

I. R. E. A.
SEASON1: THE INITIATE
EPISODE 6: THE WOUND

Written by

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Original script

INT. ROYAL BEDROOM. DAY. COPYRIGHT: 0402/12.12.2024/DACINSARA

Okot is in the final moments of sexual labour. His face is red, the veins in his neck are swollen, he moans and suddenly all his energy is released. Tired, Okot falls onto the bed, breathing heavily. Next to him, Ukamaka is sweating and breathing heavily.

UKAMAKA

You're starting to like dry sex more. I was sure that would happen, that's why I put it off.

OKOT

(takes Ukamaka in his arms
and kisses her on the
forehead)

You have the most beautiful and velvety sphincter, my Queen. I just love it, that's all.

UKAMAKA

He adores you too, my King, but then we shall have no heirs to the throne.

OKOT

We will, don't worry, we will.

UKAMAKA

I'm hungry.

The Queen quickly gets up from the bed and, naked as she is, goes to a cupboard and opens the door. Okot looks at her.

INT. ROYAL BLUE PALACE DINING ROOM. DAY.

At the long table, Okot sits on the right and Ukamaka on the left. There is plenty of food on the table, along with cups of wine and water, and the servants hurry to serve them. Okot eagerly eats a chicken and drinks wine, glass after glass. As they eat, they talk.

UKAMAKA

How many times a year did you say you went to the House of Numbers?

OKOT

(surprised by this
question)

Why, my queen? You said you didn't want to go anymore.

UKAMAKA

Well, maybe I changed my mind.

OKOT

Really? And what made you change your mind?

UKAMAKA

The Queen's duty. To stand by my King. But tell me, when are you going to the House of Numbers?

OKOT

I don't have a definite date.

UKAMAKA

Today?

OKOT

(increasingly surprised)
You took me completely by surprise.

UKAMAKA

That's me. Don't you like it?

OKOT

(a little confused)
Yes... I don't have any big plans today.

UKAMAKA

We're leaving today, right?

OKOT

Yes. But why the change?

UKAMAKA

(drinks wine from the glass in front of her and gets up from the table)
I'll get dressed and leave after you've eaten.

As the King looks on in amazement, Ukamaka rushes from the room.

EXT. GATE AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE ROYAL BLUE PALACE. DAY.

The gates open and a large sleigh drawn by four horses, all white, leaves the palace courtyard, followed by the King's military escort.

There was a thick layer of snow on the road and the sleigh slid gently.

EXT. ROYAL SLEIGH. DAY.

The sleigh is open, and on the back seat, facing the direction of travel, are the King and Queen, dressed in thick winter coats, with fur cloaks wrapped around their legs. The sleigh moves slowly through the streets of the Fortress, followed by the soldiers of the King's Guard.

Okot continues to marvel at Ukamaka's request.

OKOT

I still don't understand why you suddenly changed your mind.

UKAMAKA

How beautiful the Fortress is in winter. All white, this clean snow.

OKOT

Where do you see clean?

UKAMAKA

On the roofs of houses, on trees, even on walls.

OKOT

Are you kidding me?

UKAMAKA

My King, be patient and, more above all, have faith in me.

(the two stare at each other, a moment, two)

You'll find out everything exactly as it is.

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

On the steps in front of the main entrance to the House of Numbers, the Grand Master and the other 6 Masters are waiting for the royal couple.

The square in front of the House of Numbers is busy at this hour.

The royal sleigh emerges from a street and enters the square. People move aside and the sleigh arrives in front of the stairs at the entrance to the House of Numbers, where it stops.

Two soldiers from the Royal Guard quickly dismount and go to the King and Queen to help them take off their thick coats and get off the sleigh. Once the two have dismounted, Okot waits for Ukamaka to join him and they both climb the steps of the House of Numbers.

A solemn bow is made by Ayaju and the other Masters.

AYAJU

I welcome Your Majesties. The House of Numbers is always open to the Royal Blue Family, whom it serves with devotion.

Ayaju and the other Masters bow, again.

OKOT

Great Master, it is a pleasure to visit the House of Numbers. I would like to tell you that this time the Queen has suggested this visit.

Ukamaka and Ayaju look at each other for a moment, and the Grand Master bows to her.

UKAMAKA

Let us enter, my King.

Okot and Ukamaka enter the House of Numbers followed by Ayaju and the rest of the Masters.

INT. HALLWAY AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE HOUSE OF NUMBERS. DAY.

Ukamaka stops and looks at Ayaju in the middle of the large corridor.

UKAMAKA

Please tell me, Grand Master, where is the Library? I haven't visited it - the first time I was here, I saw the Scribes' Hall and the Cemetery, but the Library?

AYAJU

(bowing again)
This way, Your Majesty.

And Ayaju leads the way up the stairs.

INT. HOUSE OF NUMBERS LIBRARY. DAY.

A small narrow room with no windows, against the wall opposite the entrance is a simple wooden table with 3 wooden chairs. There is a wooden door on the right and left walls. The ceiling is made up of a network of bars that intersect to form squares, like a chessboard, in which there are windows that let in light from outside.

The door at the entrance to the library will open and the first one to enter will be Ayaju, followed by the Queen and the King.

AYAJU

Your Majesty, this is the First Chamber. Through the door to Your Majesty's right you enter the Right Labyrinth of the Book, and through the door to the left you enter the Left Labyrinth of the Book.

UKAMAKA

Interesting.

OKOT

(to the Queen)

You will lose yourself in them, you will see.

UKAMAKA

(looks at the King and turns to Ayaju)

I want to enter the Labyrinth...

(Ukamaka looks at the two doors and considers which one to choose, then stops)

The Left one.

OKOT

I'll wait for you here.

Ayaju bows, opens the door to the left of the Royal Couple and enters first, followed by the Queen.

It's a long corridor, the walls are lined with bookshelves, and the ceiling is also a skylight, letting in light from outside.

Ukamaka looks left and right and reaches a door on the left. She turns to Ayaju and asks him.

UKAMAKA

May I?

AYAJU

Of course, Your Majesty, I will follow you.

Ukamaka exits through this door and reaches another passageway, also full of shelves of books, and reaches another door on the right, which she opens and enters to reach another passageway full of shelves of books.

And so Ukamaka walks through the corridors filled with shelves of books, followed by Ayaju. At one point, she stops and turns to Ayaju.

UKAMAKA

Are we lost?

AYAJU

No, Your Majesty, I know the way back because of the strings of Numbers written above the doors.

And Ayaju points to a string of Numbers above the door that they entered this corridor through. Ukamaka approaches the door and looks at the string of Numbers. A moment, two, then she turns to Ayaju.

UKAMAKA

How do you orient yourself to this strings of Numbers, Grand Master?

AYAJU

(smiles slightly)

It is complicated, Your Majesty, but if you insist.

UKAMAKA

No, I do not insist. But perhaps you can help me with something else.

And Ukamaka pulls from an inside coat pocket the scroll that Master Ijere gave her, which he said was Ayaju's report to the Elders of the Order of Numbers.

AYAJU

(while taking the scroll)

With pleasure, Your Majesty.

Ayaju begins to read the strings of Numbers. While Ukamaka stares blankly at the books on the shelves in this aisle.

At first Ayaju reads with a serene face, but as he moves from one set of Numbers to the next, his face grows darker and darker until it turns black, and drops of sweat appear on his forehead.

As if in surprise, Ukamaka slowly walks over to Ayaju and stares at him. The Grand Master reads with a frown and the paper slowly begins to tremble in his hands. Ukamaka looks at Ayaju. He has finished reading and is staring at Ukamaka. The eyes of the Grand Master are red.

UKAMAKA

What happened, Grand Master?

AYAJU

What is it, Your Majesty?

UKAMAKA

(in a calm voice)

Tell me, Grand Master.

(Ayaju looks at the scroll
in his trembling hands)

What are you going to do to us...

Ayaju?

The Grandmaster looks Ukamaka in the eye and says nothing.

UKAMAKA (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

I want you to go back to the King
and tell him what it says.

(Ukamaka pauses for a
moment, looks at the
parchment and points to
the bottom right corner)

Is this your personal string of
Numbers?

(Ayaju looks into
Ukamaka's eyes and nods
yes)

Do you recognise your handwriting?

(Ayaju nods yes)

Let's go back, Ayaju, I'll follow
you.

The two stare into each other's eyes, one second, two, three.

In the First Room of the Library, the King is pacing
nervously.

Ayaju enters through the side door, followed by Ukamaka. Okot
speaks nervously to them.

OKOT

I thought you didn't know how to get back. What took you so long? A corridors with shelves of books, what's the big deal?

UKAMAKA

My King, be patient. Remember when I asked you to trust me?

OKOT

My Queen, this is the most boring place in the House of Numbers, seriously, let's go.

UKAMAKA

You're wrong, my King, this place is full of surprises. The Great Master has something to tell you.

Then Okot looks at Ayaju and notices what he looks like.

OKOT

Ayaju, what is it?

Ayaju says nothing, but looks down, holding the parchment given by the Queen.

OKOT (CONT'D)

What happened inside?

UKAMAKA

It's about the scroll the Grand Master is holding, which we know nothing about, but I'm sure the Grand Master will enlighten us.

Ukamaka stares at Ayaju. And Okot looks at the Grand Master in confusion. Ayaju looks at the strings of Numbers on the scroll.

OKOT

What does it say? Read us, please.

AYAJU

(does not start reading immediately, but looks at the Numbers for a second or two, then says)
Report No. 15 of the first year of the reign of King Okot.
(Ayaju pauses. His left hand begins to shake slightly.)

(MORE)

AYAJU (CONT'D)

Ayajū continues reading)
 Most esteemed and honoured Elders
 of the Order of Numbers, in my
 temporary capacity as Grand Master
 of the Order of Numbers...

(Ayaju's left hand begins
 to tremble and he reads
 with difficulty)

...and as the only true servant of
 Your Lordships, I inform you that
 the strategy by which the Royal
 Blue House is...

Ayajū trembles all over, drops his hands, lets the parchment
 fall from his hands, closes his eyes and falls face down,
 straight as a post.

Okot rushes to him and catches him in his arms before he
 falls. Ayaju is unconscious and Okot struggles to hold him
 upright. Ukamaka looks at them in horror.

OKOT

(to the Queen)
 Do something, I can't hold it any
 longer.

UKAMAKA

(running to Ayaju and
 grabbing him from the
 other side)
 Lay him down.
 (Okot and Ukamaka lay
 Ayaju down)
 Move him to one side.

The two of them turn Ayaju's body to the left. At that
 moment, Amos enters the first room of the library. He remains
 at the stone pillar. Ukamaka gives Ayaju a hard slap on the
 cheek. Then two more. Suddenly, the Grand Master shows signs
 of recovery. Okot and Ukamaka stand up and Amos leans over to
 Ayaju. He has regained his senses and stands with Amos' help.
 Ukamaka looks at the scroll on the floor.

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

Through the main door of the House of Numbers come Okot and
 Ukamaka, and behind them the 6 Masters of the Order of
 Numbers. The Royal Couple descend the stairs and enter the
 royal sleigh that awaits them at the front of the stairs. The
 6 Masters stand at the door and bow solemnly. The Royal
 Couple sit in the back of the sleigh and wrap themselves in
 thick furs.

The soldiers who helped the couple to sit in the back run away and saddle their horses, and the royal sleigh sets off.

In the square in front of the House of Numbers, people make way for the royal sleigh to pass, it circles the fountain in the centre of the square and returns the way it came.

The 6 Masters watch the royal sleigh as it leaves. Among them is Ijere, whose face shows satisfaction.

EXT. ROYAL SLEIGH. DAY.

Okot and Ukamaka sit side by side in the back of the sledge without speaking. The king is deep in thought, while the queen looks at him from time to time, wanting to talk to him. Okot looks away from Ukamaka, but Ukamaka can't resist and pulls hard on his left sleeve. Okot is suddenly snapped out of his thoughts and turns his head towards Ukamaka.

OKOT

Yes, what is it?

UKAMAKA

Nothing much. We just need to sort out this parchment business.

(pulls it out from under his coat)

OKOT

(wrapping)

I'll get the Master with Gloves to read me the strings of Numbers on the parchment.

UKAMAKA

I have a bad feeling about this.

OKOT

This scroll you found in the Library?

UKAMAKA

No, a few days ago Captain Ash was summoned to the gates of the Royal Palace because a child had a message for him. The message

was this scroll. After taking it, Captain Ash brought it to me. And what should I do?

OKOT

You went to all this trouble to bring the scroll here.

UKAMAKA

(disturbed by the King's
words)

I simply wanted to know what was
written on this scroll. That's all.

OKOT

And why didn't you say so before?
Why did we have to come here?

UKAMAKA

You said there would be no problem.

OKOT

Well, it wasn't until you created
one.

UKAMAKA

(angrily)

Listen, Okot, something tells me
that this document is very
important and that it comes from a
source that wishes us well.

OKOT

And if it wants us well, why
doesn't this source show its face?

UKAMAKA

I don't know. We will find out who
the source is. In the meantime,
let's see what the Master with
Gloves says is written on the
parchment.

INT. GRAND MASTER'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

In the bedroom, Ayaju is lying on the bed, with Amos beside
him, and the Masters are gathered in front of the bed, except
for the Master with Gloves. The room is lit by many candles.

AYAJU

Blood was taken and now I feel
better.

UGONNA

Grand Master, we were very scared.

AYAJU

You have no reason to be. I think
all the sweetness in my blood has
suddenly gone.

UGONNA
How do you feel now?

AYAJU
Very well, everything is over.

Master Ijere joins in on the discussion.

IJERE
But what happened in the Left
Labyrinth of the Book, Grand
Master?

Ayaju didn't answer right away, looking straight into Ijere's eyes. They looked at each other for a moment, two, three.

AYAJU
I don't remember, Master, I thought
the Queen was showing me a scroll.

Ayaju emphasised the last word just to see Ijere's reaction, but he didn't move a muscle.

IJERE
And you've slacked off in the First
Room.

