

I. R. E. A.
SEASON1: THE INITIATE
EPISODE2: 500 THOUSAND CRATES

Written by

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Original script

INT. GRAND MASTER'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.
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Ayaju, since becoming Grand Master, has moved into the bedroom and study of the Grand Masters of the Order.

It is night, Ayaju is dressed and puts on the hood of his robe, takes the Ebony Rod and leaves the bedroom.

INT. ANTECHAMBER OF THE GRAND MASTER'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Ayaju takes two steps and hits something that is on the floor. Amos, his apprentice, suddenly wakes up.

 AMOS
What, what?

 AYAJU
Shut up, Amos.

 AMOS
Great Master.

 AYAJU
Lie back. See you in the morning.

Ayaju bypasses Amos.

 AMOS
You're leaving again, Grand Master?

Ayaju doesn't answer him, opens the antechamber door and exits, closing the door behind him. Amos stares at the closed door for a moment, then goes back to sleep.

EXT. NUMBER HOUSE CEMETERY. NIGHT

Ayaju leaves the House of Numbers. He walks down the central avenue of the cemetery.

The moon is big and shining in the clear sky. It is easy to see in the graveyard. Ayaju arrives at the tomb of the Great Masters, takes out a key attached to a chain, opens the iron door, enters the tomb, closes the door behind him, and his footsteps can be heard descending the stone stairs.

INT. TOMB OF THE GREAT MASTERS. NIGHT.

Ayaju descends the stone stairs and heads towards a niche in the wall. On the niche are four strings of numbers.

Ayajū kneels down, bows his head and places the Ebony Rod on his head.

AYAJU

Grand Master Okigbo defends me,
along with all the great masters
who have been there since our
beginnings. Amen.

Ayajū remains on his knees for a second or two, then stands, walks over to the rectangular stone table, picks up the ebony staff and drives it violently into the stone floor. The rectangular table begins to move and the stone steps appear beneath it. Ayajū takes a torch from the wall, pulls a flint from his pocket and lights the torch. With the torch in his hand, Ayajū walks down the stairs, along the corridor to the small room, takes from the stone pedestal an iron object made of two pieces joined in the middle, and pushes against the stone wall, which begins to fall away. Ayajū comes out through the opening.

EXT. WHITE WORLD. NIGHT.

Ayajū stands on a wall of white rock from which a path leads down into the White Forest. It is also night in the White World and there are two moons in the sky, one big and round like the one in the sky of the Blue Fortress and the other half and bright in the clear sky.

Ayajū is walking down the path with a burning torch in his hand, cautious and careful of where he is going.

Ayajū has reached the White Forest and enters. He walks purposefully and looks around carefully.

The Grand Master arrives at a white wooden hut, opens the door, leaves the burning torch on the wall next to the door and enters.

INT. WHITE HOUSE. NIGHT.

Inside the hut there is only a bed, a small table and a chair made of white wood. Ayajū lies down on the bed and closes his eyes. The Grand Master sits so quietly. Through the small window of the hut, the soft sound of a spring.

A gentle breeze blows through the white house. In the distance you can hear the occasional bird call.

On his bed, Ayajū turns over on his left side, puts his hand under his head like a pillow and stays like that for a moment or two or three.

A noise is heard near the small white house, and Ayaju opens his eyes. To the right of the door, staring at him, is a White Deer. It has a black nose, black eyes and white fur. It sits motionless and stares at Ayaju. He also stares at the White Deer. The two look at each other for a moment or two, then the deer slowly walks away. Ayaju gets up from the bed and slowly starts to follow the White Deer.

EXT. WHITE FOREST. NIGHT.

The White Deer is on a path, its head turned towards the White House from which Ayaju emerges. The deer slowly walks down the path, Ayaju takes the burning torch in her hand and slowly walks behind the White Deer. It goes behind the White Lodge, past a small lake and takes a narrow path through the white trees. The doe is followed by Ayaju, torch in hand. The path runs parallel to a thin stream that flows into the small lake next to the White Lodge. The deer is walking slowly along this path, followed by Ayaju two or three metres away, torch in hand. Ayaju follows the deer and studies it. There are strange black spots on her fur, like markings that Ayaju doesn't recognise because he's never seen them before.

The white deer stops at the rock under the stream that flows into the small lake next to the white cottage. The deer lifts its snout and looks at Ayaju who has stopped to look at it. Ayaju looks at the rock and takes a step forward, suddenly the White Deer is startled, Ayaju stops, but the deer runs away and gets lost among the trees of the White Forest.

Ayaju searches for the deer until he can't see it, then approaches the stone and examines it. Beneath the stone is a sword with a broad, glowing orange blade and a pearly white handle. Bending down, Ayaju picks up the sword from the stream and brings his left hand close to the glowing blade, but immediately pulls it back as it burns him, looks at it for a while, then puts it back into the water of the stream. A small amount of steam rises from the point, after which the water of the stream becomes crystal clear and the sword can be seen at the bottom of the stream.

The sky begins to light up, and Ayaju makes his way back to the White House.

Ayaju reaches the small lake and passes by the White Cottage, then leaves the White Forest and begins to climb the path on the mountain wall, reaching the opening in the wall and entering it.

INT. TOMB OF THE GREAT MASTERS. NIGHT.

Ayaju removes the iron object from its place as the wall begins to close in, places it on the pedestal and climbs the stone steps of the narrow corridor he came from.

Ayaju emerges from under the rectangular table, extinguishes the torch and returns it to its place on the wall stand, and removes the Ebony Rod from its place. The rectangular stone table begins to close. Ayaju climbs the stone steps to the door of the tomb, unlocks it and exits, closing the door behind him. The sound of the key being used to lock the door can be heard.

EXT. NUMBER HOUSE CEMETERY. DAY.

Ayaju walks down the central avenue of the cemetery, it's a bright day, the sun has risen and its rays illuminate the avenues and tombs of the cemetery. Ayaju reaches the House of Numbers and enters it.

INT. KING'S CABINET. DAY.

The King's Cabinet is a large room with hunting trophies, deer, wild boar and a large bear pelt on the walls. On one wall is a painting of the royal coat of arms. In one corner is the armour of King Okot with a blue gold crown on his head. On another wall is a large fireplace with two armchairs by it. A large glass door leads to a large terrace with several wooden chairs and two small carved wooden tables.

In the King's Cabinet there is also a long wooden table with a solid wooden chair with a high back. King Okot is sitting on the chair, holding a portrait of Princess Ukamaka. There are some papers and writing utensils on the table.

In another part of the room there is another long table for important meetings where I can seat more people. At the end of the table is a high back with the royal coat of arms, and around the table are several beautifully carved wooden chairs.

King Okot looks intently at Princess Ukamaka's portrait.

This one has some fine, very beautiful, dark-eyed features, almond-shaped, dark brown skin, curly hair and in many braids. Her lips are very fleshy and red. The nose is fine with a slightly raised tip. In the portrait, the princess is smiling and there are two dimples in her cheeks. The portrait shows a little bit of her and from the bust, Ukamaka has small breasts, but because they're pressed by the dress, they're bulging.

Lord Down enters the King's Cabinet. As soon as he sees him, King Okot leaves the portrait of the Princess on the table and addresses him.

OKOT

What news do you have, Lord Down?

DOWN

Good, my Lord, good.

OKOT

Let's hear it.

DOWN

The Green King has agreed to your marriage to his daughter, Princess Ukamaka.

OKOT

(clapping hands)

Perfect, perfect.

DOWN

But...

(and the man stops)

OKOT

But?

DOWN

It's about your gift to him.

OKOT

For the Green King?

DOWN

To receive the jewel of the Green Kingdom, My Lord.

OKOT

And how much is the... payment?

DOWN

500,000 crates of blue gold and gems.

Says the Lord quickly, for fear of not being able to finish the whole message.

King Okot was surprised by the large sum of money.

OKOT

I didn't expect so much.

DOWN

It's a bit much, Your Majesty, but beautifying the Green Kingdom is worth the effort.

Okot looks at Princess Ukamaka's portrait. He picks it up and caresses her face.

OKOT

How much do we have in the treasury?

DOWN

Without disturbing the urgent needs of the Blue Fortress too much, we can fill 200 thousand crates.

OKOT

And the rest?

DOWN

I have thought of some solutions, Your Majesty, just accept them.

OKOT

(annoyed)
Tell everything to the end.

DOWN

Your Majesty, you must sign new decrees: tripling of taxes, confiscation of animals and blue gold from the inhabitants of the Blue Fortress and surrounding villages, and a special decree for the Order of Numbers.

OKOT

(astonished)
A special decree for the Order of Numbers?

DOWN

Yes, Your Majesty, the Order of Numbers is under Your Majesty's direct control. The decree must force the Order to increase its taxes 20-fold, sell its precious artefacts and hand over all its blue gold to the treasury.

Okot thinks for a moment, two, three, then addresses Lord Down.

OKOT
So we fill 300 thousand crates?

DOWN
More, Your Majesty, and we can save
some of our treasury.

The king likes the plan and smiles.

OKOT
Come to me, Grand Master Ayaju.

INT. A CORRIDOR IN THE ROYAL PALACE. DAY.

Lord Down leaves the King's Cabinet, closing the door behind him. He smugly walks to the end of the corridor. He turns left and enters another room.

INT. LORD DOWN'S STUDY IN THE ROYAL PALACE. DAY.

Lord Down is in a small antechamber where there are two desks where three men work. The walls are filled with shelves on which books and scrolls are placed. Down beckons Secretary Brown to follow him and enters another room. Secretary Brown hurries to follow his master and closes the door behind him.

Lord Down's study is austere. The walls are lined with shelves of books and parchments, and in one corner stands a single wooden bed with a crumpled sheet. Next to the only window in the room is a long wooden table full of papers.

Lord Down is sitting on a high-backed blanket with his family's coat of arms drawn on it. Down is very distressed. He turns to Secretary Brown.

DOWN
Secretary Brown, how long has the
Noble M. been at sea?

BROWN
3 months, sir.

DOWN
(deep in thought)
3 months... 3 months...

And Down is silent, a moment, two. Suddenly he comes back to reality and tells the secretary.

DOWN (CONT'D)
Tell Grand Master Ayaju that he is
urgently summoned to see King Okot.

BROWN
Yes, Master.

And Brown greets him respectfully and leaves the room.

DOWN
(talks to himself)
3 months... 3 months...

INT. KING'S CABINET. DAY.

The portrait of Princess Ukamaka sits on the king's desk.

The door to the terrace is open, and outside you can see King Okot walking with measured steps, as if he is thinking. The king pauses. A gentle breeze ruffles the lap of his cloak.

The door to the Royal Cabinet opens and Grand Master Ayaju enters, the door closing behind him. Ayaju takes two steps and looks for Okot, whom he sees on the terrace. He is about to go there, but his eyes are drawn to the portrait of Princess Ukamaka on the king's desk. Ayaju approaches the table and carefully examines the princess's portrait, one moment, two, three. Suddenly Ayaju is startled by King Okot's voice.

OKOT
She's beautiful, isn't she?

Ayaju flinches and takes a step back, then leans forward to King.

OKOT (CONT'D)
She's very beautiful, A.

