ara ANGRY – we ara riving rike goats on our own soil! Am I wrong?

Chancellor: (*Carefully*) Ahh...you are never wrong Sekuru...(to Kuda) brother.

Kuda: I am neva wrong. Ya. I rike that one. I am neva wrong.

Uncle: (*chuckling*) Neva wrong.

Kuda: Hey. I am neva wrong. I wish you could have been saying that today bhudi, TODAY! Ha! Today this white devil he want to tell me I must go – he throw me away rike that from his mine (*snapping his fingers*). Just rike that. For many time now, I was working for him, using my arms as though they ara not my own for him, now he is telling me I must go from there – now I have NO monies to pay hut tax for my wives theya homes. Then I want to go to my mother and I see ha she walking bek to the virrage – she saying this BAFU has taken she her job AWAY. That is too much aren't you agreeing? In ONE day Bafu! The white devil and his black slave ara teking both us our job! IN ONE DAY! AHHH, hey...bafu...it is too much.

Uncle: TOO, TOO much. So they must be learning a lesson TODAY. (*Gets up, starts cracking a chair with his stick*) TODAY! I told THAT BAFU what is to come, NOW, IT HAS COME! So who ara you? ARA you a son of the soil or ara you a white? WHO ARA YOU TODAY?

Chancellor: Ahhhh, hey! I am a son of the soil, FOR SURE, Sekuru! And have ALWAYS been so. Indeed I can be of much help to you, I can be giving you assistance even now! (*Reaches in his pocket, his hands are shaking however, he cannot retrieve the money fast enough*)

Kuda: YA! That would be good *brotha*, you hep me, I know you ara having lots of moni-! (*Reaches in Chancellor's pocket and searches impatiently*)

Ah...one shilling? CHETE [**Only**]? Ahh! So you ara thinking that is all me I am worth? (*To uncle*) This is the bafu with many monies Sekuru, with the MOST monies but he is thinking we ara nothing, these ones, they ara thinking we ara animals.

Uncle: YA!

Kuda: One shilling ere?

Chancellor: Ahh...brother...don't be of worry! I can be getting more, it is good to remain tranquil –

Uncle: trankill, what is that? Trankill? Ahhhh, hey, ROOK AT HIM! He is just a WHITE now, having TOO, too many of these words from Ingrand ey?

Kuda: (*Still searching Chancellor*) Ah...what is this? (*finds Chancellor's pocket watch*)

Uncle: (*chuckling*) hey, Trankill...

Kuda: (*Examining the watch*) Ahh, this is betta now, this will do brother, this is rooking verry full of monies. Rike a white man thing eh? I can be takin –

Chancellor: Ahh... NO not that one brother, (*grabbing for it*), I can be getting you many monies, but not that one brother please.

Kuda: Ah! You ara wanting to be fighting me for this? I was thinking you ara wanting to help me! (*Chancellor reaches for knobkerrie and keeps hold of watch, a scuffle ensues, Kuda is too strong for him and proceeds to start beating him passionately with the stick, his uncle standing watch*). You want to be fighting me now, eh? Why ara you trying to be fighting me now? YOU BAFUS! WE CAN'T TRUST YOU! (*Beating him passionately*) You think you have strong because the whites they be riking you eh? You think that make you have strong? (*Beating him*).

Chancellor: (*On the ground*) Please! Please, I am begging of you! I can...AHHH...I can be giving you...ahhh!

Kuda: Giving me what? To make me rike a bafu too? You want to mek me rike a bafu too! *Kuda beats him until he is quiet. He steps back, out of breath, examining his deed, seemingly a little shocked and confused yet wired. He looks over at his uncle.*

Sei achindibata [**Why did he touch me?**] Why was he grabbing my stick eh? (*To Chancellor*) Ah...hye...muka ka. SIMUKA [**wake up, wake up**] (*kicks at Chancellor's limp leg*). Ahh.

Uncle: Afa? [**Is he dead?**] (*Goes and examines Chancellor, shakes his head*), afa [**He died**].

Ester opens the door and enters, shocked, surveying the scene-

Ester: It *was* your voice. What have you done? Kudakwashe! What is it you have done?

Kuda: Ah! He said you –

Ester: (*Shaking him*) You dofu! You kill him? You kill him! Babamukuru **[Uncle]** – how could you –

Uncle: AH AH, me I do nothing – I do NOTHING!

Kuda: He was starting it – he was doing these stupid things, I just wanted some monies and –

Ester: SHUT IT YOUR MOUTH! GET OUT of here now! Just be going.

Kuda: What will you be –

Ester: Shh SHUT IT UP! – come on – make it look like a theft – here – be taking some things, (*she pulls apart the desk and the drawers, she hands him random items*). COME ON!

Kuda and Uncle slowly join in, beginning to get caught up in it, they take apart the room, tear up letters and the bible they find, knock the crucifix off the wall.