AYAJU
Yes.

The bedroom door opens and the Master with Gloves, enters.

MASTER WITH GLOVES
Please excuse me for being late.

The Master with Gloves' face says everything about the state of his soul. And if the whole sky had fallen on his head, the Master with Gloves wouldn't be so sad. His eyes are down, his head is between his shoulders, his hands are behind his back, hiding behind the other Masters.

Ayaju speaks to him.

AYAJU
Is something wrong, Master with
Gloves?
(The Master with Gloves
says nothing, just nods
his head)
Please come forward.
(The last thing the Master
wants to happen to him in
this world is to stand
before Ayaju.

(MORE)

AYAJU (CONT'D)

But he can't help himself
and with small steps, as
if he wants to stand
still, the Master with
Gloves comes in front of
Ayaju)

Where have you been, Master?

THE MASTER WITH GLOVES

(does not answer
immediately, waits a
moment, two, three, then
says)

I have been summoned by the King.

INT. ROYAL CABINET. DAY.

King Okot sits in his high-backed wooden chair at a huge table covered with all kinds of papers. Ukamaka sits on a chair opposite the King. The two of them are looking at the Master of Gloves, who is standing and holding the scroll that Ukamaka received from Master Ijere.

The face of the Master with Gloves is that of a frightened man reading the strings of Numbers in terror. After a while, the King asks.

OKOT

Do you understand what it says?

(The Master with Gloves
nods his head in
agreement)

Read it to us, word for word.

The Master with Gloves doesn't start right away, he pauses for a moment, two, three, then reads in a slightly shaky voice.

MASTER WITH GLOVES

Report No. 15 on the first year of
King Okot's reign.

(The Master pauses and
bows to the King who
makes no gesture. The
Master continues reading)

(MORE)

MASTER WITH GLOVES (CONT'D)

Most esteemed and honoured Elders of the Order of Numbers, in my temporary capacity as Grand Master of the Order of Numbers and as the only true servant of Your Lordships, I inform you that the strategy by which the Royal Blue House is to be replaced by the leadership of the Blue Fortress must be completely revised.

OKOT

(interrupts the Master)
What strategy?

UKAMAKA

(answers him immediately)
Replace the Royal Blue House at the helm of the Blue Fortress.
(to the Master with
Gloves)
Continue, Master.

MASTER WITH GLOVES

This need arose after the marriage of King Okot to Princess Ukamaka, a member of the Green Royal House. We now have two enemies, the Blue and Green Royal Houses, both of which must be destroyed.

Okot lands a powerful shot on the table. Ukamaka freaks out and flinches. And the Master with Gloves freaks out and stops reading.

OKOT

(screaming)
What is this crap? What are you reading, idiot?

MASTER WITH GLOVES

(frightened, takes two
steps back)
Your Majesty, it says...

UKAMAKA

(jumping to the Master's
defence)
Let us be patient, my King. We have every confidence in the knowledge of the Master with Gloves.

OKOT

But it's a piece of crap.

UKAMAKA

(trying to assert herself
before the King)

Let's be patient, King. Let's
listen to the end of what the
Master with Gloves reads.

(to the Master)

Please continue.

The King disagrees with the Queen, but remains silent and
looks at the Master with Gloves. He continues to read.

MASTER WITH GLOVES

Only the destruction of the two
Royal Houses can ensure that the
Order of Numbers and its true
shadow rulers, the Elders of the
Order, can once again rule the Blue
Fortress, as the Forgotten Blue
Father has wished since the
founding of our Order.

OKOT

(screaming)

Give me the scroll!

(stands up, overturning
the chair beneath him)

The Master with Gloves gets scared
and goes numb. Ukamaka gets up from
his chair, takes the scroll from
the Master's hand and hands it to
the King. The King takes it and
looks at it. After a moment or two,
he shouts at the Master with
Gloves.

OKOT (CONT'D)

What's that?

(Master with Gloves is
scared and says nothing)

What's this?

(The King screams again
and tears the parchment)

The Queen immediately steps in and
shouts louder than the King.

UKAMAKA

Nooo, Okot stop.

The King remains stunned, the Queen comes up to him and takes
the two pieces of parchment from him.

UKAMAKA (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)
 Don't act like a child. Why do you
 keep wondering? It's clearly a
 plot.

(The Queen goes to the
 Master with Gloves)
 Master, please go to the wooden
 desk and copy this scroll so that
 it is all on one sheet.

The Master with Gloves takes the two sheets of paper, bows
 his head and goes to the wooden desk.

UKAMAKA (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)
 Master, please, is the scroll
 signed?

MASTER WITH GLOVES
 (looks down to the right)
 Yes, it is the signature of Grand
 Master Ayaju.

UKAMAKA
 Are you sure?

MASTER WITH GLOVES
 Yes, Your Majesty, this is the
 Grand Master's personal string of
 Numbers and the handwriting is his.

INT. GRAND MASTER'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

The Master with Gloves is alone with Ayaju. The other Masters
 are gone, and Amos is gone too.

AYAJU
 Master, I know that you have taken
 an oath which you cannot break, so
 I will only ask you general
 questions which I will ask you to
 answer with yes or no.

(Master with Gloves nods
 his head in agreement)
 Did you read to the king from a
 scroll?

MASTER WITH GLOVES
 Yes, I did.

AYAJU
 Was the Queen present?

MASTER WITH GLOVES
Yes, she was.

AYAJU
Was the King angry?

MASTER WITH GLOVES
Yes.

AYAJU
But the Queen seemed to be in control?

MASTER WITH GLOVES
(looks up and stares at Ayaju)
If you've seen everything, why ask me?

AYAJU
(smiles)
I wasn't there, Master, and I didn't see anything. I just assumed, that's all.
(the two are silent for a moment, two, three)
Thank you, Master. Please call Amos and go back to your cell, it's late.

THE MASTER WITH GLOVES
(bows to Ayaju)
I wish you good health, Grand Master.

AYAJU
Thank you, venerable Master.

The Master with Gloves bows, goes to the door, opens it and leaves it open.

Ayaju is left alone. He gets up from the bed and starts walking around the room. Amos enters and closes the door behind him.

AMOS
Grand Master, try to go to bed, it's late.

AYAJU
Amos, my boy, we're in for some hard times. I think I'm going to need your help.

AMOS
 (flushed)
 Any time, any place.

Ayaju says nothing more. The two look at each other for a few moments, then the Grand Master lies down on the bed and the Apprentice begins to blow out the candles, one by one, until he has extinguished them all.

Darkness falls in the Grand Master's bedroom. You can hear Amos' footsteps, the door opens, the Apprentice comes out and the bedroom door closes behind him.

INT. ROYAL BLUE PALACE DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

The only light in the room comes from 3 large, fat candles on the table in front of the chair in which Okot is sitting. The king has a large clay jug and a glass goblet in front of him. He fills his glass with wine from the jug and drinks to the bottom. Then he fills the glass again, but not completely, because the wine is running out. Okot throws the jug violently on the ground and it shatters into dozens of pieces.

The King sits and waits. After a moment or two, the door is heard to open, footsteps approach Okot and a servant fills his wine glass and places a new large clay pot in front of the King.

The servant disappears into the darkness, his footsteps are heard, the door opens and closes. The king is drunk and very sad, he drinks his wine glass to the bottom and puts it on the table, empty. The door can be heard opening. Light footsteps, barely audible, approach the king. It is Ukamaka, dressed in a long, thick robe up to his heels. The Queen is sitting on the table, facing the King on his right. Okot fills his wine glass. They are silent for a moment or two.

UKAMAKA
 Are you going to stay here all night? You can drink in the bedroom.

Okot doesn't answer. He drinks all the wine and puts the empty glass on the table.

UKAMAKA (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)
 I understand that you are angry.

OKOT
 You don't understand anything.

UKAMAKA

There is a clear conspiracy that
you don't want to see.

OKOT

You don't understand anything,
nothing. It's not about the plot.

UKAMAKA

What is it about?

OKOT

(howling)

Friendship, faith and loyalty.

The two are silent. Okot fills his glass with wine and drinks
it all. Then he slams the glass down on the table. Ukamaka
says nothing for a moment, two, three, then answers.

UKAMAKA

I know you're a childhood friend of
Ayaju's. I know what that means,
and loyalty and faith. But this is
about something else.

OKOT

(ironic)

Anyway, what is it about?

UKAMAKA

Human nature.

OKOT

What do you mean by that?

UKAMAKA

The weak man, the little man, the
man who was not born with the
destiny to lead, that is to have
power, this man changes radically
when he gets power.

OKOT

And Ayaju is such a man.

UKAMAKA

Ayaju, as a man who was not born
with the destiny of a King, ready
to hold power, when he gets it, he
changes radically.

OKOT
(shouting and throwing the
glass and the jug from
the table)
No! No!

INT. GRAND MASTER'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Ayaju is in bed and suddenly wakes up, as if he has heard Okot scream. He looks around, it is dark and quiet. Ayaju gets out of bed, gets dressed, picks up the Ebony Rod and goes out, closing the door behind him.

EXT. NUMBER HOUSE CEMETERY. NIGHT.

Ayaju leaves the House of Numbers and makes his way down the main alley, reaching the Tomb of the Grand Masters, opening the iron door and entering, closing it behind him.

EXT. WHITE WORLD. NIGHT.

Ayaju descends the path along the rock face towards the White Forest. He stops at the bottom. He looks around at the cloudless, moonless, starless sky. He stands for a moment, two, three.

INT. WHITE HOUSE. INT.

The door of the hut opens and Ayaju enters slowly, thoughtfully, and sits down on the bed. He sits there with his thoughts.

INT. ROYAL BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Okot is in the final moments of sexual labour, he is violent, he strikes Ukamaka, who is on her back, across her face, across her breasts. Okot screams and squeezes Ukamaka's left breast hard with his right hand, his left fingernails digging deep into her right thigh. Ukamaka screams in pain, but the king's final howl is much louder and it all ends abruptly, Okot letting go of breast and thigh and collapsing on the bed.

The two remain like this, Ukamaka on her back, massaging her left breast, and Okot face down.

After a moment or two, the Queen wrapped herself in the blanket and turned the King's back.

He gets out of bed, picks up the jug of wine from the floor, puts it to his mouth and drinks noisily as he pours it over himself. When he had finished the wine, Okot broke the jug from the floor and stood with his head back, shaking slightly.

The bedroom is lit by a few half-burned candles, casting a pale light that cuts the darkness of the room into strange shadows.

Ukamaka is on the bed, curled up under the covers.

INT. ROYAL CABINET. DAY.

The King sits on a high-backed wooden chair. The Queen sits on a wooden chair, also in front of the table. In front of them, standing, is the Master with Gloves.

OKOT

Master, have you examined the scroll carefully?

MASTER WITH GLOVES

Yes, Your Majesty.

OKOT

What is the conclusion? Briefly.

MASTER WITH GLOVES

This scroll was written by Grand Master Ayaju, as evidenced by the style of the writing, the strings used, and most importantly, the signature at the bottom right, which is authentic. The scroll is a report to the Elders of the Order, unknown to me, detailing how the Royal Blue House can be removed from leadership of the Blue Fortress.

And the Master with Gloves is silent.

OKOT

And how does the Grand Master see the elimination of the Royal Blue House?

(The Master with Gloves says nothing)

Please, Master, no fear.

MASTER WITH GLOVES

By killing the King, the Queen, the Queen Mother and all the vassals of the Royal Blue House.

The three are silent for a few moments. Then the King says.

OKOT

Thank you, Master with Gloves, you may go.

The Master with Gloves bows to them, turns and leaves, opens the door, walks out and closes the door behind him. Okot and Ukamaka are silent for a while, then the Queen says.

UKAMAKA

This is clearly a plot involving only Ayaju as Grand Master. It is possible that only the Grand Masters know of the existence of the Elders of the Order, such is the secrecy of this organisation.

Okot says nothing. Ukamaka continues.

UKAMAKA (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

Don't back down from what we discussed. If the Grand Master admits it's his handwriting, arrest him and have Lord Down investigate the Order of Numbers. We must find this secret group: the Elders of the Order.

Okot says nothing, but raises his right hand and rings the bell.

The door to the Royal Cabinet opens and Lord Down enters, closing the door behind him and stopping in front of them.

DOWN

Your Majesty, I am listening.

OKOT

Come to me, Grand Master Ayaju.

INT. GRAND MASTER'S OFFICE. DAY.

Ayaju is sitting at his desk, studying strings of Numbers in a book. He looks up from the pages, thinks, and starts reading again.

The office door opens. Amos walks in and approaches Ayaju.

AMOS

Grand Master, the King summons you.

Ayaju makes no gesture, continuing to read the strings of Numbers in the book on the table. Amos says nothing. After a moment or two, Ayaju closes the book, gets up from the table, carefully places the book on a shelf and then tells his Apprentice.

AYAJU

Amos, never forget, this book soothes your troubled soul. Like the one up there.

(and Ayaju points to the top shelf of a blue bound book)

This one soothes the pain of the body.

(Ayaju approaches Amos)

Listen to me carefully, I think you and I have brought the evil that wants to destroy our Order and replace the Numbers with Images into our Fortress.

Amos winced as he heard the last word.

AMOS

The Queen?

AYAJU

The Queen, yes. I have a feeling that very difficult times lie ahead for us, for our Order, and especially for you and me. You must watch everything very carefully and wait for a sign from me.

And Ayaju picks up the Ebont Rod, supported by the high-backed wooden chair, walks past Amos, opens the door and leaves the study, leaving the door open.

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

It's snowing, with big flakes falling gently to the ground. The Brook is in front of the steps with a black horse.

Ayaju leaves the House of Numbers, walks down two steps, stops and turns to face the building. He sees how imposing it is, with white columns, a large balcony and a string of Numbers on top, which means the House of Numbers.

Ayaju turns and walks down the remaining steps to the mare. He places his Ebony Rod in the holder attached to the saddle and straddles her. Brook lets go of the horse and Ayaju heads for the Royal Blue Palace.