AYAJU
(smiles)
Miss Emily was much prettier.

Okot laughs, approaching his desk.

OKOT
That's right, my friend. Emily was
our first love. Sit down.

And the king is sitting on his throne, while Ayaju is sitting on a chair in front of the table. They are both in a jovial mood and are talking to each other like two old friends.

AYAJU
What blonde hair she had, O.

OKOT

(smiles)

Yes, and those blue eyes, they
drove us both crazy.

AYAJU

Especially you, O.

OKOT

Shut up A, you loved her.

AYAJU

I was shy.

OKOT

(laughs amusedly)

You're not ashamed to lie like
that. You kissed her.

And they laugh together.

OKOT (CONT'D)

What a wonderful childhood we had,
A.

(Ayaju smiles in approval)

What mischief we made.

AYAJU

You were the leader here, O, you
must admit that.

OKOT

And you, my brave deputy.

AYAJU

(laughing)

That's right, O, I've followed you
all my life.

OKOT

(looks at Ayaju closely
and speaks seriously)

Will you help me now, A?

AYAJU

(also becoming serious)

I think you mean the beautiful
princess.

OKOT

I've fallen in love with her, A.
(and the king takes the
portrait in his hands)

(MORE)

OKOT (CONT'D)

I want her like crazy. She must be mine, A.

AYAJU

Who is she?

OKOT

Princess Ukamaka, daughter of the Green King.

AYAJU

Now that you are King, O, go ask the Green King to marry the Princess.

OKOT

That's what I have done, A.

AYAJU

And? The Green King said: Yes?

OKOT

He said yes, but on one condition.

AYAJU

(looks at Okot as if he senses something he won't like)

What condition?

OKOT

(does not answer him immediately, but looks at the portrait of the princess for a moment or two)

500,000 crates of blue gold and gems.

AYAJU

(he is surprised and silent for a moment, two, three, as he looks at the king)

Much, O.

(The king says nothing)

Very much, O.

(The king looks at the portrait of the princess without saying anything)

And how are you going to get ten ships? From the royal treasury can we fill them all?

OKOT

(looks up at Ayaju)
We can fill 200 thousand with blue
gold and gems from the treasury. We
still have 300 thousand left.

AYAJU

And how you'll fill those ships.

OKOT

Yes, I want you to draw up three
new royal decrees: Tripling of
taxes, confiscation of animals and
blue gold from the inhabitants of
the Blue Fortress and surrounding
villages, and a special decree for..
(King pauses without
continuation of sentence)

AYAJU

(frowning)
And a special royal decree, I
suppose, for...
(Ayaju also pauses without
finishing his sentence,
forcing the king to
continue)

OKOT

Order of Numbers, yes...
(finish sentence king)

AYAJU

(realising that he can't
change the king's mind)
And what are the new commands that
the Order of Numbers must obey?

OKOT

You must give all the blue gold you
have to the royal treasury...

AYAJU

(interrupts the king)
We have no blue gold.

OKOT

(annoyed at being
interrupted)
Then sell all your priced items and
artefacts and raise all your
paperwork fees 4 and 5 times.

One moment, two, three, Ayaju falls silent and looks at King Okot. Then he says.

AYAJU

Is Princess Ukamaka worth this
sacrifice, O?

OKOT

(looks at the princess's
portrait again)
She's worth a million crates of
blue gold and gems, my friend.
She's worth much more than you
think, A.

Ayaju looks at Okot. He stares at the portrait of Princess Ukamaka like a lover.

EXT. NUMBER HOUSE CEMETERY. DAY.

A soldier emerges from the House of Numbers carrying a square flag with the Royal Coat of Arms. He is followed by another soldier carrying a smaller square flag with the Order of Numbers' Coat of Arms.

Then Queen Halima appears followed by Lucretia and 4 butlers carrying baskets of wicker. The last one leaves the House of Numbers a new Master of the Order.

They all walk down the central path of the cemetery to the royal tomb. The soldier with the royal crest enters through the open iron door, followed by Queen Halima, two butlers and the New Master.

INT. REGAL TOMB. DAY.

In front of the niche in the wall where the coffin containing the body of King Chinedu lies, Queen Halima takes a large, thick, white candle from a wicker basket. Lucretia takes out incense and puts it in a burner, one of the majordoms takes a bundle of dry sticks and the other lights them with two flint sticks which he strikes between them, then they light the candle in the queen's hand and the incense in the burner held by Lucretia.

The Queen approaches King Chinedu's niche, Lucretia moves the bowl that emits incense smoke, and the new Master begins to mumble strings of numbers that he reads from a book.

Queen Halima listens. She holds the lighted candle and stands by the niche where King Chinedu's lifeless body lies.

The new Master finishes reading, the Queen places the lighted candle on a special holder next to the niche in the wall where King Chinedu lies, and Lucretia places the burner of smoking incense next to the candle.

The majordomos carrying the wicker baskets, Lucretia and the soldier carrying the square flag with the royal coat of arms climb the stone steps and leave the tomb. Halima remains alone, wipes the tears from her cheeks, stands for a moment, two, three, and looks at the place where Chinedu is buried. She takes a step and kisses the marble slab that covers the niche where King Chinedu's lifeless body lies, then turns and walks away.

EXT. NUMBER HOUSE CEMETERY. DAY.

Queen Halima leaves the Royal Tomb and the group continues along the central path of the cemetery. After a short walk, the group arrives at the tomb of the Grand Master of the Order of Numbers, which has an open iron door. The soldier carrying the square flag with the crest of the Order of Numbers, Queen Halima, Lucretia and the two butlers with the wicker baskets enter the tomb.

INT. TOMB OF THE GREAT MASTERS. DAY.

Inside, a Majordon lights a bundle of dry twigs, lighting the candle in Queen Halima's hand and the incense in the burner held by Lucretia. The new Master begins to read strings of numbers from a book in his hand.

After a few seconds, the Master stops reading and hangs up the book, Queen Halima places the candle against a wall near the niche where the lifeless body of the Great Master Okigbo lies, Lucretia also places the incense burner next to the candle, Regina turns and leaves, climbing the stone stairs to the exit. She is followed by the soldier with the square flag bearing the crest of the Order of Numbers, Lucretia and the two butlers.

EXT. NUMBER HOUSE CEMETERY. DAY.

Soldiers carrying flags with the blazons of the House and the Order of Numbers on them make their way to the entrance of the House of Numbers, while Queen Halima, followed by Lucretia and the two butlers carrying the wicker baskets, make their way down a side alley. They are followed by the new Master. As they walk, Queen Halima says.

HALIMA

It's a fine day, Lucretia. The
times we live in are not fine.
Master Ugonna, isn't it?

The new Master looks down. When he hears his name, he hurries
to answer.

UGONNA

As you say, Your Majesty.

HALIMA

Don't you agree?

Master Ugonna doesn't answer. The group arrived at a place
with many flowers in the middle. It was surrounded by an
alley with small white stones. There are many green wooden
benches at the edge of the alley. Tall trees were standing
behind them, shading the wooden benches.

Queen Halima sits down on a wooden bench. She beckons
Lucretia to sit beside her. Master Ugonna stands beside them.
The two butlers remain in the alley.

HALIMA (CONT'D)

You haven't answered me, Master
Ugonna.

UGONNA

(looks at the ground)
What do I know, Your Majesty?

HALIMA

You are the new Master, are you
not?

UGONNA

Yes, Your Majesty, I am the Master
who took over after Master Ayaju
was appointed Grand Master.

HALIMA

I have heard that there was a
difficult examination. Many scribes
wanted to become Master.

UGONNA

They all had the right, Your
Majesty.

HALIMA

So you are the best of all scribes.

UGONNA

I don't think I'm the best, just
the most ambitious.

HALIMA

How many servants does the Order of
Numbers have?

UGONNA

One Grand Master, 6 Masters, 36
Scribes and 216 Disciples. That
makes 259 servants of the royal
house, Your Majesty.

HALIMA

I heard the Grand Master is very
fond of you.

UGONNA

I am intimidated by what you tell
me, Your Majesty. I feel that the
Grand Master's love is poured out
equally on all the servants of our
Order.

HALIMA

(ironically)

Not quite all. But tell me
something else, Master. What news,
a month after our brilliant King
issued the new decrees?

Ugonna doesn't answer. He looks down and says nothing. Then
Lucretia intervenes. She encourages him.

LUCRETIA

Master Ugonna, we know the news
can't be the best, but the Queen
Mother just wants to know the
latest information. Do not worry,
nothing will be used against you or
the Order.

Raising his eyes from the floor, Master Ugonna seems to have
calmed down somewhat.

UGONNA

Your Majesty, royal edicts are
hardly accepted by the people.

HALIMA

How else, Master, when they have to
feed the folly of a man?

Master Ugonna falls silent and looks down, startled by what Queen Halima said.

AYAJU
Good morning, Your Majesty.

Unnoticed by anyone, the Grand Master has appeared. The Queen turns her head towards him.

HALIMA
Hello, Grand Master.

AYAJU
(turns and greets Lucretia
politely)
Madam.

Lucretia is visibly excited by Ayaju's arrival and greets him with a slight nod.

HALIMA
What wind brings you here, Great
Master?

AYAJU
I knew that you had come today,
Your Majesty, for the Weekly Sacred
Ritual at the tomb of King Chinedu,
and I have come to greet you.

HALIMA
Well done, Grand Master.

AYAJU
I will send Master Ugonna to my
office with some work, with your
permission.

Halima nods and Master Ugonna bows his head and walks away, almost running, from the Queen's side. When she sees him, Halima gives a discreet snort of laughter.

AYAJU (CONT'D)
(Note the way Ugonna
leaves and the Queen's
laughter)
He is a good man, Master Ugonna,
Your Majesty, and one of our
Order's few remaining honesties.

HALIMA
(turns serious and looks
at Ayaju)
Things are going bad, Grand Master.

AYAJU

That's right, Your Majesty. We have received reports that officers pocket some of what they take from the people. Then, the Order of Numbers sold the most expensive and valuable artefacts. In fact, we've only kept the basic books that the Order needs to exist. The rest...

Ayaju doesn't finish his sentence.

HALIMA

The rest was swallowed up by my son's madness.

(Halima pauses, then continues)

I have seen the portrait of Princess Ukamaka. I understand my son, but only to a point. You can't plunder your own people because you want a woman.

LUCRETIA

Look, you can.

Halima and Ayaju look at Lucretia, who is intimidated and has her eyes lowered.

HALIMA

You're right, Lucretia, it can be done.

AYAJU

150 thousand crates have already been filled, in addition to the 200 thousand filled with gold from the royal treasury.

HALIMA

So the madman has 350 thousand crates of blue gold and gems.

Ayaju looks at Lucretia, who looks at him in fascination. Halima looks at both of them, then Ayaju looks at the queen and looks down.

AYAJU

(to the queen)

If you permit, Your Majesty, I wish to return to work.

HALIMA

I wish you luck in everything,
Grand Master.

Ayaju bows to the Queen, then to Lucretia.

AYAJU

Madam.

Then Ayaju turns and leaves. Halima and Lucretia watch his departure. After a second or two, the Queen says:

HALIMA

Can the Grand Master calm my son's
madness? This one and the ones to
come?