Ester: Now go. GO. NOW.

They proceed to the door – Kuda looks at her –

Kuda: You ara not a bafu –

Ester: BE OF SILENCE and go. GO. I must never be seeing you again.

Kuda: You ara not a bafu.

He leaves. She leaves the door open, goes, throws on her night gown, comes back, surveys the room and Chancellor's body, crosses herself, takes a deep breath and screams in the direction of Chilford's quarters,

Ester: MASTER!!!!

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

During intermission the place has been put back in order, though different from what it was. The chaise is gone, replaced by a simple wooden bench, once used as a pew, one or two basic wooden chairs furnish the remainder of the room, with the large desk replaced by a pile of wooden blocks and a simple stool. Months later, Chilford and Ester rush through the door, Ester quickly takes her seat at the desk and begins to take dictation from Chilford, who strolls around the room.

Chilford: The prisoner was most full of fear, but not of remorse and held fast and quick to his pagan beliefs, he refused an offering of spiritual enlightenment and rather opted to consult with a witch doctor. The request was of course denied. The prisoner proceeded to the gallows having not received Christ as his Lord and Savior – Thursday, Decemeber 10th, 1897. What was his name?

Ester: Chengetai Matonga.

Chilford: Good. Yes. Well...we can't save them all.

Ester: You tried, you tried most hard Master. 'Many are called but the chosen are few'.

Chilford: Yes...yes. But you were of some success today were you not?

Ester: Well, we will see. She is still in resistance to accepting the powerlessness of her ancestors. But she is not in likelihood to go to the gallows, so she has the time to be of coy play I suppose.

Chilford: Ah...one of those. She thinks her Great uncle Torororo is just as sound a route to God, I am to suppose.

Ester: The usual, yes.

Chilford: Well, tomorrow the day is anew!

Prudence enters from the house, she is dressed in a night robe, seeming slightly intoxicated

Chilford: Good evening Prudence, how...how are you today?

Ester: Good evening Mistress Prudence

Prudence: Ahhh, ndaneta! Waswera sei Ester? **[I am tired. How are you Ester?]**

Ester stammers

Ester: Ahh...ahh...Nda...ahh

Prudence: Oh my every day! Every day Chilfy! Give her leave to speak in her mother's tongue! SAY IT ESTER!

Ester looks at Chilford who nods reluctantly

Ester: Ndaswera maswera sei?**[I am well, how are you?]**

Prudence: Ndaswera. See did that not feel nice? Some color is returning to your cheeks as the whites say. How goes it all? How is that loving white family you work for? What are they called again?

Ester: The Colterns.

Prudence: Ahh, of course yes. The Colterns. I know them. Very...condescendingly well meaning. How was the day of savage soul saving? Any conquered souls to report?

Chilford: Ah...not today.

Prudence: And what about reports, new suspects, anything of that?

Chilford: No. Not today.

Prudence: Hmm hmmm. *(Beat)* Carry on, don't mind me! *She lights up her pipe*

Chilford: Yes, well as we were saying then, Ester, tomorrow the Commissioner told me They have finally captured Nehanda, and Kaguvi is already -

Prudence: Oh! I know of them! They are the big instigators of the rebellion no? The spritual mediums! "The whites' bullets wont touch you" and what not! Oh shame, that stratagem did not pan out.

Chilford: Yes, God be of thanks it did not –

Prudence: GOD be of thanks! Chilfy! Are you so mad to *still* think these whites are going to get away with all this mess?

Chilford: *(Carefully)* Prudence, I am not of sure what you speak of –

Prudence: Oh *come on* Chilfy! All this MESS. Taking the land – forcing us to be their servants, claiming it as their own – even you cannot *still* really think GOD is on their side!

Chilford: Would you rather live amongst the savages Pru?

Prudence: I have no desire to proceed in this circle again with you. Carry on.

Beat

Chilford: Right. (*To Ester*) So as I was saying – we have been assigned to -

Prudence: Did you know Ester, that I am the real bright spark of all of us – myself, Chancey and Chilfy, the one with the most promise –

Chilford: Prudence –

Prudence: What? She should know! I have a sense – she might be the brighter of the two of you – she just may not know of it yet! I was so bright I was sent on to Natal for further schooling – Ndana school for girls.

Ester: Yes, you have mentioned it in the prior.

Prudence: I did? Well anyway, it appears Miss Protégé – there is no place for a highly educated African woman. I am a mere thing of oddity and suspicion. Just wait until you try to leave his side Protégé! Oh you will see! There is Nothing out there for us!!!
Nothing my dear!

Chilford: //PRUDENCE AHH!

Prudence: And how do I repel that voice in my head that says I am not a true African because my family disowned me, because without a husband and the children we bear there will be no one to bury me when I die. No one to stay up with my body all night singing me over to the ancestors, calling them to receive me. The Whites just throw you in the ground, cross themselves and go for tea. Chilfy isn't bothered with all that though, Chilfy, *The Great Black Tragedy*.