INT. ROYAL CABINET. DAY.

Okot sits in the high-backed wooden chair, with Ukamaka standing beside him on the left.

UKAMAKA

It is clearly an old conspiracy, and the involvement of the Grand Masters of the Order of Numbers is equally clear.

OKOT

I still don't understand how this scroll came into your possession.

UKAMAKA

I told you, my King.

OKOT

Tell me again.

UKAMAKA

Several sunrises and sunsets ago, a child I didn't quite understand, 12 or 14 years old, came to the gate of our Palace and gave the soldier there a scroll, telling him it was for Captain Ash.

OKOT

What does the child look like?

UKAMAKA

How should I know?

OKOT

Who was the soldier at the palace gate?

UKAMAKA

I wouldn't know that either.

OKOT

But when was it?

UKAMAKA

I don't remember exactly.
 (The King says nothing
 more, so the Queen
 continues)

Ash brought me the scroll I gave to
 the Grand Master to tell me what
 was written on it. Then you saw
 Ayaju's reaction. He got scared and
 fainted. Isn't that strange?

OKOT

Yes, it's strange.

UKAMAKA

If he was innocent, he should have
 been amused by what he wrote there.

OKOT

Really amused?

UKAMAKA

Well, not amused, but not
 frightened. Did you see that?

OKOT

Yes, I saw it.

UKAMAKA

His left hand started shaking, then
 his whole body until he fainted. If
 we hadn't been there, who knows
 what he would have done to himself.

OKOT

Yes. Strange reaction.

There's banging on the door of the Royal Cabinet.

OKOT (CONT'D)

Come in.

The door opens and Lord Down enters, announcing Ayaju.

DOWN

Grand Master Ayaju.

Ayaju enters the Royal Cabinet and stops in front of them,
 bowing and greeting them.

AYAJU

At your service, Your Majesties.

Okot sits on the high-backed wooden chair and stares into Ayaju's eyes.

Ukamaka is standing to the left of the King.

Okot and Ayaju look at each other for a moment, two, three, then the King speaks.

OKOT

Yesterday, the Queen asked you to read to her, to read us the sequence of numbers on a scroll. Unfortunately, you couldn't. How do you feel today?

AYAJU

Very well, Your Majesty.

Okot hands the scroll to Ayaju. He steps forward and takes it.

OKOT

Please study it again.

Ayaju, without answering, begins to read, but quickly scrolls through the strings of Numbers, his gaze fixed on the bottom right, the string of Nnumbers that is his signature. Ayaju studies this string, a moment, two, three. The king's voice is heard.

OKOT (CONT'D)

Can you tell us what it says?

AYAJU

Your Majesty, I truly believe that you know the meaning of these strings of Numbers, especially since I understand that they have been interpreted to you by the Master with Gloves.

OKOT

Has the Master told you anything?

AYAJU

No, absolutely nothing, he kept his professional secrecy and his oath to Your Majesty. But he didn't have to tell me anything because I have my faith, my oath sworn before Your Majesty and I know I have read it. So I tell you one thing for sure. This scroll is a forgery.

(MORE)

AYAJU (CONT'D)
A forgery from the first to the
last string of Numbers.

UKAMAKA
(says firmly)
Not to the last string of Numbers.

Ayajju looks at the Queen. He knows what she means.

AYAJU
That's right, Your Majesty, the
last string of numbers is my
original signature.

OKOT
Then you don't deny that you signed
this report?

AYAJU
I cannot deny the truth.

OKOT
And you still maintain that the
rest of the text was not written by
you?

AYAJU
Yes, it is a forgery.

OKOT
Then why did you sign a forgery?

INT. MASTER IJERE'S CELL. DAY.

Master Ijere is at his desk, arranging a pile of scrolls by placing them on top of each other. When the pile is neatly arranged, Ijere gets up from his chair, checks that the door is closed, goes to the bed, lifts the mattress and takes a scroll from it. He looks at it, there is no string of numbers written in the bottom right corner. With great care, Ijere places this parchment in the middle of the pile and arranges it with great care. Then he takes the scroll, opens the door, walks out and closes the door behind him.

INT. GRAND MASTER'S OFFICE. DAY.

Ayajju has just cleared the papers and books off his desk. Amos is next to him, watching him.

AYAJU
I'm done for today, can't wait to
ride through the snowy forest.

AMOS

It's a beautiful day, Grand Master.
The sky is clear.

AYAJU

A sun with teeth, Amos.

AMOS

That's true, but I think your
favourite mare is just waiting for
snow and the freedom of a run.

AYAJU

I am also looking forward to a free
run.

As Ayaju was on his way out of the cabinet, Ijere appeared at
the door with a sheaf of parchment in his hand.

IJERE

(humble)

Grand Master, forgive my delay.

AYAJU

Master Ijere, what is it?

IJERE

I have brought you some documents
for your signature, concerning the
tasks I am responsible for. There
are not many.

AYAJU

They are urgent, can't you come
back tomorrow?

IJERE

No, Grand Master. Today I have to
bring new inkpots and writing
utensils from the workshop. 20
scribes have been waiting for 4
days and they can't write the
documents the people need. Just
sign my papers so they can get
their tools from the workshop.

AYAJU

(hurriedly sits down at
the table)

Since you've come, give me the
whole pile so I can sign it
quickly.

Ijere places the pile of documents on the table and the Grand Master sits down in his chair and begins to sign them. Ijere picks up only the bottom right corner of each scroll in the pile. That way, Ayaju can't see what he's signing, just where he's putting his personal string of Numbers.

A white corner of a document is filled in by Ayaju with his personal string of Numbers.

INT. ROYAL CABINET. DAY.

Ayaju is standing in front of the King and Queen.

AYAJU

I don't know how my original signature got on this forged document.

UKAMAKA

(in a sour tone)

We will find out, Grand Master.

And the Queen gently shoulders the King. He seems to shake off his lethargy and rings the bell.

The door to the Royal Cabinet opens and Lord Down enters.

OKOT

Lord Down, take the Grand Master to the dungeon in the Blue Tower and summon the Master with Gloves to draw up a royal decree authorising an internal investigation into the Order of Numbers.

Okot falls silent and looks at Ayaju. They look at each other for a moment, two, three.

EXT. THE WHITE WORLD. DAY.

It's a beautiful day, the sky is clear and the two suns are clearly visible in the sky. They are far apart.

In front of Diamond Cave, Old Argument is leaning on Tasso.

ARGUMENT

What a beautiful world this is, my friend Tasso.

TASSO

So white, it's very beautiful. But I'm afraid this beauty hides many dangerous places.

ARGUMENT

Should there be traps in such a beautiful place?

TASSO

This world is like a poisonous mushroom, beautiful on the outside and full of poison on the inside.

ARGUMENT

Words of wisdom, my young friend. You look my age.

TASSO

(laughing)

I'm not really your age, Old Argument, except that I've seen enough in my short life so far.

The White Fisherman appears from the White Forest. He is hunting two white rabbits.

WHITE FISHERMAN

Hello.

ARGUMENT

Hello there. You've caught two rabbits already?

WHITE FISHERMAN

If you get up early, you have a good chance.

TASSO

I want to go with you, why didn't you wake me up?

WHITE FISHERMAN

You were sleeping too soundly.

And the three of them laugh and go into the Diamond Cave.

INT. DIAMOND CAVE. DAY.

In the cave, White Fisherman and Tasso made several things from the white deer they had hunted the day before: they used the hide to stand on, and made knives of different sizes from the antlers.

They also made a bow and arrows from branches, the tips of which were made from pieces of diamonds they had broken off the walls of the cave.

Tasso places the Old Argument with his back to a wall of diamonds. Beside him is a pile of small pieces of bone.

ARGUMENT

My dear friends, we can't stay here forever. Even if mine is at the end.

TASSO

Don't talk like that, Old Argument. You won't leave us so easily.

ARGUMENT

I have something else to tell you, we must find the Ash Grotto.

WHITE FISHERMAN

(who had started skinning rabbits, asks as he works)

Tell us again what's this Grotto?

ARGUMENT

The Hidden Slave took refuge in the Ash Grotto because of the hatred of the Forgotten Blue Father, who wanted to kill him. There he taught his relatives the Numbers and died. The Order of Numbers found him and segmented his body, leaving his head in the Grotto.

TASSO

And you want to find the head of the Hidden Slave?

ARGUMENT

That's a lot to say. I don't want to find the skull of the Hidden Slave, although if it's there and I find it, I'll be happy.

TASSO

You want something else?

ARGUMENT

First of all, I want to feel the energy of this place, immerse myself in it, live it with every atom and psychom in my body and soul.

TASSO

Why?

ARGUMENT

Because that's where all my learning comes from, all my life.

WHITE FISHERMAN

All your strength.

ARGUMENT

Which I feel is fading from the wound in my chest basket.

TASSO

And you hope to heal.

ARGUMENT

And live many years hence.

TASSO

How do we get to the cave? Do you know which way it is?

ARGUMENT

Not now, but we'll find out.

TASSO

How?

ARGUMENT

We'll find a strings of Numbers in a Numerological Matrix.

And Old Argument is turning on his stomach, next to the pile of bones. He takes a piece from there and puts it in front of him. Then he takes two pieces and puts them next to the first, then he takes three pieces and puts them next to the two, making a row of 1, 2 and 3. Under the first piece he puts 4 pieces, then 5 and 6 next to it. This is another row. Under this row, from left to right, he puts 7, 8 and 9 small bones. Under the 8 pieces, he puts two more thin pieces in the shape of an X.

ARGUMENT (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

This is a Numerological Matrix. One piece is 1, two pieces are 2, three pieces are 3 and so on 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. Zero is the two pieces sitting on top of each other, joined in the middle, under 8.

TASSO

It doesn't look like what you drew in salt mine.

ARGUMENT

No lines, but the meaning is the same. White Fisherman and Tasso, come to the Matrix.

The White Fisherman is just skinning a rabbit, but stops work and approaches the Matrix. And Tasso approaches them.

ARGUMENT (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

We are going to pick one pile of bones at a time. I will choose first.

(Old Argument shows Figure 2)

Now you, white fisherman.

(He looks at the grams of bones and points to the two thin bones joined in the middle)

Good, 0. Now you, Tasso.

(Tasso, without hesitation, points to the two bones joined in the middle)

Okay, so far we have 2.0 and 0. It's my turn, I choose...6. White Fisherman.

(this one shows all the pieces of bone joined in the middle)

Well, that's still 0. Tasso.

(Tasso points to the pile of bones 3)

That's right, 3. Me now. And I'm still 3, I show. There we go. So far we have the sequence 2,0,0,6,0,3 and 3. The last Number is chosen by the White Fisherman.

WHITE FISHERMAN

First piece.

ARGUMENT

Which one? Pointing.

(White Fisherman points to
the bone representing the
number 1)

Ah, yes, 1. We have the string of
Numbers: 2,0,0,6,0,3,3 and 1.

TASSO

What does it mean?

ARGUMENT

(does not answer
immediately, thinks for a
moment or two, three)

This is about friendship. Two
perfect, sublime friends meet. The
Ash Grotto is in the direction in
which the two friends meet.

TASSO

Who are the two friends?

ARGUMENT

I have no idea. Two perfect,
sublime friends meet, and we must
go in the direction in which they
meet to find the Ash Grotto.

WHITE FISHERMAN

Two friends can be many things:
people, animals, trees,
mountains...

ARGUMENT

Two friends meet in the same place,
having come from different
directions.

TASSO

I don't understand who it could be.

ARGUMENT

We wait, we will surely discover
the two friends.

EXT. FOREST AROUND THE BLUE FORTRESS. DAY.

Ema and Stone are walking along a road in the forest, each on
their own horse. They are talking.

EMA

I don't believe a word you say,
traveller.

STONE

Why not?

EMA

What could the Grand Duke want with
me? Besides, I know he conducts
strange experiments. Now he wants
to experiment on a bought man like
me?

STONE

(disturbed by the way the
problem is put to the
girl)

From what I've seen so far, you're
a clever girl, Ema, and I don't
expect you to talk nonsense like
that.

EMA

That's what people say, not me.

STONE

You told me, not the world. But the
important thing is the truth. No,
the Grand Duke doesn't experiment
on people.

EMA

(stops the horse in its
tracks)

Then what does he want with me?

STONE

(takes two, three steps
forward and stops as
well)

The Grand Duke will tell you
himself.

EMA

But why did you choose me?

STONE

Because you're clever.

EMA

And how did you find out?
(Stone is silent)

(MORE)

EMA (CONT'D)

When I took my blouse off, did you see that I was clever?

(Stone is silent)

Do you think I don't know that you're a pervert with sick fantasies and that you made all the girls take off their blouses without doing anything to them?

(Stone remains silent and looks at Ema)

I've met perverts like you who make up stories about the royal family.

(Stone continues to look at Ema)

So go on your way and leave me alone.

And Ema spurs the horse and starts off to the left, through the trees of the forest. Stone says nothing, but looks after the girl as she disappears through the trees.

It is winter and the trees are covered with snow.

Ema rides the horse without direction.

A noise is heard to Emma's right. The girl listens and the horse pricks up its ears. The sound becomes clearer and Ema stops the horse and listens carefully. From the right, the sound becomes clearer, it is a woman's voice.

VOICE

Help! Help!

Ema spurs the horse and sets off in the direction of the voice. A short distance away, Ema comes across a woman wrestling with a wild boar. The animal is not large, but not small either. The woman is on her knees between two trees and the animal is charging towards her.

Ema rides her horse towards the boar. The boar sees the horse and stops. Ema reaches the boar and tries to kick it with the horse's front legs. The boar dodges and moves a little to the side. Ema turns the horse around and kicks the boar with her hind legs. The animal rolls a few metres, then gets up and runs away, disappearing into the trees. Ema looks after the animal, then dismounts and approaches the woman on her knees.

EMA

Are you all right?

SMYRNA

Yes, I'm fine.

There is blood on Smyrna's face.

EMA

Are you sure you're OK? Your face
is covered in blood.