Halima continues to look in the direction Ayaju went, but somewhere far away, not knowing where to look.

EXT. BLUE FORTRESS HARBOUR. DAY.

The Blue Fortress has a big harbour, with big cranes that load and unload the ships, with cargo ships that sell and buy all kinds of goods. Rich and poor, sailors and porters, old people, young people and children, women and men, beggars with all kinds of disabilities, all work and live in the harbour.

The harbour consists of two parts. They are separated by a very long and wide pontoon. The left side is occupied by fishing boats, large and small, new and old, with nets on deck and sails hoisted. The newer and larger fishing boats are near the large pontoon, and to the left are the smaller and poorer ones.

On the right is the Blue Flagship, guarded by soldiers and constantly loaded with crates of blue gold and gems. There are also scribes who keep a record of each crate.

EXT. WHITE FISHERMAN'S HOUSE TERRACE. DAY.

On the shore, on a high cliff, there are many wooden and stone houses. In one of them, dilapidated, with a large and wide terrace, dirty and dusty, the White Fisherman is sitting on a wooden rocking chair. From there he has a view of the whole harbour, with the fishing boats on the left, the wooden pontoon in the middle and the Blue Flagship on the right. At this time of day, there is a mixed crowd in the harbour.

The White Fisherman stares into the distance, at the sea, and slowly moves in the rocking chair.

On the terrace there is another gazebo and inside there is a wooden table with a few wooden chairs. Everything is dirty, dusty and dilapidated.

Next to the White Fisherman, Master Ugonna appears, holding a package and a bottle. The Master takes a wooden chair and sits down next to the White Fisherman, who continues to move slowly with the rocking chair, once, twice, three times, then stops. They both look out into the distance, the White Fisherman at the sea and Master Ugonna at the ship loaded with porters carrying large wooden crates.

UGONNA

I loved this place the first time I brought you here after you came to the House of Numbers with Noble M.

INT. GREAT HALL OF THE HOUSE OF NUMBERS. DAY.

It is the day that Master Ugonna, then just a Scribe, refused to draw up the deed of sale as requested by Noble M. On that day, Master Ayaju supervised the work of the Scribes. This is when Master Ayaju handed over the document to Noble M.

AYAJU

(looks Noble M. straight in the eyes)

Noble M. you don't owe us any money.

Ayaju and Noble M. look at each other for a few seconds, after which the Nobleman snatches the contract out of the Master's hand, turns and, full of rage, heads for the door of the Great Hall as he rips the contract into pieces and throws them on the floor.

The Master looks after Noble M. as he nervously walks away, then looks at the Fisherman who is in his own world.

AYAJU (CONT'D)

What happened to this fisherman?

UGONNA

His wife and twins, a girl and a boy, died three years ago. Someone unknown killed them. It all happened when the White Fisherman was at sea.

AYAJU

Noble M.?

UGONNA

Some say yes. But there's no evidence to charge him with murder.

AYAJU

Isn't Noble M. the friend of Master Ijere?

UGONNA

Yes, Master Ayaju.

AYAJU

And why did he come when I'm on watch?

UGONNA

He is in a hurry to leave with two ships for four months on a business trip.

AYAJU

(approaching the White Fisherman)

He'll be back when Master Ijere's on watch to fix his problem.

(Ayaju strokes the White Fisherman's hair)

But until then, take care of this man. Give him something to eat and drink.

EXT. WHITE FISHERMAN'S HOUSE TERRACE. DAY.

UGONNA

And I have been coming back to you ever since.

Ugonna unpacks the package that he has brought with him, takes out the food and puts it on the lap of the white fisherman. He does not move, a moment, two, three, then he takes the food and begins to eat it while he looks out at the sea.

Ugonna looks at the harbour.

UGONNA (CONT'D)

From up here you can see the whole harbour.

The White Fisherman says nothing, stops eating and continues to look at the sea. Master Ugonna uncorks the bottle he has brought and places it in the White Fisherman's arms. The White Fisherman takes a sip from the bottle. He puts it down and starts eating, looking at the sea.

Down in the harbour, the porters continue to load the large loops of wooden cargo by climbing onto a wooden bridge inside the ship. They are watched over by soldiers and Scribes who write on papers as each crate is loaded onto the ship.

EXT. BLUE FORTRESS HARBOUR. DAY.

An old, white-bearded porter approaches the Scribe.

THE PORTER

That's it.

SCRIBE

(while writing on a piece
of parchment)

Ok, good.

As the porter leaves, an officer approaches the scribe. The scribe finishes what he has written. He takes the parchment from the board, which he holds in his left hand, and hands it to the officer.

SCRIBE (CONT'D)

Here, this copy is yours.

THE OFFICER

(taking the paper)

Thank you.

The Scribe and the officer move away from each other. The wooden bridge is lifted by the people on the ship.

EXT. WHITE FISHERMAN'S HOUSE TERRACE. DAY.

At the White Fisherman's house, he finishes what was in the bottle. Master Ugonna takes the bottle and puts the cork in it, then he gets up from his chair.

UGONNA

Goodbye, White Fisherman.

Ugonna turns and walks away, while the White Fisherman continues to stare into the distance. After a moment or two, he smiles and slowly begins to move again in the rocking chair.

INT/EXT. VILLAGE/SMITHY. DAY.

The village is not rich, the huts are small and poor, and there are domestic animals all around them. The children are playing between the houses and the women are working, some are hanging out the washing to dry, others are grinding seeds or cooking food over small fires. And the men are at work around their houses.

In the village, there is a blacksmith who has a bigger house than the others in the village. Attached to the house is his workshop. The blacksmith and his apprentice, Tasso, work at the smithy. The workshop is large and has all the tools the blacksmith needs, in the middle is the furnace with the large blades. The blacksmith is a tall, well-muscled man, dressed in leather overalls, trousers and boots. Tasso is a dark-haired, rather vain 18-year-old. He wears a shirt with sleeves tucked in behind his elbows, trousers and boots on his feet.

The two are working, very concentrated on what they are doing.

Screaming as loud as they can, three boys come running into the village.

BOY1

The soldier's!!! The soldier's
coming!!!

Another boy in another part of the village.

BOY2

The soldier's coming!!! The
soldier's coming!!!

Men and women join in, collecting things from around the house and putting them inside. Children begin to run to their houses, women running after small children and bringing them into the houses.

A boy arrives at the smithy. He goes into the workshop and starts shouting.

BOY2 (CONT'D)

The soldier's coming! The soldier's
coming!

The blacksmith and Tasso stop working and the boy leaves the forge and starts shouting through the village.

BOY2 (CONT'D)

(off)

The soldier's coming!!! The
soldier's coming!!!

At that moment, soldiers on horseback entered the village. They were shouting and carrying swords. At the forge, the blacksmith emerges from his workshop with a large axe in his hand and prepares for battle. He is followed by Tasso, also holding a large club. A number of soldiers are on horseback and are attacking the villagers. They enter houses and kill men and women. They beat children. More and more soldiers are entering the village. They are attacking the villagers, stealing their animals and killing everyone they meet.

The villagers flee in terror. Some try to resist but fail and are killed, others flee and are killed behind them. Soldiers come out of the houses with various objects they have stolen, with young girls tied by their hands. Other soldiers gather the villagers' animals.

Lieutenant Beginning enters the village. He walks slowly, watching his soldiers kill and loot.

At the forge, the Blacksmith and Tasso are standing outside the workshop. A soldier on horseback appears. The Blacksmith approaches the horseman, who attacks him with his sword. The Blacksmith dodges and hits him hard in the middle with his axe. The soldier staggers, moves his horse forward a little, looks at the Blacksmith, and is not paying attention when Tasso strikes him violently on the head with his club. The horse is startled, rears up on two legs and knocks the soldier from the saddle to the ground. The Blacksmith leaps at him and drives the axe hard into his head. Just then a new horseman appears and attacks the Blacksmith with his sword. He dodges the blow. The horseman passes the Blacksmith and Tasso strikes him with his club. The soldier staggers to his feet and drops his sword to the ground. But the horse with the soldier continues on and disappears between the houses.

The Blacksmith hurries up and picks up the sword from the ground. Tasso comes up beside him and they both turn to face the direction from which the two riders came. Less than ten metres in front of them is Lieutenant Beginning. He has two pistols pointed in their direction. The Blacksmith and Tasso remain where they are and look at the lieutenant. He looks at them for a moment, two, three, then shoots, hitting Blacksmith's forehead. It falls to the ground. Tasso is stunned for a moment, then suddenly turns. The lieutenant fires at him, but misses. Tasso throws the club and runs. The lieutenant puts his pistols on his belt, draws his sword and gallops after Tasso. He runs through the houses. The Lieutenant follows him. Tasso flees through the houses, dodging two soldiers in his path.

Tasso manages to get out of the village and to the edge of the forest. He enters the forest and runs, runs, runs. The lieutenant reaches the edge of the forest and stops. He no longer sees Tasso.

EXT. THE FOREST. DAY.

Tasso runs frightened through the forest until he reaches a group of women, children and youths who have gone into hiding for fear of the soldiers, and joins them.

EXT. BLUE FORTRESS SURROUNDINGS/INSIDE THE FORTRESS. DAY.

A lot of peasants have gathered around the Blue Fortress and improvised huts for shelter. There is great misery. There are many poor people, women, men and children, young and old. They all make a lot of noise.

Tasso is seen among those who have hidden in the woods from the soldiers' fury on the road to the fortress gate. They are battered, tired and discouraged. When they reach the gate, the soldiers won't let them in, and the men scatter among the huts and tents. Around the Blue Citadel, Tasso wanders aimlessly.

OLD CHICKPEA

Hey, young man!!!

(Tasso stops)

You, the one in the shirt.

(Tasso looks at Old
Chickpea)

You, what are you lookin' at? Come
here.

Old Chickpea is beckoning Tasso to come to him. Tasso looks to his left, then to his right. He realises that Old Chickpea is calling him, so he goes to the old man.

OLD CHICKPEA (CONT'D)

What's your name?

TASSO

Tasso.

OLD CHICKPEA

How old are you?

TASSO

18.

OLD CHICKPEA

Have you worked the land?

TASSO

No.

OLD CHICKPEA

You raised animals?
 (Tasso nods his head,
 gesturing no)
 Where did you work then?

TASSO

I'm a blacksmith's apprentice.

OLD CHICKPEA

(wondering)
 It takes ten years to become an
 apprentice, you little brat.

TASSO

From the age of 4 I was sold to the
 blacksmith.

OLD CHICKPEA

(silent and looking at
 Tasso)
 Do you have the apprentice's mark?

Tasso doesn't answer, but opens his shirt so that his chest is on show. On his chest is a horseshoe tattoo and below it a series of Numbers. Old Chickpea looks carefully, his face flattens and he says to Tasso.

OLD CHICKPEA (CONT'D)

I like you, boy. I'm Old Chickpea,
 I'm not a blacksmith, I'm a baker
 and I need a big man like you at my
 ovens.

TASSO

(confused)
 I'm a blacksmith's apprentice.

OLD CHICKPEA

So what's the problem? Do you know
 how to build an oven?
 (Tasso nods yes)
 You see? Do you know how to make a
 fire in it?
 (Tasso nods yes)
 Do you have somewhere to sleep and
 something to eat?
 (Tasso nods no)
 Come to me and I'll make you a
 baker.