Chilford: Prudence! If you do not stop with this -

Prudence: What? What is it you will be doing Chilfy? Removing me from your home? Ha! You love me *far* too dearly. And seeing as this is the LAST place the man who I was meant to live with for the rest of my life was alive I feel it ONLY fitting I stay right where it is I am – NO? (*Beat*) Have you found out anything? Has ANYONE been found in suspicion?

Chilford: Not today.

Prudence: Not today, not any bloody day, isn't it? Isn't it?

Chilford: We must await God's timing on this Pru. What I know is true is all we do is in Chancellor's memory.

Prudence: It is not his memory I am concerned about it is YOURS and Miss Protégé over yonder. WHY CAN YOU TELL ME NOTHING OF WHAT HAPPENED? I will not leave! I will not leave until I am satisfied.

Chilford: Pru, not again, I am pleading –

Prudence: Do not plead Chilfy – so unbecoming. You are such a weaky, look at you, with those weak puppy eyes you’ve got. It is not at all befitting an African man you know.

Chilford: Prudence –

Prudence: I know, I know you are not an African, you are a European in an African costume. I know dearest, I know. Might I be adding – he would not even care! Are you in your natural sense to think he, Chancellor Muredzi would CARE that you are converting souls in his honor? He wasn’t a true convert himself!

Chilford: That is a lie he –

Prudence: Believe me brother! He was NOT. His only holy trinity was money, power and the member between his legs.//

Chilford: //Ahh ahh! Prudence! Enough now!

Prudence:// Just be of truth! This is for you and for your darling Father Helm – it has nothing in the slightest to do with Chancey.

Chilford: Prudence! I can be assuring you – everything I do – is in his honor. He was my closest friend, my brother. Please – no more of this – I can take it not. We are hoping and praying with each day to find his attacker are we not Ester.

Ester Yes Master.

Prudence: But why don’t you remember!

Chilford: I have been telling you this in so many times previous!

Prudence:(*suddenly with rage*) TELL ME AGAIN. (*Beat*) You were «overcome with grief» because of Father Helm's death. And how did you not hear anything Miss Protégé?

Ester: (*Carefully*) As I have said in times previous -

Prudence: JUST SPEAKETH!

Ester: Master Chancellor was instructing me to go to the back when the knock it come on the door. I go then I am hearing nothing until I am hearing Master Chancellor crying out. I was too scare to come out until I hear nothing again.

Prudence: And you never heard the other person.

Ester: No.

Prudence: Hmmm.

Beat

Prudence: I am to bed.

Chilford: Again?

Prudence: Just be glad I am not curling up right there where he fell! That is what I do when you are out savage soul saving – it is where I feel him strongest. I am far too mannered to do it when you are about though. The sisters taught me better than that! Good night. Amangwana – as they say in the venacular you both seem to have forgotten!

She exits

Ester: *(Desperate to move along)* Do you know to whom we are assigned for tomorrow?

The captures -

Chilford: *(Collecting himself)* Yes, yes, apparently they finally captured both -

A person entering through the back kitchen is heard

Chilford: *(To Ester)* Shhh. Go to the back room.

Ester: *(Petrieved)* Master...

Chilford: Just GO. Do as I tell you to do. NOW.

Ester reluctantly retreats. Chilford obtains his large knobkerrie from behind his makeshift desk and slowly advances towards the kitchen entrance as the footsteps come nearer, he lifts his shambok and is about to swing it when Mai Kuda screams

Mai Kuda: *(Seeing Chilford)* MAIHWEE ZVANGU INI!!

Chilford: *(quickly retreating with knobkerrie)* Graciousness, *(they both collect their breath)* Mai Kuda! What in the earth!

Mai Kuda: Masta, *(Ester emerges, thrilled to see her Aunt)*

Ester: AHH! Tete! Ahhh – Aunt! Makadii? How are you? How is...mother? *(Ester clings to her aunt almost too tightly)*

Mai Kuda: (*Ushered to a seat by Ester, she gently embraces her back*) Ndiripo. Varipo[**I am fine. She is fine**] Ahh...how is it with you Masta?

Chilford: It has been- a bag of mixtures. We have of course had some deep tragedies here. I am not of doubt that you heard of Master Chancellor's brutal demise.

Mai Kuda: I am in hearing. Ndinourombo. [**My condolences**]

Chilford: Yes. It was horrible. Most, most horrible. Mistress Prudence is staying with us, she is afeared to live alone presently. (*Beat*) We now work at the court, Ester's idea in fact, with Father Bart, translating and converting prisoners of the rebellion. We were staying at the mission awhile, when the fighting was at its most intense. But now, as you well are knowing the fighting is just about at end. The Colterns remained; Ester is still working at their homestead. How is it with you? I am trusting you have been in the ability of obtaining new employment.