SMYRNA

(gets up)

It's nothing serious, the animal
just scratched me.

(looks at Ema)

Thank you for helping me, without
you the boar would have killed me.

EMA

Let's get you home. What village do
you live in?

SMYRNA

Near here. But you, what village do
you live in?

EMA

(doesn't know how to
answer)

It's more complicated for me. I
don't live anywhere anymore.

SMYRNA

My house is near, in a clearing in
this forest. Come to me, I must
introduce you to my family. You
saved my life.

EMA

I didn't save your life. I didn't
do much.

SMYRNA

I'm Smyrna.
(holding out her hand to
the girl)

EMA

I'm Ema.
(and they shake hands)

INT. NUMEROLOGIST'S HOUSE. DAY.

The door of the house opens and Smyrna enters, followed by
Ema.

SMYRNA

Come in, I know just what we need
right now.

(MORE)

SMYRNA (CONT'D)
 (and closes the door
 behind them)

EMA
 Are you sitting here alone?

SMYRNA
 No, I'm with my husband and our
 son. But they are in the Blue
 Fortress on business, so we have
 plenty of time to ourselves. Come,
 I have a surprise for you.

EMA
 (smiles contentedly)
 What is it?

SMYRNA
 (putting her hand to her
 face and saying amusedly)
 A hot bath.

EXT. FOREST AROUND THE BLUE FORTRESS. DAY.

Stone rides slowly, following some fresh tracks in the snow. This leads him to the spot where the boar fight took place. Stone dismounts and carefully examines the area. He can see the tracks of Ema's horse, the two women and the boar. Stone leaves on foot with his horse, following the tracks of Ema's horse.

EXT. NUMEROLOGIST'S HOUSE. DAY.

Ema and Smyrna are bathing in a large barrel under a roof attached to the house. A fire burns under the barrel. The barrel sits on top of a small brick oven. Steam comes out of the hot water as they talk and laugh.

SMYRNA
 Turn around so I can wash your
 back.

EMA
 I've never had such a good bath.
 (and turns her back to
 Smyrna)

SMYRNA
 (washing her back with a
 handful of leaves)
 Not even the seamstress? What is
 her name?

EMA

Mrs Cristina, no, it's a big scrunchie, I always wash with cold water. And she made me wash every day so I'd be clean, so I wouldn't smell bad when the customers came.

Ema turns to face Smyrna. At that moment, Smyrna sees the red mark under her left breast. Smyrna says nothing and turns her back to Ema, who begins to wash it with the bundle of leaves.

INT. NUMEROLOGIST'S HOUSE. DAY.

The door opens and Smyrna and Ema enter, dressed in furs thick, laughing. Smyrna closes the door.

SMYRNA

Let's eat something.

EMA

I'm starving.

The girl lets her fur down and remains naked. Smyrna stares at the red spot under the girl's left breast and studies it without saying anything. Ema begins to dress. And Smyrna begins to dress as well.

The table is full of food, and the two eat with great relish.

EMA (CONT'D)

Does your head hurt?

Smyrna has a cut on her forehead.

SMYRNA

Not at all. I've sewn it up and put tincture on it so it won't get infected. It'll heal quickly, you'll see.

(Ema eats hungrily)

Mrs Cristina hasn't been feeding you well lately.

EMA

(when she realises that Smyrna is referring to the fact that she eats with appetite, she calms down)

I haven't worked at Mrs Cristina's for a while.

SMYRNA

From the riot in Merchants Street?

EMA

Since then, yes.

(and changes the subject)

And when are your men coming? Is your son grown up?

SMYRNA

(gets up from the table
and goes to the hearth
where she is boiling a
kettle of water)

He's a grown man. You'll get to know him.

(Smyrna takes the kettle
from the fire and puts it
on the table)

I'd like to have a beautiful daughter-in-law like you.

And they both laugh. Ema continues to eat while Smyrna takes two earthenware cups, puts some herbs from two separate boxes into them, returns to the table, places one cup in front of Ema and the other in front of her, then pours hot water into the cups.

SMYRNA (CONT'D)

This drink will relax our muscles and nerves. Let a little water soak up all the energy of the leaves.

EXT. FOREST AROUND THE BLUE FORTRESS. DAY.

Stone is walking in the tracks left by Emma and Smyrna in the snow. He walks with his horse at his back. Stone reaches the clearing where the numerologist's house is and hides among the trees. Stone searches the house and the clearing where he is hiding.

Noises are heard. Stone grabs the horse's bridle and forces it to lie on its side, hiding behind it. From the opposite side, Cinyra and Adonis emerge from the forest.

They approach the house and go inside.

INT. NUMEROLOGIST'S HOUSE. DAY.

Inside the house, sitting comfortably on the floor, wrapped in thick furs, are Smyrna and Ema. They are both drinking tea from mugs in their hands.

Cinyra and Adonis stop in the middle of the house and look at Ema. Smyrna gets up and approaches Cinyra.

SMYRNA

This is Ema. She's a Red Spot.

Ema doesn't say anything, she's very dizzy and smiles meaninglessly. In fact, Ema can't even see the 3 people looking at her, everything is blurred and the 3 have distorted images. Ema can't even hear clearly, it's as if the 3 or 6 are talking from somewhere very far away and moving very, very slowly.

CINYRA

How do you know?

SMYRNA

We took a bath together and saw the Red Spot, she has it under her left breast. I don't think she's more than 20.

Cinyra begins to undress. Adonis approaches his mother.

ADONIS

Who is she?

SMYRNA

A girl called Ema. But most importantly, she's a Red Spot.

ADONIS

Which is?

SMYRNA

I mean, her father is a red-eyed Albino who left a mark of power on the girl's body. We collect these power marks and extract their energies to use in our Numerology rituals.

ADONIS

(while undressing)

And how will you collect the Red Spot?

CINYRA

We peel off the skin that has the Red Spot, dry it, grind it and mix it with other herbs.

ADONIS

And the girl?

CINYRA

Leave it on the girl. You must be careful with everything we do. Maybe you won't meet another Red Spot.

ADONIS

Why do you keep calling her "Red Spot"? Doesn't she have a name?

SMYRNA

No. She's just a Red Spot, that's all.

CINYRA

Come on, Smyrna, we've got to get to the Red Spot before the girl wakes up.

Ema can't hear anything, and everything around her is a mist. Some very blurry figures appear beside her. Ema closes her eyes.

Adonis and Smyrna lift Ema from the floor and place her on the table. The woman takes off her blouse, revealing a red spot under her left breast. Adonis touches the spot curiously, then traces the outline of the breast with his finger to the nipple. Cinyra approaches him.

CINYRA (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

Sit down and watch what we're doing.

ADONIS

(steps back)

You're going to cut off her skin with the Red Spot?

CINYRA

(holding knife)

Follow me carefully.

Cinyra places the tip of the knife on Emma's white skin and presses gently. A thin thread of blood emerges from the spot.

At that moment, the door to the house opens wide and Stone enters, holding the rifle to his eye. Cinyra stops and stares at him. So does Smyrna. Adonis runs to Stone, but Stone is not surprised, takes the gun from his eye and hits the young man hard with her bed. He collapses in a faint. Just as quickly, Stone puts the rifle to his eye and points it at Cinyra. For a moment or two, the three of them stand looking at each other as Adonis lies unconscious on the floor.

Stone gestures with his rifle for Cinyra to move away from Ema. The old man takes a few steps back. Stone has the rifle pointed at him, but he addresses Smyrna.

STONE

You, woman, dress the girl.

EXT. NUMEROLOGIST'S HOUSE. DAY.

Smyrna and Cinyra come out of the numerologist's house and take Emma with them. Stone also comes out after them, threatening them with a gun. When they are outside, Stone whistles and runs out of the woods, his horse appearing and stopping next to the Master. Stone signals with his rifle for the two to get Ema on the horse. The two do just that.

STONE

Now go inside and close the door behind you. Do not leave the house today.

Cinyra and Smyrna enter the house and close the door behind them.

Stone gets on his horse and starts running, but turns around the house and stops in front of the door again. Cinyra opens the door and starts to leave, but Stone fires a shot into the door. The old man doesn't expect Stone to still be there and closes the door in fright.

At that moment, Stone leaves with Ema on his horse and the two of them get lost in the woods around the Numerologists' House.

INT. EMA'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Ema is lying on the bed. She is covered with blankets.

The bedroom is relatively large, with tall stained glass windows depicting scenes of young men and women bathing in a lake, playing in a green meadow or dancing.

On one wall is a large wooden cupboard, next to it a make-up table with a sink and everything a woman needs to take care of herself: combs, perfumes, rouge, powder.

The walls are decorated with paintings of the four seasons.

The bed is wide and long, and Ema is sitting in the middle of it. The girl slowly opens her eyes and looks around. She is very sleepy and closes her eyes again.

INT. ROYAL CABINET. DAY.

At the table is the King, looking at several pieces of paper with strings of Numbers written on them. Next to him is the Master with Gloves to help him read the strings of Numbers.

MASTER WITH GLOVES

The document you are reading is a Royal Decree. Village 899 wants a new coat of arms. I have researched it and the members of the Royal Council appointed by Your Majesty with heraldic powers, the Marquises Delta and Gamma, have researched the new coat of arms and the conclusion is that it can be accepted.

The King says nothing. He looks at the strings of Numbers on the paper in front of him and is silent. The Master with Gloves is also silent. The King looks up at the Master with Gloves. He does not look at the King who is intimidating him.

OKOT

Do you think the report for the Elders of the Order was written by Ayaju?

MASTER WITH GLOVES

(does not answer immediately, purses his lips, closes his eyes for a moment, two, then opens them and looks at the King)
Something puzzles me...
(and says nothing more)

OKOT

Say, don't be shy.

MASTER WITH GLOVES

It discourages me that this is the original signature of the Great Master. How can it be the signature on such a document? I cannot understand it.

OKOT

But do you think the rest of the parchment is a forgery?

MASTER WITH GLOVES

I don't know, Your Majesty. It's so hard to believe. And his signature is original.

At that moment there was a knock at the door. But before he could say to the King, "Come in," the door opened and Lord Down entered.

DOWN

Queen Mother.

Lord Down doesn't quite get to finish what he has to say because the Queen Mother storms into the Royal Cabinet. She is followed by Master Ugonna, looking down.

HALIMA

Hello, King.

OKOT

(is surprised and rises automatically from his chair)

Mother, hello.

HALIMA

I don't understand why you are surprised to see me after what happened yesterday.

And Halima is sitting on a chair in front of the king's desk. He comes to stand next to her. Master Ugonna bows to the King, says something, but nothing is heard. Lord Down closes the door to the King's Cabinet and remains inside.

HALIMA (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

Please tell me what happened yesterday.

OKOT

Mum...

HALIMA

Please, King, explain to me why you arrested Grand Master Ayaju?

OKOT

(gets serious and tries to control the situation, but is clumsy)

(MORE)

OKOT (CONT'D)

Queen Mother, Grand Master Ayaju has written a secret report to an unknown group called the "Elders of the Order" who want to remove the Royal Blue House from the leadership of the Blue Fortress.

HALIMA

Elders of the Order.

OKOT

Yes, that's right, this secret group wants to kill all the members of the Royal Blue House, me, Your Majesty, and rule the Blue Fortress again.

HALIMA

Where is the document? I want to see it too. I want Master Ugonna to translate it.

OKOT

It's in a safe place.

HALIMA

Who read the document to you?

OKOT

(points to the Master with
Gloves)

Master with Gloves.

(Halima looks at him as he
bows)

Then the Grand Master realised it was his original signature.

HALIMA

(authoritative)

I want to see the scroll.

OKOT

The scroll is with the Queen.

HALIMA

(starting to get angry)

I want to see the scroll and the Queen.

OKOT

(turns to Lord Down)

Get the scroll and see if the Queen can come too.

HALIMA
 (nervously)
 She can come.

No one says anything. Lord Down unlocks the door and leaves, closing it behind him.

HALIMA (CONT'D)
 (stares at the King but
 addresses the two
 Masters)
 Leave us alone.

The two bow and leave the Royal Cabinet. Halima and Okot are left alone.

HALIMA (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)
 Are you crazy?

OKOT
 Mother.

HALIMA
 No "mother" with me. Why did you arrest Ayaju? Because you were shown a parchment?

OKOT
 It's a conspiracy.

HALIMA
 It sounds like a plot to me too, but by whom and against whom?

OKOT
 Ayaju is against the Royal Blue House.

HALIMA
 Are you sure?

OKOT
 (surprised)
 What do you mean?

HALIMA
 That a man you've known for 30 years has suddenly become an enemy of the Royal Blue House?

OKOT
 There's a document that says so.

HALIMA

(shouting)

False. It's a false scroll.

(The two fall silent,
Halima calms herself and
continues in a normal
tone)

Okot, I don't think this document
is authentic.

OKOT

(unsure)

But Ayaju has admitted that this is
his signature.

The two are interrupted by a knock at the door. After a
moment, the door opens and Lord Down enters.

DOWN

Her Majesty the Queen.

Ukamaka enters the Royal Cabinet with a scroll in his hand.
He takes two steps and bows to Halima.

UKAMAKA

Your Majesty.

HALIMA

It's good to see you, Queen, please
sit next to me.

Ukamaka sits on the chair next to Halima. The chair is in
front of the King's desk.

HALIMA (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

Looks like someone is disturbing
the peace of the Royal Blue House.

UKAMAKA

That's right, Queen Mother, and I'm
surprised, especially since this
person has great influence in the
Fortress, is respected and loved by
the royal house.

HALIMA

I'm not sure we're talking about
the same person.

UKAMAKA

(pretending not to
understand the reference)
Queen Mother.

(MORE)

UKAMAKA (CONT'D)
 (and hands her the
 parchment)
 It's Grand Master Ayaju, no doubt.

Halima takes the parchment and looks at the strings of Numbers. Then she looks up at Lord Down and says.

HALIMA
 Please let Master Ugonna come in.