Old Chickpea takes Tasso by the shoulders and they walk towards the Blue Fortress Gate.

They are stopped by a soldier when they reach the gate.

SOLDIER

Where are you going?

OLD CHICKPEA

This is my new baker's boy.

SOLDIER

A bit big for a boy to be, Old Chickpea.

OLD CHICKPEA

Big, small, I couldn't find anyone else. I need a strong man, so leave me alone.

And Old Chickpea pulls Tasso behind him, and the two of them go past the soldier and into the Blue Fortress.

INT. GREAT HALL OF THE HOUSE OF NUMBERS. DAY.

The Scribes are seated, as usual, in three rows, one row close to the high windows, the second row in the middle and the third row close to the wall. Each scribe has his own desk. Almost all of them have someone to write for.

Master Ijere sits at the large table on the dais. He oversees the Order in the Great Hall. Ijere is looking on with the Scribes, and everything is going on as usual.

The door to the Great Hall opens and Noble M enters, followed by the White Fisherman.

Master Ijere sees them immediately. He rises from his chair, walks down the steps of the podium and approaches them. When he is in front of them, Ijere addresses Noble M.

IJERE

Hello.

M.

(not answering immediately, after a second or two)

Hello.

IJERE

(pretending not to know
why Noble M has come with
the White Fisherman)

What do you want from us, Noble M.?

M.

(pretending that he
doesn't agree with Master
Ijere)

I came with the good White
Fisherman to make a deal, a
contract.

IJERE

(looks at the White
Fisherman, who is in his
own world, then at Noble
M.)

I understand, please follow me.

Master Ijere starts down the aisle between the row and the wall. He is followed by the Noble M. and the White Fisherman. The three of them walk up to a Scribe, who is the first one in line by the wall. Master Ijere introduces the Scribe to the Noble M.

IJERE (CONT'D)

He is the Silent Scribe. His
Lordship is the Noble M.

(The Scribe bows in
respect)

Please serve them well, they have a
deed to do.

The scribe bows again, and Master Ijere turns and walks to the podium, climbs the steps and sits down in his chair, from where he continues to survey the hall. The Silent Scribe begins to fill in the strings of numbers as Noble M tells him what to write. The White Fisherman is in his own world, completely detached from the reality that surrounds him. His head is a little backwards and he keeps rolling his eyes around the room without looking at anything in particular.

Noble M., in his expensive clothes, looks at the scribe with superiority and slowly dictates what to write. The scribe writes the strings of numbers on white parchment, nodding his head from time to time to indicate that he understands what he is being asked to do. At one point the Scribe stops, bends down, takes a book from the shelf under the wooden desk, opens it, finds the page and starts copying.

Noble M. looks at Master Ijere, they look at each other briefly, then Ijere looks out into the hall and Noble M.

resumes talking to the Silent Scribe. All the time, the White Fisherman is in his own world.

The parchment the Scribe is writing on has many series of numbers. Noble M. says something to the Scribe. The Scribe is surprised and doesn't want to write down what he's been told, so he looks at Master Ijere. He stares at the Scribe and nods discreetly to let him know that all is well and that he needs to do as Noble M tells him. The scribe resumes writing and finishes the strings of numbers on the parchment. He opens a box on the desk in which he has a sponge soaked in blue ink, on which the Noble M. places the thumb of his left hand and then his thumb on the parchment in the place indicated by the scribe. Noble M turns to White Fisherman, takes his right hand and places his thumb on the blue ink, then on the parchment where the Scribe indicates. The White Fisherman obeys the Noble M without any resistance. He just rolls his eyes in all directions.

The Scribe picks up the parchment filled with the two prints, blows on it to allow the ink to dry, and then hands it over to Noble M. He looks at it without understanding anything. Then he looks at Master Ijere, who is looking at Noble M from his seat. They look at each other for a moment, then Ijere looks out into the hall. Satisfied, the Noble M. packs up the parchment and puts it in the inside pocket of his loose coat, takes out a small leather pouch, opens it and takes out a few blue gold coins, which he gives to the Scribe, who bows his head in thanks. Noble M closes the bag, takes White Fisherman's right hand and places the bag in it.

Noble M is very pleased, he stands up and looks around, then nods to Master Ijere. Not pleased that Noble M wants to talk, Master Ijere rises, walks down the podium steps and approaches Noble M.

IJERE (CONT'D)

Anything else, Noble M.?

M.

No, Master Ijere, everything is fine. I just wanted to tell you that the Silent Scribe is very efficient, thank you and good day.

But Noble M can't finish these words because a loud voice is heard beside them.

WHITE FISHERMAN

Thief! Thief!

(M.

(MORE)

WHITE FISHERMAN (CONT'D)

and Ijere turn their heads towards the White Fisherman who has the coins in his left hand and looks hatefully at noble M.)

Thief!!

(M. and Ijere, as well as the Silent Scribe, stand frozen and can't believe how the White Fisherman has changed from a madman out of touch with reality to a madman who looks at the Noble M. with hatred)

Thief!!! Thief!!!

The White Fisherman throws the blue gold coins at Noble M, punching him in the eye.

The Noble M. takes a full punch, staggers and falls over the wooden desk of the Silent Scribe. The White Fisherman rushes to Noble M. and grabs his throat with his palms as he stares hatefully.

The Silent Scribe rushes to the White Fisherman. Others nearby rush to help Noble M. With difficulty, the hands of the White Fisherman are removed from the neck of the Noble M, who is lifted to his feet. The White Fisherman is howling and struggling like an animal. His eyes are red and his eyelashes dishevelled. Two soldiers arrive and one of them hits the White Fisherman in the head with a spear. The White Fisherman loses consciousness and falls to the ground at Noble M's feet. He's scared, black-eyed and breathing heavily.

EXT. LARGE SQUARE IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE OF NUMBERS. DAY.

In front of the House of Numbers is a cage on four wheels, surrounded by soldiers. Next to it is Lieutenant Beginning on horseback. Noble M., followed by Master Ijere, comes from the House of Numbers. They stop on the steps and look at the white fisherman in the cage. Lieutenant Beginning sees them and greets them. Noble M. does not answer, but Master Ijere nods his head in acknowledgement. Then Lieutenant Beginning gives the signal to leave, and the four-wheeled cage, drawn by two horses, sets off after the lieutenant, followed by the soldiers.

From the steps of the House of Numbers, Noble M. and Master Ijere watch the prisoner's cage being followed by a crowd of curious men, women, children and teenagers.

In the cage, the White Fisherman once again has the lost look of a maniac in his own world.

INT. GRAND MASTER'S OFFICE. DAY.

At the head of the long table in the cabinet sits Ayaju, in the Grand Master's chair, and to his left, on the wooden chairs, Master Breadless and Master Left-Eyeless, and to his right Master Ugonna.

Nonso, the apprentice of former Grand Master Okigbo, stands on the other side of the table.

AYAJU

(holds a scroll in his hand and speaks while looking at it)

Nonso, you have now passed the first stages of the Scribe's examination.

(Nonso bows his head in respect)

Your handwriting is good, in some places even very good. But you still have to perfect the parallelism of the strings of numbers.

(And Ayaju hands the parchment to Span and Left-Eyeless)

OK, now stage two. Do you know what it is?

NONSO

Memory.

AYAJU

More precisely?

NONSO

For the things you will ask me about, I will have to write down the numbers.

AYAJU

Very good. Masters, are you ready?

(and Ayaju looks at each Masters and they signal that they are ready)

Then let Master Ugonna start.

UGONNA

(looks at Nonso who is
sitting on a chair)
Marriage certificate.
(Nonso writes)
Death certificate.
(Nonso writes)
Amputation of left hand.
(Nonso starts to write,
stops, thinks for a
moment, then writes)

AYAJU

Enough, thank you Master Ugonna.
(Ugonna bows his head in a
sign of respect)
Master Beardless, please.

BEARDLESS

500 kg of wheat.
(Nonso writes)
381 head of cattle.
(Nonso writes)
115 sheep and 45 turkeys.
(Nonso writes)
300 crossbows and 50 lances.
(Nonso writes)

AYAJU

Thank you, Master. Master Left-
Eyeless, please.

LEFT-EYELESS

(bows his head in respect.
He turns to Nonso)
Beauty's superfluous...
(Nonso writes)
If not escorted...
(Nonso writes)
By virtue.

Nonso pauses to think, then recites what he has written and
raises his eyes to look at Ayaju.

NONSO

Grand Master, may I rewrite what
Master Left-Eyeless told me?

Ayaju looks at Master Left Eyeless and asks him with a glance
if he is in agreement. Master Left Eyeless nods his head to
say yes, then Ayaju speaks to him.

AYAJU

Repeat, please, Master.

Master Left Eyeless repeated the words to Nonso.

LEFT-EYELESS
Beauty's superfluous if not
escorted by virtue.

Nonso pauses for a moment and looks at what he has written. Then he continues writing, finishing and looking up at the Master Left Eyeless.

LEFT-EYELESS (CONT'D)
For man to become strong and
fulfilled, childhood, adolescence
and youth must come to an end in
their own time.

Nonso closes his eyes, moves his right hand as if he were pointing at something in the air, then he opens his eyes and begins to write. He finishes and looks at Master Left Eyeless.

LEFT-EYELESS (CONT'D)
Don't steal.
(Nonso writes)
Don't kill.
(Nonso writes)
Respect celibacy.
(Nonso writes)
Never use weapons.
(Nonso writes)

AYAJU
Thank you, Master.

Master Left Eyeless turns to Ayaju and greets him respectfully.

AYAJU (CONT'D)
(to Nonso)
Have you finished writing?

NONSO
Yes, Great Master.

AYAJU
Check your writing and correct
where necessary.

Nonso looks at the strings of numbers. The Grand Master and the other three Masters look at him. Ayaju addresses him after a few moments.

AYAJU (CONT'D)
 Enough, give the scroll to Master
 Ugonna.

Nonso gets up from his chair, walks over to Master Ugonna and hands him the scroll. Ugonna reads the strings of numbers and then hands the scroll back to Nonso.

AYAJU (CONT'D)
 To Master Left-Eyeless.

Nonso hands the scroll to Master Left-Eyeless and returns to his seat. Left-Eyeless reads the scroll and then hands it to Master Beardless. He reads the strings of numbers written by Nonso, then hands the scroll to Ayaju. He takes the scroll, reads it, leaves it in front of him and looks at Nonso who stands up excitedly.

AYAJU (CONT'D)
 (to Master Ugonna)
 Master Ugonna?

UGONNA
 Great Master, please receive him.

AYAJU
 (to Master Breadless)
 Master Breadless?

BREADLESS
 Great Master, please receive him.

AYAJU
 (to Master Left-Eyeless)
 Master Left-Eyeless?

LUCRETIA
 Great Master, please receive him.

AYAJU
 (looks at Nonso)
 Your test has no faults. I will accept the proposals of the three masters. Tonight, after business hours, your rite of passage will take place.

Nonso stands frozen, staring wide-eyed at the Great Master. Ayaju continues because Nonso does nothing.