Mai Kuda: Ahh...hey...it has been very, very hard for me Masta. Very, very hard (*she begins to weep*).

Ester: Aunt, what...what has happened?

Mai Kuda: Varungu, these whites, they ara saying it is him who do these bed bed things Masta, they ara coming to Mazowe Masta, and they destroying many, many things! They ara beating end kiring (killing) us, they tek the cattles and burning the kraals. Then they ara coming to me Masta! They ara wanting him – to tek him – they ara saying I must be bringing him to the court in this few days or they ara going to tek me masta.

Chilford: Who? Who are you speaking of?

Mai Kuda: Kudakwashe Masta.

Chilford: He has been in involvement with all of this?

Mai Kuda: YOU MUST HELP HIM MASTA, THEY WIR DO BED THINGS TO HIM THESE WHITES!!!

Chilford: What has he done?

Mai Kuda: Ahhh...me I don know Masta. He wirr tell me nothing. But they ara wanting him. A mine owna die then the whites are saying bed things about him, they ara thinking him he the one who do it. Now they ara wanting to tek me if I don't bring him Masta! You must be talking to them, to you they can be listening Masta, then they can forgive him.

Chilford: And did he do it?!

Mai Kuda: *(Breaking down more)* I don't know Masta! He is not telling me.

Chilford: Where is he?

Mai Kuda: He is here.

Ester visibly stiffens

Chilford: You brought him here?!

Mai Kuda: We ara needing a prace to go where they wir not be rooking for him. They ara not going to be rooking for him here Masta.

Chilford: Jesus be of guidance.

Chilford: *(After several beats)* Bring him in. But his lips best be loose. I am not in tolerance of silence over bad deeds, he will tell us everything and all that he has done.

Mai Kuda: Yes Masta, thank you Masta, I wirr [will] tell him that now, now.

Mai Kuda bustles out the door, Ester crosses herself and walks to the Crucifix, Chilford sits still, bracing himself. Mai Kuda enters with Kuda in tow, he looks forlorn and beaten down, though he is still in possession of an aura of resistance, his eyes have a fire in them still but he is broken. A revolutionary on a failed mission. He enters with his head down. Ester does not look at him.

Mai Kuda: *(To Kuda)* Taura ka.

Kuda: Harro...Masta.

Chilford: Be seated Kuda. *(Beat)* What has been happening with you of late?

Kuda: I have been in the Chinduduma.

Chilford: And what in the earth is that?

Kuda: *(Sharply)* It is the struggle for freedom.

Mai Kuda: Taura ka! Rike a confession Masta, you wir hep him rike confession?

Chilford: *(Cautiously)* Yes, you can look at it so. What have you done Kuda?

Kuda: Ahhk...*(Beat)* What is it you ara doing there at the court?

Chilford: We are translating for prisoners.

Kuda: End what else ara you doing there?

Chilford: We are teaching them about Christ.

Kuda: They ara doin bed bed things to us there.

Chilford: No, the courts have been more than fair considering what it is you – these people have been doing.

Kuda: Some they don't even get to the court, the white devil just kill right there on the street they -

Mai Kuda: *(To Kuda, greatly impatient)* AHH! Taura ka! Tell him! Tell him so he can hep you! *(Clicks her tongue. To Chilford)* He come bek with this Masta, then me I say, I don't want to be berieving these whites but then I rememba he give me this thing, he say I can use it to pay for food end hut tex end I say –mumoyo wangu [**in my heart**] *(holding her heart)* I know he do bed thing.

Mai Kuda hands Chilford a pocket watch.

Chilford: *(Starring at the watch, examining it)* What in the earth...God of graciousness...where....where did you obtain this? WHERE? You best be speaking now, or I am going to call on the authorities forthwith.

Mai Kuda: *(Hitting Kuda over the head)* IWE TAURA KANI!! [**You! SPEAK!**]

Chilford: Ester, go call for Mistress Prudence. GO NOW.

Ester, reluctantly and greatly disturbed exits to the back. Chiford grabs his knobkerrie and stands far from Kuda, examining him closely. Kuda glares back at him.

Mai Kuda: Ahh...Masta...wha...

Chilford: Be of silence. We are to await Mistress Prudence.

Ester and Prudence re-enter, Prudence in a night robe, looking disheveled.

Prudence: Mai Kuda? What is going on Chilfy?

Chilford, never taking his eyes off of Kuda, hands Prudence the watch

Chilford: Was this not –

Prudence: Oh my God. Chancey. I gave it to him after our...after our engagement was official. Where? Where...?!

Chilford: Yes. *(Beat)* Kuda. What is it you have done?

Kuda: I...I neva mean to be *kirring* him.