Lord Down bows and leaves the Royal Cabinet.

HALIMA (CONT'D)
 Do you usually work with the Glove Master?

OKOT
 Yes, I trust him.

HALIMA
 I've known him a long time. I trust him too. But I want another opinion.

Lord Down enters, followed by Master Ugonna.

HALIMA (CONT'D)
 (to Ugonna)
 Master, please read this scroll.

And Halima hands the parchment to Master Ugonna. He takes it and begins to read. Everyone is silent. After a while, Halima asks.

HALIMA (CONT'D)
 What do you think, Master?

Ugonna doesn't answer immediately, he looks at the end of the parchment and says.

UGONNA
 This is a copy made by the Master with Gloves from the original.

Halima winces and looks at Ukamaka. She is amused by her awkwardness, she says.

UKAMAKA
 Ah, yes, sorry, the original broke the King in a fit of rage.

And the Queen takes out the two pieces of the other parchment and gives them to the Queen Mother.

She stares into the eyes of Ukamaka, who avoids her gaze.
Halima gives the two pieces to Master Ugonna.

OKOT
(confused)
Yes, I broke out of...

HALIMA
(interrupts the King and
turns to Master Ugonna)
What can you tell us about... this?

For a moment, two, three, Ugonna looks at the parchment.

HALIMA (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)
The first conclusion, please,
Master.

UGONNA
I have to study.

HALIMA
You will, I'm sure the Queen will
allow it.
(and looks into Ukamaka's
eyes, who nods in
agreement)
But now I want a first conclusion.

UGONNA
When I have studied this scroll, I
will report to Your Majesty on two
aspects: the content and the form
of the writing.

HALIMA
(impatient)
Master, we're taking a long time,
and I want to know one thing right
now: is this scroll a fake or not?

UGONNA
(pauses for a moment, two)
Your Majesty, the signature at the
end undoubtedly belongs to Grand
Master Ayaju. However, the style of
writing intrigues me.

HALIMA
Why?

UGONNA
It is too much in the style of the
Grand Master.

HALIMA

Clearer.

UGONNA

It gives me the feeling that this is a text written especially for our study, in which the scribes see the Grand Master's special way of writing. It seems to be written too much in the Grand Master's style to show us that he wrote the scroll and no one else.

(Halima turns to Ukamaka,
they look at each other)

But I must study it carefully.

HALIMA

(looks at Ukamaka and
speaks to her)

Queen, would you allow Master Ugonna to study this scroll carefully?

UKAMAKA

Surely, Queen Mother, the Master with Gloves will join him, the more eyes the better.

HALIMA

You are right, Queen.

And the two have a very intense exchange of glances.

INT. BLUE TOWER PRISON. NIGHT.

In the cell is Ayaju, alone. He is not asleep, lying on the wooden bed with the Ebony Rod in his hand, deep in thought.

There are voices in the passage. A guard and the Queen Mother's Captain stop in front of his dungeon grate. Ayaju looks at them. Without saying anything, the guard unlocks the dungeon door and leaves. Ayaju stands up. The Captain opens the door and a figure in a black cloak with a hood over his head steps out from behind him and enters the dungeon. Ayaju bows deeply. The silhouette removes the hood. It is Queen Mother Halima.

HALIMA

Good evening.

AYAJU

I bow to Your Majesty.

HALIMA

I am sorry that this has happened to you, Grand Master.

AYAJU

I am well, Queen Mother. I fear that the King is no longer safe.

HALIMA

The truth is, that the King deserves what he gets. When you mix the problems of the kingdom with the problems of the boudoir, this is what you get.

AYAJU

We can't be sure that it's the Queen who is conspiring.

HALIMA

Isn't she? But who do you think it is?

AYAJU

I don't know.

HALIMA

Is it true that the signature on the scroll is yours?

AYAJU

Yes, it's true.

HALIMA

You were very careless.

AYAJU

That's right, Queen Mother, I apologise.

Ayajju tries to kneel down before Halima, but she won't let him and pulls him up.

HALIMA

Come on, it's too late now. We have to figure out how to get you out of here.

AYAJU

Did Master Ugonna read the scroll?

HALIMA

Yes, he read it and found something strange.

AYAJU

(seems to know what it is)
There's nothing strange about it
because it is a forgery.

HALIMA

Do you know what it's about?

AYAJU

I read this forgery for the first
time when the Queen showed it to me
in the library of the House of
Numbers.

HALIMA

The style of writing?

AYAJU

Exactly, it's my writing style, but
it seems to be too much of my
writing style.

HALIMA

As if someone is trying very hard
to convince us that you wrote it.

AYAJU

Yes, Your Majesty.

HALIMA

This will be our weapon. I'll get
you out of here, don't worry.

INT. THE STABLE OF THE HOUSE OF NUMBERS. NIGHT.

Brook and Amos discuss. Brook is eating hot pretzels.

AMOS

And you say you saw Chimananda with
an old man?

BROOK

Yes, he was very, very weak. He cut
him, washed him and dressed him in
good clothes.

AMOS

He was in rags?

BROOK

Something terrible.

AMOS

And how did he do it?

BROOK.

When Chimananda threw water on him,
the cripple began: "Mercy, mercy, I
was wrong, pity, pity".

INT. THRONE ROOM OF THE ROYAL BLUE PALACE. DAY.

It is the day when the Noble M. is on trial for stealing
royal gold.

The poor old retarded beggar Chimananda bought from King
Reptile is covered in blood and repeats.

THE OLDMAN

Mercy, mercy. I was wrong, pity,
pity.

Amos looks at the old retard on the podium behind Grand
Master Ayaju.

INT. THE STABLE OF THE HOUSE OF NUMBERS. NIGHT.

Brook is eating pretzels with steam coming out of them. Amos
is sitting next to him.

AMOS

(more for him)

That means more of them are
plotting. I must tell the Grand
Master what I have learned.

BROOK

Amos.

AMOS

(wincing as if ripped out
of his own thoughts)

What?

BROOK

How did you become the Grand
Master's Apprentice?

AMOS

(silence for a moment,
two, three)

Grand Master Ayaju loves horses
very much. When I was in the
stable, he had a white mare.

(MORE)

AMOS (CONT'D)

She was old. One evening the mare became very ill and her belly was swollen.

INT. THE STABLE OF THE HOUSE OF NUMBERS. NIGHT.

Ayaju, dressed in his Master's clothes, sits on the floor of the stable holding the head of a white mare. The horse has a huge belly and is breathing heavily.

AMOS

(off)

I was new and no one paid any attention to me. Behind a wall I saw the mare with a huge belly dying in the arms of Master Ayaju. I knew what was wrong with the mare. We had one that suffered the same, so we did what we had seen my mother do.

The boy who was Amos sneaks away from where he was and, unseen by the others, reaches a wooden cupboard containing all sorts of tools. He opens the door and takes out a long, sharp-edged iron. Just as slowly and unseen, the boy returns to where the sick mare lies. Ayaju is holding the head in his lap. Next to him, three other stable hands are watching the animal, breathing heavily.

Amos looks at the mare, takes a step, two, enters the stall and lunges, fast and hard, at the animal, plunging the sharp tool into its belly.

Surprised by Amos' swift manoeuvre, no one does anything.

When the mare has felt the sharp object inside her, she opens her eyes and neck loudly. Amos then pulls the object out of the mare and presses hard on her belly. The mare lets out a long howl and a loud sucking sound can be heard through the hole in her belly. The gas comes out violently. The stable workers go to remove Amos, who is pressing hard on the mare's belly to release all the gas, but a strong smell sends them running from the stable. Ayaju covers his nose but stays put, watching what Amos is doing. When he has emptied the mare's belly of gas, he gets up, runs out of the stall and goes into a corner where he begins to vomit.

INT. THE STABLE OF THE HOUSE OF NUMBERS. NIGHT.

Brook and Amos talk.

BROOK

And the mare lived?

AMOS

She lived another seven years.

BROOK

And the Grand Master?

AMOS

Ayaju liked that I acted without much talk. I even told him that no one listened to me and that he wouldn't let me do the right thing anyway.

BROOK

And then Ayaju took you as his apprentice.

AMOS

Not at once, but from then on he started giving me all sorts of jobs, not just in the stables, and I was happy to do them as best I could.

BROOK

And now, does the Grand Master still need you?

AMOS

(surprised that Brook has suddenly changed the subject)

He needs me, now he really needs me.

EXT. DIAMOND CAVE. NIGHT.

In the White World, in front of the Diamond Cave, by the light of some knives embedded in the ground, Tasso and the White Fisherman can be seen. They have just finished making a stretcher out of two branches, twigs and animal skins.

TASSO

Well done, White Fisherman, good job we did. That's a carriage for Old Argument. I'll go get him to get on it.

Tasso enters the cave.

Outside, the White Fisherman is putting the finishing touches to the stretcher. He checks one knot, then another, sees how the animal skin is attached to the edges.

Out of the cave come Tasso and Old Argument, who is happy to see the stretcher.

ARGUMENT

Glory be to the Hidden Slave and his name be everlasting, for such a blessed moment we have not had for a long time.

And a pang shakes the Old Argument's body.

TASSO

The wound in your chest is bleeding, Old Argument.

ARGUMENT

Bleeding, bleeding, Tasso, what can she do, that's her lot in this world.

TASSO

Let me put more diamond bandages on the wound.

ARGUMENT

(changing words)

Put me on the stretcher. Let's see how it feels.

The Old Argument is placed on the stretcher by Tasso and the White Fisherman.

ARGUMENT (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

Very well, I stand. This way I can travel all over the White World.

TASSO

I believe you, old man, because we'll carry you.

And all three laugh.

ARGUMENT

It's perfect, thank you very much, my friends, we'll be leaving soon. You'll see we're in for some great adventures.

All 3 are silent. Tasso and the White Fisherman look at Old Argument and see how pleased he is with the stretcher they have built for him.

INT. DIAMOND CAVE. NIGHT.

In the cave sleep Tasso, the White Fisherman and the Old Argument. On the latter's face, you can see his eyes moving under his closed eyelids.

THE OLD ARGUMENT'S DREAM

Old Argument is alone in the Diamond Cave which is very well lit. On the floor next to the diamond walls are several beautifully painted wooden crates.

Old Argument approaches a crate painted with numbers, lifts the lid and sees that it is filled with blue gold coins. On another crate are painted dresses, men's clothes and shoes, men's and women's shoes and boots. Old Argument lifts the lid of this crate as well. Inside are clothes sewn with gold thread and beaten with precious stones. Another chest contains brightly painted plates, cutlery, glasses and golden cups. Old Argument opens the chest and sees inside the crockery made of silver and set with many precious stones. On another chest are weapons, on another are thick books with stones and diamonds on them, on another are painted white and black horses with hides richly decorated with gems and diamonds.

Old Argument has been looking at these crates. He turns his head towards the cave exit and sees the Hidden Slave looking at him. One, two, three, they look at each other, then the Hidden Slave comes out of the cave. Old Argument follows him out of the cave.

Outside the cave is the Hidden Slave looking up at the sky.

Old Argument approaches him and looks up at the sky. He then looks at the Hidden Slave, who continues to look up at the clear sky, and raises a finger pointing at the sun. The Old Argument looks up at the sun. The Hidden Slave then points with his finger at the other sun in the cloudless sky of the White World. The Old Argument looks at one sun and the other, then looks down at the Hidden Slave. The two look at each other for a moment or two, the Hidden Slave points to his chest, then to the chest of the Old Argument, and slowly, slowly his image becomes blurrier and blurrier until it disappears completely.

The Old Argument is alone in front of the entrance to the Diamond Cave, looking at one sun and the other sun, which becomes very bright and blinds the Old Argument.

INT. DIAMOND CAVE. NIGHT.

Old Argument suddenly wakes up and opens his eyes.

He is alone, Tasso and the White Fisherman can be heard talking outside the cave. Old Argument looks around at the diamond walls and the now empty places where, in his dream, there were brightly painted crates.

The White Fisherman enters the cave and sees Old Argument awake.

WHITE FISHERMAN

Good morning.

ARGUMENT

Good morning, I have some good news for you.

(White Fisherman looks at Old Argument without saying anything)

I had the Dream of Confirmation. Please help me to come out of the cave and speak.

EXT. DIAMOND CAVE. DAY.

Old Argument comes out of the cave with the help of the White Fisherman. He sits near the entrance with his back to the cave wall.

ARGUMENT

Tasso, my friend, I had the Dream of Confirmation.

TASSO

And what shall we do now?
(and looks at the Old Argument)

ARGUMENT

Now we know that our string of Numbers is good, because the Hidden Slave who appeared in the Dream of Confirmation has confirmed it to me. All I have to do is look at the two suns in the sky of the White World.

And Old Argument looks up at the sky. It's clear and the two suns are clearly visible, one in the east and the other in the south.

ARGUMENT (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

I'll have a look and tell you what I see and what we're going to do, a little more patience.

WHITE FISHERMAN

I'm going to hunt.

The White Fisherman enters the cave.

Old Argument looks up at the sky. In the clear sky, time passes and the two suns move and meet, side by side. Old Argument is in his place, looking up at the sky. Tasso and the White Fisherman are skinning some white rabbits.

ARGUMENT (CONTINUED)

(to the two)

Friends, stop for a moment.

(Tasso and the White Fisherman look at the Old Argument)

Look at the sky.

(The two look up but are blinded by the light of the two suns and look down)

Slowly, slowly, not so directly, look at the two suns. Put your hands to your eyes and look behind your palms.

(the two do as the Old Argument tells them)

You see, our friendship is now reflected in the sky of the White World. The two suns, the two sublime, perfect friends, have met in this place in the sky. This is the direction we must go to find the Ash Grotto.

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Tasso and the White Fisherman are looking up at the sky.

TASSO

Tell me again, Old Argument, why are we going to the Ash Grotto?

ARGUMENT

Because that's where I want to die.

(Tasso and the White
Fisherman raise their
hands and look at the Old
Argument)

I don't have long, my friends.
Blood still flows from the wound,
even though I have placed these
healing diamonds in it. So your
dying friend's wish is to die in
the place where the Hidden Slave
died and where his energy exists
forever.