AYAJU (CONT'D)
 You may go, Nonso, see you tonight
 in the Great Hall.

Nonso turns robotically and takes two steps towards the cabinet door. He stops, quickly returns to his seat, bows to the Master, turns and runs to the cabinet door, opens it, steps out and closes the door behind him.

Master Ugonna laughs.

LEFT-EYELESS

I think he was afraid you'd change
your mind, Grand Master.

And everyone starts to laugh.

EXT. MERCHANTS STREET. DAY.

The street is long and wide, with sidewalks and cubic stone pavement. The merchants' houses have the workshops on the ground floor and the living quarters on the upper floor. The houses are beautiful, clean and freshly painted. Old Chickpea, shoemaker Apple and the seamstress Madam Cristina are the main craftsmen. The rest are all sorts of merchants who buy and sell various things they get from the foreign ships that come to the port and from the craftsmen in the villages around the Blue Fortress.

It was then that Tasso came out of the bakery with two baskets, which he was carrying on a stick slung over his shoulder, and set off down the pavement.

It was early in the morning and the sun was just starting to light up the street.

Tasso arrives at Madam Cristina's dressmaking shop and looks in through the window. An elegant lady is trying on a wide brimmed summer hat. The lady is being helped by Ema, the shop assistant. Tasso knocks discreetly at the window. Ema, a slender young woman of Tasso's age, looks out the window. She sees him and beckons him to wait. Tasso smiles and moves away from the window.

A few people walk past Tasso, who is standing in front of the dressmaker's shop. The door to the shop opens and an elegant lady comes out with a large package in her hand. Tasso greets her and the lady nods slightly in return. Ema appears behind the lady.

TASSO

Hi, Ema.

EMA

Hello, Tasso.

And the two youngsters smile.

TASSO
Bread for Mrs Cristina.

EMA
(sniffs the bread)
Hmmm, that smells good.
(and the girl gives Tasso
some money and chooses 3
loaves, turns and leaves)

TASSO
Ema!
(the girl stops and turns
around)
You smell even better.

The girl blushes, turns and runs back into the dressmaker's shop. Tasso smiles and looks through the window for the girl. But he doesn't see her, so he walks away.
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INT. BOOTMAKER. DAY.

The shoe shop has walls full of shelves with shoes and boots for men, women and children. There are three burgundy velvet benches in the middle of the room and some mirrors on the floor, leaned against the walls. In the shop is Toma, the apprentice shoemaker. The shop door opens and Tasso appears. Seeing him, Toma runs to hold the door open, and Tasso enters with the two baskets. One is empty, but the second has more pieces. Toma shuts the door behind Tasso.

TOMA
Tasso, you're going to fill the
shop with the smell of bread again.

TASSO
Toma, the leather smell needs
freshening up. The customers won't
mind.

TOMA
The Apple craftsman will appear in
a moment.

Suddenly the Shoemaker Apple appears from behind a thick cherry curtain. He is a man in his 50s, fat, grey-haired and wearing overalls.

APPLE
Tasso, I love the smell of your
bread.

TASSO

It's good, sir. But it's not my bread, it's Old Chickpea's.

APPLE

(sniffing the bread in the basket)

And you're not familiar with it? Didn't you light the fire? Didn't you knead the dough?

TASSO

Yes, sir, I did.

APPLE

(looks like he's decided what kind of bread he wants)

You see, Tasso, that's your bread too?

(and adds determinedly)

And I want them all.

Tasso and Toma laugh.

TOMA

Always the same. My master seems to have chosen one loaf, but he wants them all.

Shoemaker Apple takes a loaf of bread from the basket, breaks it, steam comes out of the pieces and Apple eagerly bites off a piece. Then he turns and starts to leave, but stops when he hears someone shouting outside. To see where the screams are coming from, Tasso and Toma rush to the door. Outside, people are upset and running away. Toma looks down the street.

TOMA (CONT'D)

The soldiers are back.

APPLE

(asks scared)

How much money is left?

As Tasso continues to watch outside, Toma leaves the door.

Toma is holding a box and takes out a pile of money. He starts to count it, but Tasso shouts.

TASSO

Here comes Lieutenant Beginning.

And Tasso takes a step back. Outside, to the right of the door appears Lieutenant Beginning violently opens the door, and this slams into the wall. Tasso takes a few steps backwards and stands still. So do Toma and Shoemaker Apple. Lieutenant Beginning is a man in his early 30s, with red hair and a very full beard. He has two pistols strapped to his waist and is tall and athletically built. The lieutenant stands in the doorway and looks at the people inside, who stand frozen and frightened. After a moment, the lieutenant enters the shop. From behind him, two soldiers enter the shop. In the middle of the shop, the Lieutenant stops.

BEGINNING

Hello!

Tasso, Toma and the Shoemaker Apple nod.

BEGINNING (CONT'D)

Shoemaker Apple, I am here to collect the tax.

APPLE

(intimidated)

They came two days ago, Lieutenant.
I have no more money.

BEGINNING

(doesn't answer
immediately. Stays a
moment, two)

Shoemaker Apple, you can pay in
another way.

APPLE

(growing anxious)

What way, Lieutenant?

Lieutenant Beginning walks past the shelves. He stops by a pair of men's boots, looks at them and points.

At that moment, a soldier walks over to the shelf, picks up the boots and puts them in the bag that he's holding in his hand. The lieutenant walks over and points to the other boots on the shelf. The soldier takes them and puts them in the bag. Once the bag has been filled, the soldier puts the bag over his shoulder and walks out of the shop.

Then Lieutenant Beginning goes to the shoe rack, looks at them and does the same. He starts pointing at the pair of shoes that the other soldier puts in his bag. When the bag is full, the soldier puts it on his shoulders and leaves the shop.

All this time Tasso, Toma and the Shoemaker Apple have said nothing, they have watched and kept silent. Shoemaker Apple is very frightened. Thomas is less frightened, but Tasso has a frown on his face.

Lieutenant Beginning approaches Toma, takes the box and money from his hand and puts them in his pocket. After checking that there is nothing left in the box, the Lieutenant throws it on the floor and starts for the door. As he passes the basket of bread, he looks at the bread, picks out a loaf and then looks at Tasso.

BEGINNING

Are you angry, boy?

(Tasso nods no)

Is Old Chickpea at the bakery?

(Tasso nods yes)

Then I'll pay him a visit.

And the Lieutenant comes out of the bootshope.

Shoemaker Apple falls ill, holding his heart, ready to fall, but Tasso jumps up and catches him.

APPLE

Cursed day, cursed Fortress.

Toma and Tasso put Shoemaker Apple on a bench. Tasso leaves the bread.

TOMA

Take the bread, we don't have any money.

TASSO

That's on the house.

And Tasso leaves the shoemaker's shop where Toma and Shoemaker Apple remain.

EXT. MERCHANTS STREET. DAY.

There are soldiers all over the road and people are running out of the way to get away from them. Some of the soldiers are coming out of the shops with full sacks, and they are putting them into the carts that are on the road.

Tasso follows Lieutenant Beginning on his way to the bakery.

As he passes by the tailor's shop, Tasso looks in and sees that Ema is being pushed by a soldier. Ema and the soldier have an argument, the soldier grabs something out of Ema's hand and the girl resists.

Tasso takes a step towards the door of the shop, but Lieutenant Beginning appears and sits down in front of him. They look at each other.

BEGINNING

I have a special feeling, boy. I can smell the dumb heroes.

(Beginning is silent for a moment)

And you stink of stupid.

SOLDIER1

Lieutenant.

A soldier appeared beside them. The lieutenant looked at the soldier.

BEGINNING

What?

SOLDIER1

Old Chickpea causes us problems.

BEGINNING

(smiles and looks at Tasso)

All this old fool has to do is to teach you how to make bread, boy, not how to be a stupid hero.

(turns to the soldier and points at Tasso)

Take him and let's go to the bakery.

After Lieutenant Beginning leaves, Tasso sees through the tailor's window how the soldier inside hits Ema in the face. She falls to the floor. Tasso wants to go to the tailor's shop, but is pulled by Soldier 1 by force, so they both follow the lieutenant.

INT. THE BAKERY. DAY.

There is a big commotion in the bakery. Old Chickpea has an axe in his hand and is threatening the soldiers. Next to the baker is a boy called Brook, about 15 years old. He also has a knife in his hand and is pointing it at the soldiers. Old Chickpea screams.

OLD CHICKPEA

I'll kill you all. Stop stealing. Two days ago I gave you all my money!

SOLDIER2

Old Chickpea puts down the axe.

OLD CHICKPEA

I'm out. Two days ago you took 10
bags of flour and all my money!

SOLDIER2

Old Chickpea, stop it.

OLD CHICKPEA

I won't let you take my last few
sacks of flour!

Brook is crying and shaking beside Old Chickpea.

The door of the bakery slams against the wall and Lieutenant Beginning appears, standing in the doorway. Bakery goes quiet. They all turn their heads in the direction of the lieutenant, and behind him appears Soldier1 with Tasso. The lieutenant stares at Old Chickpea. He takes a step and enters the bakery. Beginning slowly approaches Old Chickpea, who looks at him, the Lieutenant pulls a gun from his belt, Tasso wants to go into the bakery, but Soldier1 holds him back. Old Chickpea points the axe at the Lieutenant, who points his gun directly at the Baker.

The Lieutenant walks up to Old Chickpea and looks him in the eyes. Beside him, Brook is crying and trembling with the knife in his hand. The soldiers inside the bakery watched them intently. Outside, Tasso is held by Soldier1. Lieutenant Beginning holds his pistol inches from Old Chickpea's forehead.

BEGINNING

Old Chickpea, put down the axe.

(Old Chickpea is shaking,
Brook is crying next to
him, but the Baker is
nodding his head in a
sign that he doesn't want
to)

Put the axe down. I'm telling you
for the last time.

Outside, Tasso is about to enter the bakery. Inside, the soldiers stare at the lieutenant, who stares into the eyes of the weeping baker, who refuses to put down his axe.

The Lieutenant raises his pistol over the head of the old man and fires a shot. A loud bang is heard in the bakery, Brook panics and runs, Old Chickpea closes his eyes and lets his axe fall. Then Lieutenant Beginning hits Old Chickpea on the head with his pistol, and the old baker falls to the floor.

BEGINNING (CONT'D)
 (yells at soldiers)
 Take everything and let's get out
 of here. I've had enough of these
 worms.

The Lieutenant comes out of the bakery and stops in front of Tasso.

BEGINNING (CONT'D)
 I have a funny feeling we'll be
 seeing each other for a while.

Tasso and Beginning look into each other's eyes. A moment, two, then the Lieutenant looks up at Soldier1 and nods. Soldier1 pulls a bayonet out of his waistband and uses the handle to strike Tasso on the top of the head.

The picture turns dark.

INT. GREAT HALL OF THE HOUSE OF NUMBERS. DAY.

The room in which the scribes work is set up for the rite of passage of Nonso from Apprentice to Scribe. Wooden tables are pushed against the walls. In the middle of the room is a table with three big, fat candles burning. Above the table is a white canvas with the Order of Numbers' coat of arms, and the table stands on a blue carpet. Next to that carpet is a pair of blue sandals, a blue belt and a blue robe, which are the clothes of a Scribe.