Mai Kuda: KUDAKWASHE! KANA, oh Mwari baba wedu oh! Musandidaro, ndofa nhasi! SHUWA ndofa nhasi izvozi! NO! KUDAKWASHE! **[NO! Oh God! Don't do this to me, I will die today! Surely I will die today like this!]** You KIR HIM! You KIR HIM?!!

Prudence: My God.

Chilford: Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, LORD JESUS. (*Sudden rage*) AHHHHH!!!! (*He breaks into his native Matebele and starts to hyperventilate, finally releasing long pent up regret and grief*) AIKONA! AIKONA WENA! HAMBABA! SUKA, SUKA!!!!

Ester rushes to his side, and guides him to sit, he refuses her help and remains standing

Chilford: (*weeping*) I am sorry my brother, oh, so so sorry my brother...

Several beats pass

Chilford: (*finally*) You dirty savage beast. You will rot, *you will rot* in the eternal fires for this

Beat

Kuda: (*Cautiously, yet firmly*) I neva mean him to die. He just want to fight so then we ara fighting and him he rose (lose).

Chilford: Oh, he lose is it? And the furniture? My papers? My desk they just lose too ha?

Kuda: THAT was not just - (*quickly, barely glimpses at Ester, who stands petrified in the corner*) I...I was enry. Very, very enry.

Chilford: At whom? At me? At Chancy? What did he EVER do to you?

Kuda: It is him who start fighting. Me I was not going to kurr him.

Chilford: DON'T YOU DARE! YOU TELL THE //TRUTH!

Kuda: //THAT IT IS THE TRUTH. I onry want to mek him be afraid.

Chilford: Hah!

Mai Kuda: Oh Masta, forgive him Masta, forgive him rike Jesas. Prease! Don't ret the whites to tek him.

Chilford: Be of silence //Mai Kuda

Prudence: //Did he beg?

Chilford: What?

Prudence: I asked the youth – did he beg? Did he fight back or did he just let you ravage him to death? Did you just beat him down, did you catch him unawares? What happened? He better have fought – Do you have children? ANSWER! Do you have children?

Kuda: (*Standing up, dismissing her, to Chilford*) Ahhkh...what is this now? Who is she – to be talking to me like that?

Prudence: DON'T YOU DARE! DON'T YOU DARE!! You see how they do – these – these BLOODY MEN!! You squander, you derail, you RUIN and then you are in the fullness of audacity to still, STILL possess a masculine bravado. You come in here – BEGGING for our help, you didn't expect to see me did you? Eh? The kaffir woman with the BIG BIG mouth. It has gotten me in much trouble before – and today I CARE not! You are at my mercy! Do you know how well I can wax poetry to these white men? They will listen to my word in a SNAP! You could be dead before the dawn! I will not show you respect you have never spent a mere moment of your life earning SIMPLY

because you possess an added fixture at the apex of your thighs. I will not. ANSWER my QUESTION. Do you have any children.

Chilford: Answer her.

Kuda: (*Very reluctantly*) Yes. I am having them.

Prudence: So did the man you killed. Six of them so far – and counting. The bloody bastard impregnated SIX women without my even knowing in the past ten years. They are all coming forward, begging for recompense, it is apparent they were all receiving support from him. It is not of bloody wonder he was so in love with money, he had a village to support! Now they are alone, fatherless, penniless, because of you. And never mind...never mind the one he never even knew about, the one sitting in *my* belly. NEVER MIND THAT ONE. He better have begged. Did he beg?

Kuda: Ahhhk...me...me I am not remembering.

Prudence: Of course you are not. (*Grabs knobkerrie from Chilford*) SIT down. SIT DOWN.

Kuda reluctantly sits.

Prudence: Now you are going to tell me everything. EVERYTHING you can remember – and you are going to tell me now.

Chilford: Speak.

Kuda: Ahhhk (*Several beats pass*)

Mai Kuda: TAURA KANI! [**SPEAK!**]

Kuda: I coming, he is letting me in, then, then we ara talking, I am telling him I am having hard, hard time – that I rose my job just now rike that with no monies for foods then he is saying he want to help me, then when it come the time for him to help he no want to help – so he is angering me because he is rying (lying) to me that he understand what it is I am feeling so –

Chilford: You were alone?

(Beat)

Kuda: Yes

Chilford: And what of the watch.

Kuda: He want to give me then he say 'No' – he no want to give me anymore – so me I not understand that then he start to fight me to take the watch bek.