WHITE FISHERMAN

Do you want to merge with this
energy?

ARGUMENT

I don't know. The Numerologist
tradition says that when a man's
body dies, his soul dissolves into
the Universe. Only one man has
succeeded in keeping his soul from
disintegrating into the Universe
and conserving its energy.

TASSO

The Hidden Slave.

ARGUMENT

That's right, my friend, the Hidden
Slave, who continues to protect us
Numerologists and to guide us
through the Dream of Confirmation.
And now I have this opportunity
that no Numerologist has had since
the dismemberment of the body of
the Hidden Slave by the Order of
Numbers and until today: to reach
the Ash Grotto and this energy.
Only this dream keeps me alive.

(Old Argument looks up at
the sky)

Look, my friends. The two friendly
suns are passing each other. That's
the direction we have to go to find
the Ash Grotto.

(Tasso and White Fisherman
raise their eyes,
shielding them with their
palms)

(MORE)

ARGUMENT (CONT'D)

A sun starts from what we call the east and goes to the west. I think it is the sun of the Blue World. And the other sun starts from what we call the south and goes to the north. Maybe it's the sun of the White World. There their paths cross. That is where the string of Numbers told us to go to find the Ash Grotto.

Tasso and the White Fisherman look at the clear sky for a moment, two, three.

WHITE FISHERMAN

Tomorrow morning, at the rising of the two suns, we'll set out. We'll follow the path of the sun of the White World.

In the sky, the two suns are one above the other, completely covering each other, so that only one sun can be seen. Time passes and the two suns separate and go their separate ways, one to the west and the other to the north. The two suns set. It becomes completely dark and the stars appear in the sky.

INT. ROYAL BLUE PALACE DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

There are two candles on the table in front of Okot as he sits in his chair. There is a glass of wine and a bottle of wine in front of him. The King is deep in thought, looking at the wine glass.

He hears the door opening and closing. After a moment or two, Ukamaka appears next to Okot, wearing a fur coat. He stops beside the King.

UKAMAKA

Will I find you here every night
from now on?

The King says nothing. Ukamaka takes the glass of wine from the table and drinks it. She puts the empty glass back on the table.

UKAMAKA (CONT'D)

It's very good. Where did you get
it?

OKOT

From Lord Down.

UKAMAKA

I want another glass.

Okot takes the bottle of wine and fills the glass. Ukamaka takes it and drinks it all.

UKAMAKA (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

Don't you want to?

OKOT

I don't feel like it tonight.

UKAMAKA

I am.

(and puts the empty glass on the table. Okot takes the bottle and fills the glass.)

What's on your mind?

OKOT

What do you think is bothering me?

UKAMAKA

It is clearly a plot against you and the Royal Blue and Green Houses in which the Grand Master is involved.

OKOT

How is it so clear?

UKAMAKA

It is in the text of the scroll, which Ayaju did not dispute.

OKOT

Ayaju didn't dispute his original signature.

(and Okot emphasises the word signature)

UKAMAKA

And by default the whole text.

OKOT

This is not so implicit.

UKAMAKA

(trying to make his point)
It's very clear, Okot.

(MORE)

UKAMAKA (CONT'D)

As long as a text bears someone's signature, that person takes responsibility for everything that is written there.

Okot is silent. He doesn't seem very convinced. Ukamaka calms down and unzips her coat, revealing her naked body.

UKAMAKA (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

Okot, I understand. This is a great shock to you. But you are King, and your friendship with a subject, however long, must not cloud your judgement.

Ukamaka pulls out her full breasts with big black nipples and sticks them to the King. Okot looks at Ukamaka.

OKOT

And what should I do?

UKAMAKA

There is only one punishment for high treason.

(and Ukamaka is silent,
not pursuing the idea)

After a moment or two, the King asks as if he doesn't know what it's about.

OKOT

And what is this, my Queen?

UKAMAKA

(Does not answer
immediately, looks at the
King for a moment, two,
then says)

The death sentence, my King.

They are silent and look at each other, the King on the chair and the Queen glued to it. After a moment, two, three, the King says calmly.

OKOT

My Queen, you've said something even more stupid than your shitty Green Kingdom.

For a second, two seconds, there's no reaction from Ukamaka, but then she realises what Okot has said and takes a step back.

UKAMAKA
What did you say?

The King screams.

OKOT
Where do you think you are,
Ukamaka? In your kingdom of
imbeciles, where a retard can kill
whoever he wants, whenever he
wants?

Foaming with rage, Ukamaka approaches Okot and hatefully strikes him hard on the left temple.

Okot is thrown off balance and falls to the ground. Ukamaka is about to fall back on him and continue to strike, but stops. His whole body is shaking. After a moment, two, three, she calms down and screams.

UKAMAKA
Guards! Guards!

INT. ROYAL BEDROOM. NIGHT.

The King is lying on the bed, and Ukamaka holds a compress to his temple.

UKAMAKA
Please forgive me. I made a
mistake.

OKOT
(takes the compress from
the Queen's hand)
I was wrong too. I insulted you
instead of explaining better.

UKAMAKA
Perhaps not tonight.

OKOT
Now that we've opened the
discussion, let's get it over with.

UKAMAKA
I'm listening.

OKOT

It would be the first time in the history of the Blue Fortress that a Grand Master of the Order of Numbers would be sentenced to death.

UKAMAKA

(interrupting the king)
But also the first time...

OKOT

(not allowing Ukamaka to continue)
Don't interrupt me, please, listen to me.

UKAMAKA

Yes, OK, I'm listening. Go ahead.

OKOT

It would be the first time that a Grand Master would be tried and even sentenced to death. Then the most difficult and complicated thing would be his execution.

UKAMAKA

Why?

OKOT

Because it would mean breaking the tradition in a dangerous way.

UKAMAKA

What do you mean by that?

OKOT

When a Grand Master feels that he is about to die, he chooses a successor. After that, the Grand Master enters a kind of state on the border between life and death. So he is taken to the Tomb of the Grand Masters in the cemetery. There he is left with the successor Master and has the transfer of knowledge from the dying Grand Master to the future Grand Master. It is a transmission unknown to us. Now Ayaju has not chosen a successor. If I kill him, I'll break this process.

(MORE)

OKOT (CONT'D)

All the knowledge of the first Grand Master will remain with Ayaju and will not be passed on to the next Grand Master.

UKAMAKA

Perhaps this will break the chain of betrayal, Okot.

OKOT

What do you mean?

UKAMAKA

I mean, Ayaju may have been loyal to you when he wasn't Grand Master, and he was given the mission of betrayal when he became Grand Master and received all the inheritance you're talking about.

Okot is silent, thinking about what Ukamaka told him. After a second, two, three, the Queen says.

UKAMAKA (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

You must put an end to this conspiracy, which seems to be passed from one Grand Master to another, at all costs, for your sake and for the sake of our descendants.

OKOT

(says nothing, continues to think, says after a moment)

I will personally investigate this plot and the scroll you have brought with you. I will find out exactly what it is.

Okot is lost in thought. Ukamaka watches him, making plans of her own.

INT. EMA'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Ema is lying in bed. She opens her eyes and looks around at the stained glass windows, the furniture, the bed she is lying on.

Ema slowly gets up from her bed and moves with difficulty. The girl is very thin. Ema leans against the bed, takes a few steps and then stops.

The bedroom door opens and Stone walks in. When he sees Ema, he stops and they look at each other.

INT. DINING ROOM OF THE GRAND DUKE'S PALACE. DAY.

The Grand Duke sat at the table and ate slowly, chewing each bite.

There are trays of fish, chicken, salads and fruit on the table. In front of him is a large cup of water, which an old servant pours from time to time into a thick, tall glass.

Next to the Grand Duke is a plate with cutlery and a chair by the table.

While the Grand Duke is eating, Stone enters the living room with Ema on his arm. The Grand Duke stops eating and looks at them, who also stop and look at the Grand Duke.

STONE

Grand Duke, she is Ema.

The girl is wearing a beautiful, expensive dress, her hair is combed and tied back. She is wearing subtle make-up.

STONE (CONT'D)

Ema, may I present the Grand Duke of the Blue Royal House.

With Stone's help, the girl greets the Grand Duke.

GRAND DUKE

Nice to meet you, Ema. Sit next to me, please. I think you're hungry. You have slept for 3 days, you are very weak.

Stone leads Ema to the empty chair and the girl sits down, but she does not touch the food, she looks at the Grand Duke.

EMA

Grand Duke, thank you for everything you have done for me. But I don't understand what's happening.

GRAND DUKE

(also stops eating and looks at Emma)

To be honest, Ema, I don't know either. The Grand Duchess left me a long time ago.

(MORE)

GRAND DUKE (CONT'D)

(Ema looks away from the Grand Duke and looks at the food on the table.

The Grand Duke notices the girl's gesture and says to her)

While I'm telling you, please eat.

EMA

(turns to the Grand Duke)

No, it's all right, I'm listening.

And Ema fainted.

INT. EMA'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Ema is lying on the bed, opening her eyes. Next to her is Stone.

STONE

Hello. A special Scrib has consulted with you and said that you are very thin. You need to get back on your feet. He has prepared this nourishing tea for you. You must drink it.

Ema nods. She drinks from a cup with Stone's help.

EXT. THE TERRACE IN FRONT OF THE GRAND DUKE'S PALACE. DAY.

The Grand Duke is sitting at an iron table with a coffee cup, a small container of milk, another with white sugar cubes and a coffee pot in front of him, all made of porcelain and very beautifully decorated.

Stone comes out of the front door with Ema on her arm. And she is very thickly dressed. They go to the table where the Grand Duke is sitting. He sees them.

GRAND DUKE

It's good to see you again, Ema. I hear the medicine has helped you a lot.

EMA

Good day, Grand Duke. Thank you for all you do for me.

Stone helps Ema to sit next to the Grand Duke in an iron chair with a bed. He also wraps the girl up.

GRAND DUKE
Coffee gives you energy.

Stone fills her cup with coffee and Ema takes it from the table.

GRAND DUKE (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)
Milk, sugar?

EMA
No thanks, I like it black.

And the girl sips from the steaming coffee.

EMA (CONT'D)
It's good. It's from the north,
isn't she?

GRAND DUKE
(surprised)
Yes, exactly, from the North. Are
you good with coffee?

EMA
No, but I like it very much.
Especially the Black East, that's
my favourite.

GRAND DUKE
It's too loud.

EMA
Yes, but it's original, that's
where the coffee tree comes from.

GRAND DUKE
Tell me about yourself, Emma, where
were you born? How old you are, who
are your parents?

EMA
(doesn't answer
immediately, sips with
pleasure from the coffee
cup, then says)
Please forgive me, Grand Duke, but
first I would like to know what is
happening. Why are you helping me?
What do you want from me?

GRAND DUKE
You're right, excuse me. I told you
the Grand Duchess died some time
ago.

(MORE)

GRAND DUKE (CONT'D)

Since her death I have never dreamed of her, until a few weeks ago when I had a dream about her. It was as if the entire court of the Royal Blue Palace was old. The servants, the soldiers, the nobles, the king and the queen. A young girl, who I now realise looks like you, was brought into the court and began to dance. It rejuvenated them all.

EMA

From her dance?

GRAND DUKE

Yes, through her dance. Do you like dancing?

EMA

Yes, I like it.

GRAND DUKE

Only once a nobleman broke his leg and died.

EMA

Dancing?

GRAND DUKE

Yes. His wife blamed you, well, blamed the girl from my dream, that if it wasn't for her, her husband wouldn't have danced and he would have lived. Then the girl ran into the arms of... the Grand Duchess, my wife, who looked at me and said...

(The Grand Duke pauses)

Find the girl with the red spot under her left breast and take care of her as if she were our child.

When she heard about the spot under her left breast, Ema stopped drinking her coffee and looked at the Grand Duke. He looked at her and asked.

GRAND DUKE (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

You have a red spot under your left breast, don't you?

EMA

(She stares at the Grand Duke in surprise.

(MORE)

EMA (CONT'D)

After a moment, two,
three, she answers)
Yes, it is.
(and Ema looks for Stone,
but he is not beside her)

GRAND DUKE

Well, this is where my story ends.
I told Stone about my dream and the
task the Grand Duchess had given me
and asked him to look for you.

Ema puts the coffee cup on the table. She turns to the Grand Duke.

EMA

And I'm the girl with the red spot?

GRAND DUKE

Yes, and I want you to live with me
and teach you everything I know.

EMA

And all because you had a dream?

GRAND DUKE

No. All because the Grand Duchess
told me to.

EMA

Yes, but in a dream.

GRAND DUKE

The soul of the Grand Duchess has
left this world and has begun to
disintegrate in the Universe.
However, the process of
disintegration seems to be a slow
one, for she appeared to me in a
dream and set me a task. And I want
to fulfil it.

EMA

What if the Stone was wrong and
there is another girl with a Red
Spot under her left breast, the one
the Grand Duchess was talking
about? What would you do?

GRAND DUKE

Firstly, you look very much like
the girl in my dream. Secondly, the
Grand Duchess asked us to find the
girl with the red spot.

(MORE)

GRAND DUKE (CONT'D)

If there were more girls like her,
the Grand Duchess would have told
me. And third, it doesn't matter if
we're wrong. We'll see for
ourselves what the truth is and
raise the other girl.

(The Grand Duke pauses,
then says)

But in the meantime, tell me
something about yourself.

Emma looked at the Grand Duke. This is a very elegant and well-groomed man. Fine features with manicured hands and beautifully trimmed nails. The Grand Duke's eyes are large, brown and soft. The tone of his voice is soft, warm and friendly. In general, the whole appearance conveys confidence and sincerity.

EMA

I don't have much to tell you about
myself, Grand Duke. I am an orphan.

EXT. AT THE GATE OF THE ORDER OF MERCIFUL MOTHERS BUILDING.
DAY.