The whole room is lit by large chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. The scribes, holding lit candles, are gathered along the walls. In the centre of the room there is a long corridor leading from the door to the podium where the 6 Masters are seated, with the Grand Master in the middle of them.

It's quiet, the rite of passage must begin. The Grand Master raises the Ebony Rod and strikes the podium three times. There is silence. In the great wooden door of the hall, three knocks are heard. Ayaju asks.

AYAJU
 Who is it?

Through the closed door comes Nonso's voice.

NONSO
 (off)
 A blind man.

AYAJU
 (asking again)
 Who is it?

NONSO
 (off)
 An ignoramus.

AYAJU
 Who is it?

NONSO
 (off)
 Apprentice Nonso, who is hungry to
 find out.

Ayaju stands for a moment or two, then raises the Ebony Rod and holds up his hand. In turn, each Master places his right hand on his heart. The last to do so is Master Ijere. After all of the masters have placed their hands on their hearts, Ayaju strikes the podium with the Ebony Rod. Then the wooden doors of the Great Hall will slowly open and the Apprentice, Nonso, will enter the hall, taking two steps, and the doors will begin to close behind him.

AYAJU
 (to Nonso)
 Who are you?

NONSO
 A newborn.
 (And Nonso removes the
 rope from his waist and
 lets it fall to the
 ground, then the brick
 robe and the brick
 sandals from his feet and
 steps forward. Then Ayaju
 asks)

AYAJU
 And what do you want?

NONSO
 A new way.

And Nonso puts on the blue Scribe's robe, ties the blue belt around his waist and puts on the blue sandals. Then he takes a step forward.

AYAJU
 The way to what?

NONSO

Way to righteousness, to
truthfulness, to enlightenment.

And Nonso goes to the wooden lectern, takes from it the white cloth with the crest of the Order of Numbers, kisses the crest and goes to the podium where the Grand Master and the other Masters are seated. When he reaches the podium, Nonso gets down on his knees and lifts the white cloth over his head. He stands and waits. The scribes in the hall begin to recite strings of numbers, the Grand Master walks down the steps to Nonso. As Ayaju puts his hand on the white cloth Nonso holds over his head, the scribes suddenly stop. Ayaju lifts the cloth, kisses the crest of the Order of Numbers and says to Nonso.

AYAJU

May this child's will, walking the
path of righteousness, truthfulness
and enlightenment, be fulfilled in
the Order of Numbers. Amen.

At that moment, the Scribes begin to clap and cheer. Nonso stands up, Ayaju smiles and looks contentedly at the Scribes who have surrounded Nonso and embraced him. Masters no longer hold their hands to their hearts and are much more relaxed, laughing and talking among themselves.

The great wooden doors of the hall open and the merry Scribes emerge, with Nonso in their midst.

INT. AMOS' CELL. NIGHT.

Amos is in his cell, reading a book of numbers. He has a burning candle on the table, gets up from his chair and lies down on the bed. He stays there for a second, two, three. There's a knock at the door. Amos stands on his head and stares at the door in wonder. There is another knock on the door. Amos gets out of bed and goes to the door.

AMOS

Who is it?

From beyond, Nonso's voice can be heard imitating the ritual of from Apprentice to Scribe.

NONSO

(off)
An ignoramus.

AMOS

(rejoicing)
Nonso.

Amos rushes to open the door. Nonso enters the cell and the two embrace happily. Then Amos closes the door and Nonso goes to the table with the book of numbers on it.

NONSO
Bravo, you are learning.

AMOS
I don't learn.

NONSO
(points to the book on the
table)
But what's this?

AMOS
A silly thing, to be honest.

And the two of them were sitting on beds, Amos on his bed and Nonso on the one that was his bed.

AMOS (CONT'D)
(changing the subject)
But what are you doing here? Don't
you sleep with the scribes? Or do
you miss your old bed?

NONSO
I told my new colleagues I was
going to study because I can't
sleep, I'm so restless.

AMOS
And?

NONSO
I was, but I'm not in the mood, I
wanna...

And Nonso stops and looks at Amos who smiles and says:

AMOS
You want to escape.

And they both let out a soft laugh to keep the noise down. Amos gets off the bed, and so does Nonso, and they both pick up the straw mattresses and pull their clothes out from underneath them. They take off their robes and put on their civilian clothes.

EXT. NUMBER HOUSE CEMETERY. NIGHT.

It's a clear night with a crescent moon in the sky. Amos and Nonso come out of the House of Numbers and walk down an alley.

Next to a cemetery wall there is a thick tree. Its branches go over the wall. Amos and Nonso arrive at this tree and start to climb it. They reach a thick branch, step on it, go over the wall and get lost in the night.

EXT. SHORE NEAR THE HARBOUR. NIGHT.

At a point where the harbour can be seen, Amos and Nonso appear on the high ridge of the shore, coming along the road. They sit down on a rock hidden behind a bush, out of sight of anyone passing by on the road.

Below is the harbour. Many fires and many soldiers are gathered around the 10 wooden ships. The left side of the harbour is quiet. The fishermen's boats are unlit and tied up tightly, only the small waves move them up and down. From the harbour you can occasionally hear the voice of a soldier swearing or laughing loudly.

AMOS

What a beautiful sea.

NONSO

And what a beautiful moon.

AMOS

I don't think I've made good choices in life.

NONSO

Why is that?

AMOS

I won't be a Scribe, Nonso.

NONSO

You keep saying that.

AMOS

Because I think so.

NONSO

And so it will be. If you keep repeating: I will be a writer; you will be a writer.

AMOS

I'm not like you, Nonso, I don't understand these strings of numbers.

NONSO

Be patient.

AMOS

How much more patience can I have? I'm beating a dead horse, don't you see?

NONSO

OK, so what do you want to do? Stay an Apprentice all your life?

Amos is silent, not answering immediately, looking out to sea at the ships guarded by soldiers.

AMOS

I heard they managed to fill 8 ships.

NONSO

Two more they need.

AMOS

Yes, two more, and the succession to the throne will be half assured.

NONSO

The beautiful half.

AMOS

The black half.

And they're both laughing their heads off. After a moment they're quiet and serious again.

NONSO

You didn't tell me what you were going to do.

Amos doesn't answer immediately. He's thinking, looking out to sea.

AMOS

I haven't decided yet. In this town there are other jobs.

NONSO

Get out, Amos. Isn't it a shame about all the years you've been an Apprentice, all you've learned in the House of Numbers?

AMOS

One thing I've learnt very well, Nonso.

NONSO

And what's that?

AMOS

I want to say that my mind is not structured like the Scribes'. Things happen differently in my mind. The numbers are too simple.

NONSO

Too simple? You said you didn't understand them. Don't remember it. Suddenly they're too simple?

AMOS

I didn't express myself very well. I don't know. The numbers seem... I don't know how to say...
INSUFFICIENT.

Then they hear voices on the road. They become quiet and hide behind the bushes. Four people pass by on the way. When they reach the boys, Amos and Nonso see that they are the Noble M., an old man, a woman of about 45 and a young man of about 20. The 4 stop talking and walk on. Amos beckons Nonso to follow him. The two of them set off in pursuit of the four.

Noble M. and the others arrive at a dilapidated house that seems to belong to a fisherman. There is a very clear view of the wooden ships in the harbour. The four of them look at them and then enter the house. Noble M. goes first, followed by the old man, then the woman and the young man, who looks behind him to see if they are being followed.

Amos and Nonso stay well hidden and are not seen by the young man as he closes the door behind him. After a moment, they emerge from hiding and walk back down the road.

INT. AMOS' CELL. NIGHT.

The door to the cell opens, and Amos enters, with Nonso closing the door behind him.

The flint is fired, the candle on the table is lit, and the two change from their civilian clothes into the robes of the order. They talk.

NONSO

I'm hearing about Noble M again!

AMOS

Yes. It was Noble M. with 3 unknown people I've never seen before in the Blue Fortress.

NONSO

Since the king decided to fill the 500 thousand crates, many poor people have come and settled around our fortress.

AMOS

Did you see them looking at the ships from above, near the fisherman's house?

NONSO

Yes, I saw that they had a look, and they came into the house.

And the two of them are silent, each one thinking on his own.

DAY. THE "CROW'S NEST" INN. NIGHT.

The Crow's Nest is a cheap inn where those who have little money can stay. On this night, wine and beer are drunk, loud talk is made and much smoking is done in the great hall of the inn. The owner of the tavern, in her early 40s, stocky, with thick arms and huge breasts that are barely covered by her dress, is walking between the tables with drinks and food. Sometimes she is grabbed by the hips by a more windy man. But she slaps the naughty man hard and escapes from his arms. The Messenians are very amused by the blows the naughty man receives.

Tasso, Toma, Miss Ema and Brook are sitting in a booth, very dimly lit by two candles, half burned, glued directly to the wooden table. They have a jug of wine on the table and wooden glasses, and are talking animatedly, but in hushed tones so as not to be overheard.

TASSO

It can't go on like this.

TOMA

The craftsmen will go bankrupt at this rate.

TASSO

And we'll end up on the streets.

EMA

My mistress, Mrs Cristina, has only one roll of silk. She can't fulfil all the orders.

TASSO

The bakery is out of flour, oil and malt.

TOMA

Master Apple is in bed, the doctor said he should rest for two weeks.

TASSO

It's clear, our time has come.

Tasso beckons the 3 to come closer.

TASSO (CONT'D)

The plan is simple. Tomorrow is the day we receive the new goods. It's clear that the soldiers will come to collect them immediately.

TOMA

That's clear.

TASSO

And we will stop them.

EMA

How?

TASSO

As soon as we receive the goods, we will build two barricades and blockade Merchant Street. As long as we make new products to sell, we will fight.

EMA

Will the barricades be enough to stop the soldiers?

TASSO

Yes, they will be enough. I'm going to round up the villagers that I came with who are in the Blue Fortress.

TOMA

I will gather the other apprentices.

BROOK

And I'm bringing 4 boys.

TaSSO

Bravo!

EMA

And what about me?

The question confuses others. Tasso and Thomas are thinking.

TASSO

You will stay in the tailor's shop.

TOMA

Yes, it's dangerous.

EMA

(offended)

Have you no shame in excluding me? Who do you think you are? I'm also going to fight on the barricades.

And Ema empties the glass of wine in front of her and slams it down on the table. Tasso and Toma say nothing.

EXT. MERCHANTS STREET. DAY.

It's morning. The sun lights up the upper floors of the houses and shops. A few apprentices, boys and girls, are opening the shops. Brook comes out of the bakery and starts to open up the shop.

A small cart, pulled by a donkey, appears in the street. It's Old Chickpea, and Tasso is walking beside it. They both wave and are greeted by the other merchants, who open their shops. The cart moves slowly and reaches the bakery. Tasso and Brook begin to unload the sacks of flour from the cart and enter the bakery.

The donkey sits quietly, waiting for the masters to finish unloading.

Ema approaches the cart. Brook comes out of the bakery.

BROOK
Good morning!

EMA
Hello.

And Brook takes a sack of flour, puts it on his shoulders and goes into the bakery. Tasso comes out and sees Ema.

TASSO
Good morning.

EMA
Hello, have you been to the fair?