Chilford: You liar. He would NEVER have willingly been parting with that watch to give you – your truth is most flawed! You came and of most probable FORCED your way in and started beating on //poor Chancey and taking whatever you could find –

Kuda:// NO! We talk! He say he want to help me. But when he not help he jump on me –

Chilford: He jumped on you? And I suppose the table and the chaise jumped on you too – my bible –// did IT attack you? What did he EVER do// to you –

Kuda: Ahhhh!//HE WAS A BAFU! Me I have nothing. Him he have all these thing. They come to force me to work in the mines with a shambok and guns. I neva hev ONE choice since I hev been a man. Me I want too to feel like a man. Then I say, why he and you can

go every day and fear like men but me I can't. I want what my ancestors they want for me. But I never mean to be kidding him. And I never like whites or do the things they are saying. That one – THAT one – it the truth.

Prudence: What do they say, these...these spiritual mediums, these leaders of the rebellion.

Beat

Kuda: They say...they say the ancestors are angry because we have let these whites come and take over what they left for us. They say we are the true daughters and sons of the soil, they say we must reclaim our land (land), and not be slaves on it. They are saying we must fight now. NOW, because the ancestors are telling them it will keep being this bad and then more and more bad. But now...ah now they are defeating us. Things are going bad for us. People are scared, they are turning on each other.

Prudence: How long have you worked the mines?

Kuda: A long time, long time – since I was not even having one child

Mai Kuda: He was the oldest of the grandchildren – as a boy, he was to help her father (*indicating Ester*). Then they took him. He still (still) try Mistress Prudence, he still try to do his duties as the one who care for the family, but ahhh...this mining it hard on him.

Ester: (*Suddenly*) He is a good man, Mistress Prudence, he help me run when my uncle want to marry me to an old man.

Prudence: Hmmmm.

(A couple beats pass) Let him go.

Chilford: WHAT?

Prudence: I said let him go. What is the use Chilfy really. What is the use?

Chilford: But –

Prudence: There is no justice to be had, no vengence. Nothing. What? You want condemn him to these colonial brutes? Does that amend? It doesn't bring Chancey back, it won't give my child a father. Where will it end Chilfy? I am sure they scuffled and Chancey lost – he was more a lover than a fighter – I am sure he was most provocative and most probably deserved every last bloody blow. He was a bastard. We all know of this. Let him go. This is all most, most unsatisfying. We all know the true source of this problem and his skin is a lot different from our own.

Mai Kuda: Oh THENK YOU MISTRESS PRUDENCE!!

Ester: *(Gushing with relief)* Mistress Prudence, great, great thanks. Great thanks. GREAT -

Prudence: Yes, yes. How ever do we proceed though?

Chilford: How can you Pru? He killed him like a dog! Anyway, ANYWAY, it matters not! He MUST be taken in; Mai Kuda cannot be free until he is reported in. To save her, he MUST pay for the consequences of his actions. IF you have ANY makings of a man Kuda, NOW it is time for these to manifest!

Beat

Kuda: I can go. I will go. Even now like this *(he turns to the door)*

Ester: *(With assertive conviction)* NO. WAIT. THIS IS WHAT WILL BE DONE. *We* must take him to the Native Commissioner, we will present him to them as an innocent of the things they blame him for, we will teach them of him being a good man.

Chilford: Ester, you must have fallen off your wits!

Ester: NO, I have not! Master, you know I can speak well, you talk of what a marvel I am, of how many people I have brought to the Lord, of how highly people think of me, I can speak for him; the Lord will allow my light, my gift to shine. Prudence and I will petition on his behalf. I am a translator for the courts. Prudence a teacher at the mission. The courts are following the laws of the Lord, of 'His mercy, that is new every morning', of seeking peace and loving one another. Indeed it is them who taught this to *us*. We take him, we petition for him, he will be spared. Are they not sparing those who submit themselves Master?

Chilford does not answer

Ester: MASTER?

Chilford: There are those who have surrendered and as a consequence been spared.

Ester: RIGHT! As it will be with you Kuda. With us as your advocates. Prudence? Please? (Beat). *Please.*

Beat

Prudence: Well, let us go then. To save Mai Kuda also, I see no other way. I will wax as much poetry as I can for you Kuda , We will see what it can do.

Kuda: Why...why would you be doing this for me?

Prudence: I may as well put all this Queen's English to use.*(Beat)* We should move along. Chilfy? If you come with –

Chilford: Never. Get him out of my house. I care not what becomes of him.

Ester: Master!

Mai Kuda: Ahhh Masta!

Chilford: And for YOUR sake Mai Kuda I am not turning him in myself. But please. Remove him from my home forthwith.

They gather themselves and bustle out of the door, Ester grabs a bible as she goes, glancing at Chilford with hurt and disappointment. Chilford and Kuda stare at each other with smouldering hatred. They exit. Chilford sits on the wooden pew.

SCENE TWO

Much later that same evening. Chilford sits in the same spot, having barely moved. He starts suddenly as voices can be heard, wailing and crying.