It's a cloudy day with buckets of rain. A small silhouette, dressed in a brown woollen coat with a hood, is carrying a wicker basket. The silhouette stops in front of a high gate, above which is the string of Numbers: 0308. Emma's voice is heard from the off.

EMA

(off)

I was told that on a very rainy
autumn day, at the gate of the
Order of Merciful Mothers building,
a young woman left, as was the
custom, a basket containing a
newborn baby.

(The silhouette leaves the
basket in a special place
and knocks on the door of
the building, then turns
and runs away.)

The nun on duty that day did not
open the door immediately, but
waited a little, as is customary,
so that the mother could leave
quietly. Then she opened the door
and took the basket I was in.

(MORE)

EMA (CONT'D)

The Order of Merciful Mothers
raised me and gave me as an
apprentice to Madame Cristina, the
seamstress of the Royal Blue House.

As Ema tells the story, the gate of the building opens, a
mother takes the basket and throws the blanket aside. A baby
is seen sleeping, wrapped in rags.

EXT. THE TERRACE IN FRONT OF THE GRAND DUKE'S PALACE. DAY.

GRAND DUKE

I know Madame Cristina, but I don't
know you.

EMA

I came after the Grand Duchess
stopped coming to Madame Cristina
for clothes.

GRAND DUKE

Oh, yes, I see.
(Pauses for a moment)
But how did you come to the inn?

EMA

Lieutenant Bieginning sold me after
he and his regiment raped me.

GRAND DUKE

(a chill runs through her
body)
Ema, is it terrible?

EMA

Then I was put to work in the inn,
prostituting myself. Then came the
stone.

GRAND DUKE

But how did you get from the
tailor's shop to Lieutenant
Beginning's garrison?

Ema doesn't answer immediately. She doesn't want to bring up
the episode of the barricade on Merchants Street, but she
can't avoid giving a clear answer to this question,
especially since the Grand Duke seems to be a sincere man.

EMA

You may not like what I'm about to
tell you.

GRAND DUKE

What can be so serious?

EMA

I don't know what your lordship's parry is, but I'll take the risk of being honest.

GRAND DUKE

Please, there's no risk. What's this all about?

EMA

I was directly involved in organising the barricade on Merchants Street and fought Lieutenant Beginning's soldiers.

GRAND DUKE

So that was you.

EMA

Only we couldn't resist the cannonade that destroyed our barricade. Some were killed, some were wounded, some were arrested and must have ended up in the salt pit.

GRAND DUKE

And you?

EMA

I was captured and sold by Lieutenant Beginning.

GRAND DUKE

You're right not to want to tell this story. It's best to keep it to yourself. I'll do the same, don't worry, I won't tell anyone. Besides, I'm not the biggest fan of the way King Okot runs the Blue Fortress, but that's another story. The coffee's not cold. I'll have some more, shall I?

EMA

(pleased that the Grand Duke is nice to her)

Yes, I'll have some more. And... thank you for everything, Grand Duke.

The Grand Duke smiles. He pours coffee into both cups.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE DIAMOND CAVE. DAY.

Tasso and the White Fisherman prepare to leave. Old Argument is sitting on his stretcher, the other two are carrying the weapons they have made, Tasso has the pickaxe he used to work in the salt mine strapped to his back, and White Fisherman has his bow and arrow and a dagger made from a piece of diamond on his arm. The stretcher on which Old Argument sits also has food attached to it.

All 3 are ready to go.

The sky is clear with two suns.

ARGUMENT

Let's take a good look at the sun above us. We will follow it in the direction of our world from south to north.

TASSO

Old Argument, wouldn't it be better to follow the east-west direction of the White World?

ARGUMENT

We are confused, my young friend, and we'll never know which is the sun of the White World and which is the sun of the Blue World.

WHITE FISHERMAN

(to Tasso)

I will be the first to carry the stretcher with Old Argument. Then you. Let us begin, and may the waters be kind to us.

ARGUMENT

That's right, White Fisherman, even if we're not at sea, we'll still catch many new and beautiful things.

And the White Fisherman sets off, dragging the stretcher behind him.

TASSO

To the victory!

(Tasso shouts
enthusiastically and
starts after them)

The three leave the mouth of the Diamond Cave and head downstream, following the direction of the sun in the White World. After a moment or two, the group of three is out of sight.

A tall, athletic silhouette emerges from the trees. It is a man dressed in white, with white skin and white hair. He is an albino, with very short cropped hair, and on his face he has a beard of white hair like a thin stripe that follows the outline from his sideburns down his jaw to the top of his beard. The man has red eyes and carries a highly polished and very sharp diamond knife on his arm. In his left hand he holds a spear, also of highly polished diamond, with a very sharp point.

The man examines the spot in front of Diamond Cave. The man slowly begins to follow the tracks left by the three who went to the Ash Grotto. The man moves cautiously and disappears in the direction that Tasso, the White Fisherman and the Old Argument went.

EXT. NUMEROLOGIST'S HOUSE. DAY.

It's snowing. Cinyra, Adonis and Smyrna are piling up snow around the house. There is a wide, well-cleared path from the forest trees to the house. There is a small layer of snow on the roof of the house. The 3 are around the house, making a wide path. The snow is piled up in large heaps around the house. Outside the door are two horses being looked after by a soldier of the Queen's personal guard. The horses are wrapped in thick blankets, which the soldier shakes off from time to time.

Cinyra, Adonis and Smyrna are shovelling snow with wooden shovels.

Captain Ash and Master Ijere enter the clearing, each on a horse. They ride down the path to the front of the house. Seeing them, Cinyra leaves the shovel in a pile of snow and walks towards them. The two dismount and Cinyra, who has reached the door, greets them.

CINYRA

Good day.

Captain Ash ignores him and Master Ijere nods at him as he passes him and enters the house after Ash.

INT. NUMEROLOGIST'S HOUSE. DAY.

Ukamaka sits in her high backed chair by the stove where large pieces of wood are burning.

Ijere is in the house, greeting Qeen.

IJERE

Good day, Your Majesty.

Ukamaka turns to Ijere and motions for him to sit in the chair in front of her. The Master sits on the chair in a humble posture. Captain Ash takes two steps back and stays by the front door, watching Ijere's every move.

Ukamaka smiles at Ijere who says nothing, waiting for the Queen to speak first.

UKAMAKA

First of all, I would like to thank you once again for your work in the service of the Blue Royal House.

IJERE

(leans forward)

My oath to the Blue Royal House is sacred, Your Majesty.

UKAMAKA

I'm glad we can trust someone as capable as you. I wonder if...

(and Ukamaka pauses,
waiting for a reaction
from Ijere)

Ijere suddenly looks up and says.

IJERE

(say safe to him)

I have the answer to your question, Your Majesty.

UKAMAKA

(smiling)

Am I so predictable?

IJERE

No, Your Majesty, I am simply your most loyal subject. That's all.

UKAMAKA

So your answer is...

IJERE

Until death, Your Majesty. You can trust me until the last atom and psychon in my body and soul disappears into the Universe.

UKAMAKA

(pleased with Ijere's answer, but without really understanding what he was trying to say)
And after your death?

IJERE

(he understands the Queen's confusion and tries to explain)
Our faith says that when a person dies, the body and soul

disintegrate into the Universe. But the disintegration does not happen suddenly, but over time, atoms and psychons are lost, slowly, slowly, in the Universe.

UKAMAKA

Atoms and Psychons?

IJERE

Atoms are the smallest elements that make up the human body, there is nothing smaller than them. And psychons are the smallest elements that make up the human soul, there is nothing smaller than them.

UKAMAKA

(smiles because she likes what Ijere has told her)
This means that even after your death, I will be served by your little elements.
(and laughs amused. Then looks at Ijere)
Master, but I need proof.

IJERE

(does not know what the queen is referring to and asks her, confused)
Do you want me to die?

UKAMAKA

(laughing)

No, Master, I need you alive and unharmed. I need further proof.

IJERE

What shall I do, Your Majesty?

Ukamaka does not answer immediately, but looks at the fire in the hearth. Ijere remains silent without disturbing Queen. For a moment, two, three, the two stay like that, then Queen says.

UKAMAKA

I need a solution to our problem.

IJERE

Betrayal of the Grand Master?

UKAMAKA

Correct. In short, the King does not wish to begin the trial of the Grand Master's treason until he has personally investigated everything related to the document you found.

(Ijere changes her face
and the Queen notices)

Yes, it seems to be quite a serious problem.

(looks at Ijere, who is
pensive)

How certain is the Grand Master's signature on this document?

IJERE

It is the safest because it is authentic, I have personally arranged for Ayaju to sign the scroll.

UKAMAKA

This is good. The rest of the text?

IJERE

A thorough and comparative research with the texts written by the 6 Masters will show that the text has great problems of originality.

UKAMAKA

That it's a forgery.

IJERE

Not really, but that it is an original with very little chance of being authentic.

UKAMAKA

Let's be clear, master. If you compare the text of the parchment with yours, you will see that it was not written by Ayaju. And if it still bears his original signature, it clearly means that he was tricked into signing a document that was not his.

Ijere says nothing. He sits with his head down, silent.

UKAMAKA (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

How long will the research take?

IJERE

If the King personally coordinates the research, it will be possible to demonstrate everything in 3 weeks.

UKAMAKA

And will your style be discovered?

(Ijere does not answer)

Come on, be brave. I know you are afraid that I will have to kill you.

(Ijere is silent)

Didn't you say that these parts will serve me after your death until they disappear? Do you retract your statement now?

Ijere suddenly looked up at Queen. A moment, two, then he says in a calm and determined tone.

IJERE

Queen, let's be clear and direct. A thorough examination of the parchment will prove that I forged it and tricked Ayaju into signing it. Under these circumstances, Your Majesty's rightful decision is to kill me. And since my life is in Your Majesty's hands, I submit to Your choice: my death or the death of Grand Master Ayaju.

(Ijere kneels before the Queen)

(MORE)

IJERE (CONT'D)

Choose the life you prefer.
(and Ijere lowers his
head)

Ukamaka says nothing. She looks at Ijere who is kneeling before her. She bends down and lifts him by the shoulders.

UKAMAKA

Take your seat.
(Ijere sits on the chair)
I haven't decided anything yet. I cannot make such an important decision so quickly. But I would like to understand from you what will happen after the death of the Grand Master. And why the King is afraid to execute him.

IJERE

Because it breaks with tradition.

UKMAKA

That's what the king told me.
Explain to me.

IJERE

Grand Master Ayaju is the repository of all the memories, thoughts, knowledge, loves and mistakes that belonged to the Grand Masters from the first to him.

UKAMAKA

Who was the first Grand Master?

INT. TOMB OF THE GRAND MASTERS. DAY.

It is the moment when the Sacred Numerological Ritual takes place. Grand Master Okigbo is sitting on the rectangular stone table, the other Masters are kneeling and reciting strings of Numbers. Next to Okigbo's body is Ayaju.

Ijere's voice can be heard from off.

IJERE

(off)

The Forgotten Blue Father taught the Great Son, Numbers, and he became the first Grand Master of the Order of Numbers. Then followed 52 Grand Masters up to Ayaju, who is the 53rd.

(MORE)

IJERE (CONT'D)

When a Grand Master feels that he is dying, he chooses a Master to follow him. In the Tomb of the Grand Masters in the Cemetery of the House of Numbers, the Sacred Numerological Ritual takes place in which the dying Grand Master transfers all his knowledge, but also everything he has felt and thought, to the new Grand Master. After this transfer, the old Grand Master dies and the new Grand Master possesses everything in his mind and soul.

The white light emanating from the translucent aura on Grand Master Okigbo's body begins to turn green. The Masters continue to murmur strings of Numbers. The green aura slowly begins to move towards Ayaju, and when it reaches him, it turns blue. A flow of energy connects the head of Grand Master Okigbo to the head of Master Ayaju. From Okigbo the energy flow starts green and reaches Ayaju blue and enters the Master's body. The flow of energy between the two continues as the Masters kneel and whisper the strings of Numbers.

After a while, the flow of green energy ends, it has completely left the body of Great Master Okigbo and the last remnants of blue energy enter the body of Master Ayaju.

INT. NUMEROLOGIST'S HOUSE. DAY.

Ijere and Ukamaka, shut up. After a moment, two, Queen says.

UKAMAKA

I understand. If Ayaju is sentenced to death and executed, he will have no successor because he has not chosen anyone.

(Ukamaka is silent for a moment, two)

Very good.

(Ukamaka's conclusion surprises Ijere who looks at her in surprise)

A better way...

(and the queen stops, realising that she has spoken more than she should)

IJERE

Your Majesty, this is not good. Without a Grand Master who holds all the power and is recognised by all, the Order of Numbers will not be able to serve the Blue Royal House as it should. In order to maintain power in the Blue Fortress and the surrounding villages, you must effectively control the Order of Numbers. Only I can do that for Your Majesty.

Ukamaka looked into Ijere's eyes, which were sincere.

UKAMAKA

And what do you suggest, Master?

IJERE

Ayaju must be eliminated and robbed of everything he has.

UKAMAKA

How?

IJERE

Ayaju must be wounded in the neck so that he does not die immediately, but only feels that he has not much longer to live and will want to choose a Master to whom he can pass on his knowledge. Then I will take him to the Tomb of the Grand Masters and perform the Sacred Numerological Ritual. Driven by the fear that he is dying and that his knowledge will be lost, he will surrender everything to me, after which he will die.

UKAMAKA

And who will fatally wound Ayaju?

IJERE

(looks at Captain Ash
standing like a statue at
the door, then looks at
Queen)

I can't, I can only finish what was started in the prison.

And Ijere looks at Ukamaka. Ukamaka looks at him and the two are silent for a moment, two, three.

INT. EMA'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Ema is standing naked in front of the mirror, looking at the red spot near her left breast. The spot is almost round, visible and large. Ema is looking at the spot reflected in the mirror. There is a knock at the door.

EMA

Get in.

The bedroom door opens and Stone enters, closing the door behind him. Seeing it empty, Stone suddenly turns his back.