TASSO
(while taking a sack of
flour)
Yes. We bought it in debt because
Lieutenant Beginning took all our
money.

Tasso puts the bag on his shoulders and pauses in front of Emma.

TASSO (CONT'D)
And you?

EMA
We're waiting for the cloth
merchant to come to us.

TOMA
(appears next to the two)
We're waiting for master Apple to
come back around 6pm. He left at
3am to buy new skins.

TASSO
And he's putting them in debt?

TOMA
Something like that. He borrowed
some money from his sister.

EMA
Didn't you say he's in bed for two
weeks?

TOMA

That's what the doctor told him,
but suddenly he woke up, went to
his sister, borrowed money and went
to get the new stuff.

TASSO

Tonight stays as we agreed.

Tasso looks at them as they nod in agreement. From the bakery
comes Brook, followed by Old Chickpea.

OLD CHICKPEA

We're late, Tasso. Come on. You'll
have plenty of time to talk later.

Toma and Ema greet Old Chickpea.

TOMA

Good morning.

EMA

Good morning.

OLD CHICKPEA

Hello, hello!

And Old Chickpea goes to the cart, from which he takes a
small bag, turns and enters the bakery. Tasso comes in after
him, and Toma and Ema leave.

EXT. WHITE FISHERMAN'S HOUSE TERRACE/BLUE HARBOUR. DAY.

On the terrace are the Old Man and the Young Man who had come
in the evening with Noble M. when they were seen by Amos and
Nonso. The two look at the ship, which is currently loaded
with blue gold and gems. The Old Man has a spyglass, which he
uses to carefully study what goes on around the ship. He can
see the porters loading the large wooden crates, the scribes
carefully marking each crate, and the soldiers guarding the
ship.

Out of the house comes the Woman who was last night with the
Old Man, the Young Man and Noble M. She brings a tray with a
teapot and 3 cups, which she places on the wooden table where
the Old Man and the Young Man are sitting. The Old Man leaves
his spyglass on the table and fills a cup with tea. The Woman
takes the spyglass and looks at the people loading the ship
in the harbour. The Old Man takes two biscuits from the plate
on the tray and starts to eat them with his tea. The young
man says nothing, but stands and looks across the harbour at
the ships full of blue gold and gems.

In the harbour, porters are loading the ship, scribes are noting down every crate that is loaded onto the ship, and soldiers are patrolling the entire harbour.

On the terrace of the White Fisherman's house, the Old Man drinks tea and eats a biscuit, the Young Man says nothing and looks at the harbour, and the Woman looks through the spyglass at what is happening in the harbour.

Noble M. appears beside them.

M.

When did they start loading again?

The 3 are surprised and turn to Noble M.

M. (CONT'D)

Did I scare you? Give me some tea.

(The Woman pours tea into
a cup and gives it to
Noble M.)

When did they start again?

OLD MAN

The sun hadn't even risen when the first carts of soldiers and scribes arrived.

M.

How many carts have they brought so far?

OLD MAN

36. This is the 37th.

A cart carrying soldiers and a Scribe enters the harbour.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

There's the 38th.

Noble M. points his spyglass at the new cart and sees the driver, the Scribe beside him, then the large chests in the cart, the soldiers walking and the horse soldiers guarding the transport. The cart moves slowly towards the loaded ship.

M.

How many soldiers guard a loaded ship?

OLD MAN

22 and a lieutenant.

M.

And how many sailors?

OLD MAN
Twelve is enough.

M.
Isn't that a little?

OLD MAN
Not too few, not too many, just as
many as are needed.

Noble M. surveys the port, then leaves the spyglass on the table, gets up and walks to the White Fisherman's house.

M.
Come on in.

The Old Man and the Young Man get up and follow Noble M. The Woman takes the cups from the table, puts them on the tray, takes them in her hand and goes home.

EXT. MERCHANTS STREET. NIGHT.

The merchants' street is a hive of activity. The facades light up the street where two barricades stand. Merchants, apprentices, children, women, young and old bring all sorts of things from their houses to build the barricades that block the street.

Tasso appears in the street, leading a group of men and women, young and old. They are well received by the others and immediately begin to build barricades. Tasso sees Ema and goes over to her.

TASSO
Good evening.

EMA
(glad to see him)
Good evening. You've brought more people.

TASSO
They're all from my village. They all hate Lieutenant Beginning because he killed their families.

TOMA
(approaching the two)
Come on, Tasso, brother, this is work, not talk.

Tasso and Ema snort with laughter and start building barricades.

The captain of Queen Halima's personal guard stands outside the door of the shoemaker's shop, guarding it. The captain is not wearing his military uniform, but is dressed in civilian clothes, a knee-length cloak and a large brimmed hat on his head that hides his face. The captain looks closely at the barricades and guards the door of the shoemaker's shop.

INT. SHOEMAKER SHOP. NIGHT.

In a room in the shoemaker's shop, Master Apple, Old Chickpea, the seamstress Madam Cristina and Lucretia, Queen Halima's confidante, sit on wooden stools around a work table. A big candle on the table in the middle of the four makes the room dim.

LUCRETIA

What are these barricades for? I don't understand.

APPLE

My little sister, what don't you understand? We need time to fulfil the orders we already have.

OLD CHICKPEA

Lieutenant Beginning is taking our resources, not just our money.

CRISTINA

He's rabid. He can't wait for us to sell our products and just take our money.

LUCRETIA

Right, he'll take your money anyway.

APPLE

My sister, the Lieutenant, still has a ship and a half to fill and he's in a hurry, he's running out of time.

OLD CHICKPEA

So he's stealing our raw materials.

CRISTINA

And he sells it for blue gold, not to mention lining his own pockets.

LUCRETIA

OK, that's what I get. But how are you going to keep your money? I don't understand.

OLD CHICKPEA

Madame Lucretia, my apprentice, had a brilliant idea. Our plan is this: These barricades will prevent the soldiers from taking our supplies.

APPLE

So we have time to fulfil the orders we already have.

CRISTINA

But we won't take any money for it.

APPLE

We'll make lists of who owes us money and how much. When all this madness is over, when the ships are loaded and leaving port.

CRISTINA

We'll get our money from the debtors.

OLD CHICKPEA

And I'll feed them all while the barricades block our street.

Everybody shut up. Old Chickpea, Master Apple and Madame Cristina look at Lucretia. She thinks, a moment, two, three.

LUCRETIA

What if no one gives you the money?

APPLE

My dear sister, I don't think anyone will give us the money we owe. Maybe one or two, we've been thinking about who might.

CRISTINA

But the rest we know are honest people and we've had them as customers for a long time.

APPLE

And there's something else, this way we can save some of our money.

(MORE)

APPLE (CONT'D)

If we don't do this, Lieutenant
Beginning is sure to take all of
our money.

Lucretia is silent, thinking, one moment, two, three.

LUCRETIA

Very well, so be it, as you say.

APPLE

And, dear Sister, let our Queen
know that we love her and that
we're going to remain faithful to
her until we die.

CRISTINA

And when all this is over, I'll
give her a new finest silk dress.

OLD CHICKPEA

And I'll make a cake named after
her.

APPLE

And I'll give her a new pair of
shoes, like the ones she wore at
her wedding to King Chinedu. To
make her young again.

Lucretia says nothing. She just looks at her interlocutors,
who are confident in their plan.

EXT. MERCHANTS STREET. DAY.

Barricades block the merchants' street. Many people were
standing on them. Tasso, Toma and Ema were standing together.
There is complete silence, no one speaks, everyone waits in a
state of rage.

Brook comes running out from around the corner and reaches
the barricade where Tasso, Toma and Ema are standing. He lies
down on his stomach, slips under the barricade and reaches
the other side.

BROOK

The soldiers are comin'.

The child breathes heavily and is frightened. Tasso says from
the barricade.

TASSO

Go to the bakery.

Brook runs towards the bakery. Tasso turns to face where the soldiers are coming from. After a while, Tasso addresses those on the barricade.

TASSO (CONT'D)

Everybody knows what to do, right?

The men and women on the barricade nod in agreement. All of them are armed with sticks and axes, large and small. It is quiet. A few people come from the other barricade and climb onto the one where Tasso, Toma and Ema are standing. They are all angrily waiting for the soldiers to appear.

The sound of footsteps can be heard in the distance. The noise grows louder. Now you can clearly hear the soldiers' boots hitting the cobblestones of the road. You can also hear the hooves of Lieutenant Beginning's horse. The noise is louder, clearer.

The first soldiers, moving in column, appear around the corner. The soldiers enter Merchants Street, walk a few metres and stop. The soldiers in front are hit by those behind and the column stops in disorder. Lieutenant Beginning on his horse comes around the corner. When he sees the barricade, he suddenly stops. The soldiers are now a disorderly group, staring at the barricade in amazement.

At the barricade, all eyes are on the soldiers.

The lieutenant is surprised, but quickly recovers and gives the order:

BEGINNING

Soldiers, double file, fall in!

In front of the barricade, soldiers are sitting in two parallel rows. The lieutenant is looking at the barricade.

They all have sticks and axes in their hands on the barricade.

The lieutenant stands next to his soldiers and gives the order:

BEGINNING (CONT'D)

Bayonets to arms.

(The soldiers put their bayonets to their rifles.

When they are ready, the lieutenant gives the command)

Attack!

And the soldiers run towards the barricade, rifles in front of them. The soldiers get to the barricade and start to climb it, the people on the barricade get up and a fight starts between the soldiers and the people defending the barricade.

The soldiers' initial attack is repulsed by those on the barricade, and Lieutenant Incept orders them to regroup.

BEGINNING (CONT'D)

Retreat!!!

The soldiers gather around him.

BEGINNING (CONT'D)

In attack formation!

The soldiers are back in two parallel columns facing the barricade. A number of them are wounded. And those on the barricade have their wounded. They have come down from the barricade and are being tended to by Ema.

Lieutenant Beginning called a corporal to his side.

BEGINNING (CONT'D)

You don't have any ammunition, do you?

CORPORAL

You ordered us not to carry ammunition. We only have bayonets.

BEGINNING

How do I know these idiots are rioting? Get back into formation.

The corporal goes to the soldiers. Beginning looks at the barricade and gives the order.

BEGINNING (CONT'D)

Attack!!!

The soldiers start the second wave of attack, reach the barricade, climb it and begin to fight the barricade defenders. Lieutenant Beginning stirs and pushes his men forward behind the soldiers. The soldiers don't have much luck. The barricade fighters are fighting with great determination. The soldiers are losing the battle. More and more wounded are found in their ranks, while the barricade defenders seem to have nothing. Finally, the lieutenant orders a retreat.

BEGINNING (CONT'D)

Retreat!!!

The soldiers stop fighting. They retreat a few metres away from the barricade. The lieutenant looks at the men on the barricade.

On the barricade, the defenders are tired, some are wounded, and all look at the soldiers with hatred.

The lieutenant stands beside his soldiers.

BEGINNING (CONT'D)

Retreat to the barracks.

The soldiers line up for the march and start back the way they came. Those on the barricade begin to shout in victory when they see them.

On the barricade, the defenders cheer. They raise their axes and clubs and curse the retreating soldiers.