Enter Mai Kuda with Prudence holding her up, she is barely able to walk, it is obvious she has cried until she could cry no more. She looks like she is on the verge of collapse

Mai Kuda: *(feebly)* Maiwee zvangu ini! Musandidaro, Sei? SEI?! AHHH! Musandidaro CHOKWADI!! Kuda! KUDA! Mwana wangu chokwadi!! **[Don't do this to me, How, how? Don't do this to me, Kuda, KUDA! My child, my child]**

Chilford opens the door and they enter, they proceed to the back

Chilford: What? What happened? Pru?

Moments later Prudence reappears, hardened defeat on her face.

Chilford: What happened? And where are they? Where is Ester?

Prudence silently searches for the whiskey, finds it behind the desk and retrieves a glass, she sits on the pew and proceeds to drink, she drinks one glass then two, then three.

Chilford: Prudence. Please. Stop that.

He grabs for the bottle. Unphased she pulls out her bag of snuff from her bosom and proceeds to sniff it.

Chilford watches her, disturbed and with great distaste.

Finally

Prudence: They killed him on the spot. The second he identified himself.

Ester ran off, I have no idea where to.

Chilford: No (*beat*). No trial, no –

Prudence: It seems they have no need to try one they believe killed a mine owner. So my and Ester's advocacy was nothing short of a joke. They observed me like I was a creature designed for their amusement, this kaffir monkey speaking their language better than themselves. They commended us for bringing him to *justice*. And then they murdered him. Right in front of his own mother. (*Beat. Starts to laugh*) I thought...I actually thought...

We are damned Chilfy. Damned. I am going to the witchdoctor in the morrow. I will not bring another black soul to be damned on this wretched, cursed soil. I will not. I will not, I will not, I will not, I will not, I will not, I will not (*She gets up and walks out, repeating herself over and over*).

Chilford: PRUDENCE! PRU! YOU CANNOT-

He gives up following her and walks to the door, opens it and shouts out rather futilely

Chilford: ESTER!!!!

He looks around and finally he exits back into the house.

SCENE THREE

Much later that same evening Chilford sits on the pew, waiting for Ester, he is asleep. A knock at the door, Chilford starts, grabs for his knobkerrie from its usual spot.

Chilford: Who is going there?

Ester: It is me Master.

Chilford: Ester?

Ester: Yes.

Chilford opens the door

Ester enters, wrapped in a large zambia (African scarf)

Chilford: Where is it you have been? You must not be going out on your own like this, these times are of trouble you –

Ester: You must be starting you your own church Master.

Chilford: Wh – what is this now?

Ester: You your own. They will never be giving you one. They will never be letting you be priest Master. But you can be doing it. You are ready. The people they will be listening to you more than Father Bart, they will be following you better.

Chilford: Ester –

Ester: Master, I would like to have a confession.

Chilford: What? In the here and now?

Ester: Yes.

Chilford: For what end? Perhaps it is best we await Father Bart

Ester: No, I want to make it to you.

Chilford: I don't feel I am qualify

Ester: (*firmly*) You are *my* priest Master, I want to make it to you.

Beat

Chilford: Alright then.

Ester: Thank you. In the first and the foremost, I must be introducing myself to you properly. My name, it is Jekesai Wekwa Chiyangwa Murumbira. You have been giving me this name Master, Ester, and it is a good name. I have been liking it all this time, but today I must be giving you my name Master, Jekesai, it mean to illuminate. I am wanting to make confession to you with you knowing me who I am. (*Beat*) I couldn't be like you Master- I couldn't. All this time I have been trying and trying but it can't. It can't work. Me I am learning this the day Master Chancellor he die. I am learning that NOTHING is stronger than blood. Nothing. Blood it can make you move – it can make you be doing things you are not knowing are inside you to be doing. Kuda save me. He was always saving me.

– I could not let them be taking him for what he do to Master Chancellor when I am knowing what Master Chancellor was wanting to do to me. I cant.

Chilford: (*carefully*) You were knowing what happened here and you were baring false witness – to spare your cousin.

Jekesai: Yes.

Beat

Chilford: And Master Chancellor was doing what?

Jekesai: He...he was wanting to put his love on me.

Chilford: He was forcing on you?

Jekesai: Yes.

Chilford: When Kuda was coming?

Jekesai: Yes.

Chilford: So you witnessed the attack?

Jekesai: No. I was in the back, in your chambers when Kuda he come – Master Chancellor send me there when they come to the door. I only come in the end – when I know that it is his voice I am hearing.

Beat

Chilford: Why...why are you telling me now?

Jekesai: I am confessing – everything. I have to tell you something now, Master. The time is not long. I...*(Beat)* they killed him like a chicken Master. A chicken. *(Beat)* He kept, he kept looking at me – I know what it was he was thinking. He was thinking I have this good English and this bible learning why I couldn't stop them like I was saying I could. Why I couldn't save him this time. Just this one time. And I couldn't. I couldn't do one thing. I just was standing there with my bible like a fool, like a dofo. So I had to... I had to, ...I...*(Beat)* They were sleeping, Master and Mistress Coltern, when she see me, I am thinking she thought I was just coming to be warning them of something. I am a good one. That is what they would always be telling me, "You are one of the good ones Ester." I like being good Master. But I couldn't, I couldn't *manage*.*(Beat)* Master, you have never told me about you your father but I want to tell you about mine. My father was a good, good man. And today, today I meet him. And he was angry with me. He told me to shed blood for my own. The whites don't do what their book it is saying. I thought they would be like Jesus, show his love, love their enemy, I thought - *(Beat)* I wanted to not care and spill their blood like they were not caring and spilling mine. They killed him like a chicken Master. A *chicken*. *(Beat)* She open her eyes, Mrs Coltern, her eyes they were looking at me like she know me – but she did not know me today. Amai always called me

the best with the chickens, I could do it one time, I knew how to cut quick, how to lift the knife just like so and drop it heavy. I just lift the knife like I do with the chicken and drop it through Mrs Coltern she her neck. I think if I drop it somewhere else she would have been screaming but I was cutting the neck so she just open her mouth and it look like the sound it want to come but it cant. Her eyes they looking at me like she cant believe. Him he not even wake up, I leave him like that – to sleep, I just put it the knife in his breast many, many time. I see it, the blood, somehow it make me to feel better. I know their kind bleed like my cousin he bleed; their blood it was looking like his, same color, it come out same. I was thinking, maybe it a difference but no, we have same under this (*tugging at the skin on her arm, her zambia drops to the ground, revealing her blood drenched arms and dress*) just the same.

Dawn begins to break

Master, can you be absolving me?

Chilford: (*Jumping up and away from her*) I...ha...oh Ester, NO. What have you DONE? What have you done, what have you done, what have you done -

Jekesai: Master, I am needing you to be absolving me. They will be coming now, now like this.

Chilford: Who...Who will be coming?

Jekesai: Those...those whites with their police. I was writing a letter of confession

Chilford: NO! Oh Ester please NO.

Jekesai: Yes. I was leaving it at the Commissioner of Native Affairs and of Police. They will be seeing it as they arrive, then they will be coming for me – I have killed theirs. They must be avenging that, as I was avenging what they do to mine.

Chilford: Ester! They will...they will...*(Suddenly frantic)* NO. You must run. NOW, go – go get your things, GO NOW, we can – we can get you to the Umtali road at least, you can be hiding there and heading south – GO and get your things!

He near pushes her to the door. She goes. He rushes around, frantic, reaches for a loose block in the floor and retrieves a small pouch, takes out all the money he has in it to give to her. Jekesai re-enters dressed in the original attire she wore upon her first arrival: her nhembe skirt and beads, she is now barefoot, with nothing else.

Chilford: Here this is all I have, it it it - is not too much but it will *(looking up and noticing her)* What in the earth?

Jekesai: This is what it is I was having when I was first coming here.

Chilford: What –

Jekesai: Master, can you be absolving me. They are to come now like this.

Chilford: Ester! You must run, you must be getting out of –

Jekesai: Master there is nowhere to be running. I am already making my peace on this one. This I was doing for my blood, but I am knowing there is a price I must be paying. I am ready to be paying it. Don't be fearing for me Master, the Lord he is with me. It is what I am learning about the Lord from you that is giving me courage. Nothing can separate me from His love. I am just needing you to be absolving me.

Chilford: *(Cracking)* Ester please

Jekesai: Master, I must be facing what it is I do. Please, be absolving me. Please.

Chilford is speechless. Several beats pass. Finally he walks to her.

Chilford: *(weeping)* I...I absolve you in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit *(crossing her)*. Amen.

Jekesai: Amen. *(Beat)*. Thank you Master.

She sits on the floor in a manner typical of a young Shona muzezuru girl, legs bent to one side, feet neatly tucked under her posterior, back inexplicably straight. She waits.

Jekesai: What is it the time?

Chilford: Twenty past seven.

Jekesai: They are coming. *(Beat)* I am making this song as I was walking just now. It is to the Lord my God in the tongue of my ancestors. You, Father Ndhlovu, you can be singing it in you your *new* church. *(Starts to sing)*

Makanaka baba, makanaka, makanaka baba,

makanaka, makanaka baba, makanaka.

Ndinotenda Jesu, ndinotenda, ndinotenda Jesu.

Ndinotenda, ndinotenda Jesu, ndinotenda. *(Chilford, beside her, wiping away tears)* Makanaka baba aiwo, Makanaka, makanaka baba, makanaka, makanaka

baba, makanaka. [God you are good. I thank you Jesus]

She continues to sing, Chilford, having sat down hopelessly beside her, through tears joins in the chorus feebly. She looks at him and smiles gently as he does; she looks back ahead and continues to sing. Lights begin to fade.

END OF PLAY