On the street, Lieutenant Beginning looks at the barricade. He sees Tasso looking at him. The two look at each other for a moment, two.

INT. NOBLE M'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Noble M. is sitting in his chair at the head of the long table in the great hall of his house. A few candles on the long table light up the room.

When he hears movement at the door, Noble M gets up and goes to the door that has just opened. Lord Down enters through the door and is greeted by Noble M.

M.

My Lord, how glad I am that you have done me the honour of coming to my humble home.

DOWN

(as the two shake hands)

Your modesty, noble M., has never been noticed by anyone, especially as a guest in your "humble" home.

(Down says ironically)

M.

Not a guest, my lord, you are my master here and in the whole city.

DOWN

With me, Master Noble M., all the rogues of the city have a very good life.

M.
Not true, my lord. Sit down,
please.

And Noble M. invites Lord Down to sit on the chair he was sitting on at the head of the table. M brings a bottle of wine and two long-legged goblets from the shadows.

M. fills the glasses and sits down at the table beside Lord Down. M. takes the glass in his hand, as does Lord Down, and they toast.

M. (CONT'D)
Honouring and loving Lord Down, I
am your humble servant forever.

DOWN
Amen.

And the two toast, then drink from glasses.

DOWN (CONT'D)
(after putting the glass
on the table)
Good wine, Nobile M.

M.
(he also puts the glass on
the table)
Twelve bottles of this wine are
already in your carriage, sir.

DOWN
Yes, thank you. I'll brag about it
to the King, but I'm here for
something else.

M.
I'm listening, my lord.

DOWN
I've come for... something more.

M.
(not liking what he hears)
More?

DOWN
And more...precious.

M.
(already not liking what
he hears)
I don't understand, My Lord.

DOWN

I want a hundred thousand crates of
blue gold from you.

And Down said what he wanted to say, quickly, directly, as if
slashing with a sword. And it was quite a blow for the Noble
M., who opened his eyes wide, opened his mouth and made
slurping noises.

DOWN (CONT'D)

(trying to calm M.)

With profit, Noble M., off course.

Noble M was still in shock and could not articulate a word.
Lord Down is annoyed by M's attitude and takes it hard.

DOWN (CONT'D)

Come on, Noble M. Stop the
theatrics. Your wealth is doubled.

(Noble M. becomes serious
again)

I only need to load 150,000 crates
of blue gold. Then all 500,000
crates can go to the Green King's
fortress.

M.

And where, my lord, am I going to
get so much gold?

DOWN

You've got enough. And if you don't
have enough, I can lend you 10
crates of blue gold. Of course,
you'll have to pay interest on 5
more crates.

M.

You've thought of everything, my
lord.

DOWN

Forget the irony. What I want to
propose is very clear. But first
have another glass of wine.

(Noble M. does not move,
looks at Down)

Come on, I've got no time to waste.

(And Down gently pushes M.)

He takes the bottle and
fills Down's glass
without pouring into his
own.

(MORE)

DOWN (CONT'D)

Down drinks all the wine,
puts the empty glass on
the table and looks at
M.)

You will fill the 100 thousand
crates of blue gold. If you need
it, I'll lend you 50 thousand
crates at 25 thousand percent
interest. When the convoy leaves, I
will persuade the king to give you
the keys to the royal treasury.
That you're a good merchant, that
you're frugal, this, that. Once you
have the keys, the king will order
you to replenish the treasury,
which is empty now that the 500,000
crates have been filled.

(Down pauses and looks at
M. for a moment or two)

I hope I don't have to teach you
how to fill the King's treasury
when yours is empty.

M. stares at Down for a moment, two, three, then reaches for
the wine bottle and pours into the two glasses. He puts the
bottle down on the table and picks up his glass. Down picks
up his glass too.

M.

Here's to the king of Okot and may
the royal wedding be a great
success.

DOWN

And we, his servants, may we be
happy beside His Majesty.

M.

Amen.

And they are both drinking the wine out of the glasses.

EXT. MERCHANTS STREET. DAY.

The sun has just risen and lights up the floors of the houses
on the street.

The bread made by Old Chickpea is shared by Tasso and Brook.
They enter the bakery and come out with bread, bagels and
cakes. They hand them out to the people between the two
barricades.

On one side are Toma and Emma.

EMA

Yesterday was easy, today it's
going to be a different day.

TOMA

Yesterday I surprised the soldiers.
Today they'll come back ready.

Tasso approaches the two.

TASSO

It's all right, the workshops have
been working all night. Today and
tomorrow we'll keep at it and our
plan is working.

EMA

Can we hold out?

TASSO

We can.

And the three are silent. Silence is also between the two
barricades, some eat, some look over the barricade and wait
for the soldiers to come.

A seagull sits on the roof of the bakery, halfway between the
two barricades, and begins to scream. It makes high-pitched
sounds. From a distance, another seagull answers. The one on
the bakery screams again, the other seagull answers, but
closer. Then silence, a moment, two, three. Everyone on the
barricades stares in the direction from which the soldiers
are supposed to appear. Suddenly, the seagull on the bakery
screams again. The response from the other seagull can be
heard even closer. The seagull flies away from the bakery and
those on the barricade hear the sound of the column of
soldiers approaching.

The noise grows louder. The soldiers appear around the corner
and stand in two parallel lines in front of the barricade. On
his horse, Lieutenant Beginning appears. A heavy noise of
wheels turning on the cube of stone reaches the ears of those
standing at the barricade. The soldiers move to the side, and
a cannon appears in the middle of them. The Lieutenant raises
his right hand, the gunners quickly load the cannon and,
before the barricade understands what is happening, the
Lieutenant drops his hand and a volley of cannon is fired at
the barricade. The cannonball flies over the barricade and
hits the road somewhere between the two barricades.

The people on the barricades get scared and some of them run
away.

The gunners quickly load the cannon, the Lieutenant raises his right hand, stands for a moment and puts it down. Another cannon shot is heard. This time the cannonball flies past the barricade and hits a group of men standing between the two barricades, killing two of them.

Desperate, some climb the second barricade and flee to the other side. Tasso, Toma and Ema come down from the barricade and take cover behind it.

The gunners quickly load the cannon. Lieutenant Beginning raises his right hand and waits, one, two, three, giving the signal to fire the third cannon.

This time the cannonball hits the barricade full on and smashes a big hole in the middle of it.

Behind the barricade there are wounded and dead. Tom is dead, Tasso is covered by the remains of the barricade blown up by the cannonball. The shouts of the soldiers who have attacked can be heard. Stunned, Tasso manages to get to his feet. Dazed, Tasso manages to get to his feet. With difficulty he finds an axe being held by a dead woman. Tasso bends down and picks up the axe. His head is full of blood and he can barely see. Tasso is quickly surrounded by soldiers who have broken through the hole in the barricade, and one of them hits him in the back of the head with a rifle butt. Tasso falls to his knees.

Lieutenant Beginning also enters through the hole in the barricade and approaches Tasso, who looks up and sees the Lieutenant. They look into each other's eyes.

BEGINNING

Boy, I trip over you all the time.

The lieutenant hits Tasso in the temple. Tasso collapses on the cubic stone.

EXT. BLUE FORTRESS STREET. DAY.

A four-wheeled cage pulled by two oxen moves slowly along the road. Inside are the wounded and survivors of the barricade. Soldiers guard the prisoners and walk alongside the cart.

Men, women, young and old have gathered around the cart, watching those in the cage. Some of them are wounded and lying on the floor of the cage, others are bloody and dirty and leaning against the walls of the cage. One of the wounded is Tasso. His hair, face and shirt are bloody and dirty. He is leaning against one of the walls of the cage, looking up from time to time at the passers-by.

Passersby whisper among themselves as they watch the prisoners in the cage slowly walk down the street.

Among those looking at the prisoner's cage are Grand Master Ayaju and his apprentice, Amos. The two are sitting on the side of the road, next to the wall of a building, as the cage passes in front of them.

In the cage, Tasso looks up and looks over his right shoulder at the people passing by. He sees that Amos is looking at him. For a moment, two, three, they look at each other. The cage that Tasso is in passes in front of Amos and moves away from him.

The Grand Master and Amos look at the receding cage. Then they start walking in the opposite direction.

INT. THE KING'S CABINET. DAY.

At his desk, King Okot is studying several lists of numbers. Next to him is Lord Down, who is also studying the papers in the King's hand. A few metres away from them is the Master Gentle.

The door to the royal study opens, a captain enters, approaches the table and waits. The King looks up from the paper in his hand and looks at the Captain.

CAPTAIN

Grand Master Ayaju has arrived.

OKOT

Come in.

The captain bows and leaves. The King continues to look at the pages in his hand. The door to the Royal Study opens and the Grand Master enters, stopping in front of the King and bowing.

AYAJU

Your Majesty.

OKOT

(rises from his seat and
goes to Ayaju)

Great Master, it is good to see you
again.

(and the two shake hands)

Look, 400,000 crates ready to sail.

And the king hands Ayaju a pile of papers. Ayaju takes them and looks at Master Gentle, who is standing there and bows down when he sees Ayaju looking at him.

OKOT (CONT'D)

Master Gentle has just informed me that the Blue Flagship has been filled with 400,000 crates; and Lord Down has told me that 100,000 crates will be ready tomorrow.

(Ayaju looks at Down, who bows in respect, and Ayaju does the same)

AYAJU

It's good news, Your Majesty.

OKOT

Very good, Grand Master, the best ever.

DOWN

Second best, the first being Your Majesty's coronation.

The king is a bit confused because he was interrupted, but he continues.

OKOT

OK. But this is the first one for me.

DOWN

(insists)

For the people of the Blue Fortress, it's two.

OKOT

(irritated by Down's interruptions)

Ok, ok.

(to Ayaju)

Great Master, I need you.

(Ayaju looks at the king)

Only you have my complete trust. You must take the 500,000 crates to the Green Fortress and return with Princess Ukamaka.

Ayaju was taken by surprise and is amazed.

OKOT (CONT'D)

What are you wondering?

AYAJU

I have not sailed for a long time, Your Majesty.

OKOT

And the sea has dried up?

AYAJU

No, but...

OKOT

The Blue Flagship has its captain, sailors and soldiers under the command of a lieutenant. You have to coordinate the captain and the lieutenant. That's it.

The king goes to his desk, takes a scroll and gives it to Ayaju.

OKOT (CONT'D)

This is my order appointing you Commander in Chief of the Blue Flagship. It's written by Master Gentle.

Ayaju looks at Master Gentle, who bows, then reads the document. After a moment or two, the king asks:

OKOT (CONT'D)

Is it well written?

AYAJU

It's very well written.

OKOT

Great Mastre...

And the king takes Ayaju by the arm, and together they walk away from the others and out onto the terrace.

OKOT (CONT'D)

My friend, please help me. I love Princess Ukamaka very much and I want her to be Queen of the Blue Fortress. And who knows, we'll have two boys, the big one I'll put on the throne of the Blue Fortress and the little one on the throne of the Green Fortress, and that way my royal house will rule the most powerful fortresses in our world.

AYAJU

(does not answer
immediately, pauses for a
moment or two and thinks,
then says)

I will help you... my friend.

The King embraces Ayaju with great joy.
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END OF EPISODE 2