STONE

I apologise.

EMA

(laughter)

Come on, Stone, you've only seen the tip of the iceberg.

STONE

The Grand Duke is expecting you for breakfast, I'll tell him to get ready.

And Stone approaches the door.

EMA

I think I need a housekeeper. You cannot help me with all women's problems.

STONE

(also with his back to
Ema)

No. But the Grand Duke has a small number of servants.

EMA

Did the Grand Duchess not have a housekeeper?

STONE

Yes, she did, but she died a long time ago. I will convey your request to the Grand Duke. The Grand Duke is expecting you for breakfast.

And Stone opens the bedroom door and leaves, closing it behind him.

INT. DINING ROOM OF THE GRAND DUKE'S PALACE. DAY.

The Grand Duke and Emma are sitting at a long table with trays of food on it. Everyone has glasses from which to drink water.

THE GRAND DUKE

I know you need a housekeeper. And the Grand Duchess had one, she was her former nanny. When the Grand Duchess was born, her nanny was a 14-year-old child. She had been raped and got pregnant, but the child died at birth. Because her breasts were full of milk, she was taken to my father-in-law's palace to look after the newborn. They stayed together until the nurse died.

EMA

Didn't the Grand Duchess have another housekeeper?

GRAND DUKE

She tried twice, but no one could take the nurse's place.

EMA

Could she manage on her own after being served for so long?

GRAND DUKE

Learned.

EMA

I think I exaggerated my claim.

GRAND DUKE

Did not.

EMA

Yes, I did not control my pride. I have been alone all my life. Please forgive me, Grand Duke.

GRAND DUKE

Ema, I want something from you.

EMA

I am listening to you.

GRAND DUKE

In my dream, the Grand Duchess asked me to raise you as my child.

(MORE)

GRAND DUKE (CONT'D)

We desperately wanted a son to inherit my titles and wealth, but most of all I wanted my son to carry on my work.

EMA

Work?

GRAND DUKE

Yes, my work, my personal theories, thoughts and research. I feel that they all need more lives, not just one, mine.

EMA

Do they need my life too?

GRAND DUKE

Maybe your children too.

EMA

(slightly amused)
My children?

GRAND DUKE

I have a secret to tell you. But not now, let's finish eating and then we'll go to my laboratory.

And the two continue to eat.

INT. THE GRAND DUKE'S ALCHEMY LABORATORY. DAY.

Outside light streams in through the high windows, a fire burns in the hearth. On the tables are numerous containers, papers, bottles of various sizes containing all kinds of substances of different colours.

The door opens and the Grand Duke enters, followed by Ema.

GRAND DUKE

Come in, don't be afraid. This is my laboratory. And my secret, known to everyone in the Blue Fortress, is that I am an alchemist.

The door to the lab is closed by the Stone that remains outside.

Ema looked curiously at everything in the lab.

GRAND DUKE (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

I think everything is new to you.

EMA

Not just for me, I think it's new
for everyone in the Blue Fortress.

GRAND DUKE

Not really for everyone, but
certainly for many, many.

EMA

What is it all for?

GRAND DUKE

Alchemy is the art of discovering
the essence that sends you to the
Principle.

EMA

(repeat what the Grand
Duke said)

Alchemy is the art of... of...

GRAND DUKE

Discovering the essence...

EMA

Discovering the essence...

GRAND DUKE

That sends you...

EMA

That sends you...

GRAND DUKE

To the Principle.

EMA

What is this, Principle?

GRAND DUKE

The first impulse. The first force.
The first cause that started all
the processes in the universe that
led to the appearance of the world,
of man, and that will continue, who
knows in what directions.

EMA

But what is the use of knowing what
was in the past? Isn't it better to
find out what will happen in the
future?

GRAND DUKE

That's true. But to find out what will be in the future, we need to see what was in the past.

EMA

Why?

GRAND DUKE

If we understand how things have evolved, we will know how they will evolve in the future. If we discover the pattern of how things have evolved, we will be able to use it to know the future.

EMA

Mrs Cristina used the pattern in tailoring.

GRAND DUKE

How did Mrs Cristina proceed?

EMA

First she thought about what the dress should look like. Then she drew it on a piece of paper, that was the pattern. Then she took the lady's measurements and used the pattern to make the right dress for her.

GRAND DUKE

This is exactly what the Art of Alchemy does. It seeks to find the pattern of the past and then to build the world of the future according to its measurements.

EMA

And what are the measures of the Art of Alchemy?

GRAND DUKE

The higher ones are Faith, Hope and Love. The primary ones are Wisdom, Justice and Courage; and the secondary ones are Humility, Kindness and Politeness.

EMA

Why do you call it Art?

GRAND DUKE

Art is a way of life that only the man who has a certain vocation follows.

EMA

I have many questions, Grand Duke. With every word you say, many questions come to mind. What does it mean to have a vocation?

GRAND DUKE

All human beings are born with a purpose. This purpose is called "Calling".

EMA

And what is my calling?

GRAND DUKE

We will see. We'll start today on the path to discovering your calling.

EMA

Is it connected to the Red Spot?

GRAND DUKE

We must understand what this red spot means. In my dream, the Grand Duchess also spoke of it.

EMA

But you said that art is a way of...

GRAND DUKE

A way of life followed by the man who has a certain vocation.

EMA

What do you mean by a vocation?

GRAND DUKE

A man's vocation begins to take shape in his mother's womb. When the child is born, the vocation continues to take shape under the influence of the mother and father, but especially the mother.

(When he hears about Mum and Dad, Ema is sad. The Grand Duke notices this but continues)

(MORE)

GRAND DUKE (CONT'D)

When the child has its first memory, it becomes aware that it exists in this world and its consciousness begins to form. This is very much influenced by the calling. At the beginning of life there is an imbalance between consciousness and vocation. If man maintains this imbalance, he will be unhappy all his life. If he manages to balance it as much as possible, he will become happier and happier. Now, only the man whose balance is balanced or very slightly unbalanced can go on the path of Art.

And the Grand Duke is silent and looks at Emma. She is sad.

GRAND DUKE (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

You got sad when I talked about Mum and Dad.

EMA

(smiles sadly)

It is a great sorrow of my soul.

GRAND DUKE

I understand you. But you can turn this to your advantage.

EMA

How?

GRAND DUKE

Trust me to guide you through the labyrinth of your soul to find your calling.

Emma cries. The Grand Duke comes over and takes her in his fatherly arms.

GRAND DUKE (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

I will look after you as if you were my own daughter, just trust me and be optimistic.

Emma cries in the arms of the Grand Duke. He embraces her like a father.

EXT. WHITE FOREST IN THE WHITE WORLD. NIGHT.

Tasso, the White Fisherman and Old Argument are sitting around a fire.

WHITE FISHERMAN

I've walked a bit today, my friend Tasso. We must move faster.

TASSO

But why are we hurrying?

The White Fisherman is silent. The three eat. After a while Tasso asks the Old Argument.

TASSO (CONT'D)

Old Argument, what are you going to do in the Ash Grotto?

ARGUMENT

I don't know, my friend Tasso. I will die in peace.

The 3 said nothing. The old argument was very natural, he spoke without the slightest fear of death, as if he were preparing for something normal that everyone does. After a moment's silence, Tasso continued.

TASSO

Perhaps your time has not yet come, Old Argument.

ARGUMENT

Maybe...yes, maybe...no.

TASSO

We don't know anything about each other. We've never had the silence to say who we are.

(and Tasso pauses, then continues)

I'll begin.

(and Tasso prepares himself a little while the White Fisherman and the Old Argument look at him intently)

I'm 18 or 19 years old. I don't know exactly, I don't remember what my mother told me, but I am about that age. I had a very beautiful childhood, and when I think about it, I feel so nostalgic.

EXT. TASSO'S CHILDHOOD HOME. DAY.

It's a big yard with everything a householder needs, animals and tools of all kinds. Children between the ages of 2 and 7 play in the yard. The house is small but nice and freshly painted. Tasso's voice can be heard from off.

TASSO

(off)

There were 7 of us, 4 girls and 3 boys. I was 4 years old and always playing. We would run around until evening and then eat like hungry wolves.

INT. TASSO'S CHILDHOOD HOME. NIGHT.

In a smaller room, children are gathered around a table with a man in his 30s. They are all eating. A woman, also in her 30s, bustled around them, bringing food, which she placed on the table, and water in large clay cups.

TASSO

(off)

Mum never eats with us. We were like a pack of hungry wolves devouring the carcass of a dead, fat deer. All of us, led by my father, who was very tall, very strong and worked all day. Then we went to bed.

In another room, the same size as the first, the children sleep. The father sleeps in front of the door. They are all lying on blankets on the floor.

TASSO (CONT'D)

(off)

My poor mother slept in the kitchen. We had a big house with a kitchen and two rooms. We slept in the one in the middle in winter because it was warm, and in the one at the end in summer.

EXT. WHITE FOREST IN THE WHITE WORLD. NIGHT.

Tasso, the Old Argument and the White Fisherman are standing around the fire.

TASSO

Everything was fine until the Great Sickness. We all got sick. Within two days we all had red blisters all over our bodies. The last to get sick was my mother, who was also the first to die. Then my brothers and sisters. My father was the last to die. The animals were starving. Pigs and buffaloes broke through the gates and ran away, also hungry. I was the only one left alive. I got hot, hot, hot, hot, hallucinated and saw all my grandparents and ancestors. They were all saying, "Behave yourself, Tasso, it's not your time". Or, "Get out of the way, Tasso, I've come for others."

And Tasso is silent, a moment, two, three. The White Fisherman and the Old Argument fall silent and stare into the flames of the fire. Tasso continues.

TASSO (CONT'D)

Then one day I woke up. I was very weak, but alive. Dad was rotting next to me. He had buried them, all of them, and he died last. He smelled terrible and his face was rotten. I struggled up from the ground and out into the courtyard.

EXT. TASSO'S CHILDHOOD HOME. DAY.

The courtyard is deserted, desolate, Tasso comes out of the house and two dogs greet him. Tasso goes to the henhouse where he finds some eggs, takes them and eats them. Then he goes into the orchard to the fruit trees and begins to eat the fruit with great relish. The dogs are with him.

Tasso is near the house and goes down into the cellar, which is full of meat supplies, and begins to eat. Outside, dogs can be heard barking. Tasso listens.

TASSO

(off)

That day the villagers came to set fire to the house. They thought we had all died and came to chase away the sickness.

In the courtyard of the house, horsemen with burning torches throw them onto the roof of the house. Tasso comes out of the cellar. Dogs bark at the horses, people howl and set fire to the stable. The dogs bark in rage. The fire spreads everywhere. Tasso tries to sneak past the horses. A rider leans down and grabs Tasso by the shirt, puts him on the saddle and rides off with him, out of the yard. The other riders leave. The dogs bark and try to bite the horses. The house and the buildings in the courtyard are on fire.

EXT. WHITE FOREST IN THE WHITE WORLD. NIGHT.

Tasso, the White Fisherman and the Old Argument are around the fire. Tasso continues.

TASSO

A villager picked me up. He took me to a village and sold me to a blacksmith. He sold me for a high price because I was resistant, I had beaten the Great Sickness. The blacksmith was a very good man. I worked for him from the age of four and he helped me to become an apprentice.

And Tasso opens his shirt to reveal his chest. A tattooed horseshoe can be seen next to the heart, with a strings of Numbers underneath.

TASSO (CONT'D)

Then came the madness of collecting gold for the Queen. The blacksmith was killed by the king's soldiers, and I fled. Fortunately. I ended up at Old Chickpea, the baker on Merchants Street in the Blue Fortress. But even there the madness continued. We organized a barricade, which was destroyed by the soldiers' cannons. There I was arrested, tried and sent to the salt mines.

And Tasso, the White Fisherman and the Old Argument are silent, looking at the flames of the fire before them. A moment, two, three, no one says anything.

EXT. A STORM AT SEA. DAY.

The sky is dark and full of grey clouds. It's raining heavily. There are big waves on the sea. You can hear the voice of the white fisherman from the off.

WHITE FISHERMAN

(off)

We were 3 brothers, from a family of fishermen, with a house on the ridge by the Blue Harbour of the Blue Fortress. One day we were caught in a violent storm at sea. My father had a debt to pay, and we stayed at sea longer, even though we knew the storm was coming. But we didn't expect it to be so bad.

A small fishing boat is out at sea, buffeted by very large waves. There are three young fishermen on deck and a man in his 50s at the helm.

A huge wave rises in front of the fishing boat. On deck, the fishermen are tied to the objects on the small boat. The man at the helm looks at the immensity of the wave.

The wall of water rises and rises and rises.

WHITE FISHERMAN (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

(off)

I wondered how long this wave would go on, when it would stop. And it stopped. It stayed like that, a second, two, three. It seemed like a long time. I turned my head to look at my father. He looked at me and smiled. Then I heard the thump.

A huge mass of water covered the small fishing boat.

EXT. WHITE FOREST IN THE WHITE WORLD. NIGHT.

Tasso, the White Fisherman and the Old Argument are around the fire. The White Fisherman continues.

WHITE FISHERMAN

I awoke blinded by the sun. The sea was calm and I was holding a

large piece of wood in my hand. I floated for a few hours. When the sun went down, a friend of my father's, also a fisherman, found me and pulled me out of the water. When he saw me, he shuddered.

EXT. DECK OF A FISHING BOAT. DAY.

On deck, a fisherman in his 50s stares at a young man. The fisherman holds out his hand, wants to say something, but can't.

The young man in front of the fisherman has long hair that falls over his shoulders and is completely white, like snow.

EXT. WHITE FOREST IN THE WHITE WORLD. NIGHT.

WHITE FISHERMAN

My hair was completely white.

The three stand around the fire. Tasso and Old Argument are looking at the flames of the fire.

WHITE FISHERMAN (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

And since then my name has become
the White Fisherman.

(he pauses for a moment
and then continues)

I worked for various fishermen
until I bought my own boat. The man
who sold me the boat had a maid of
my age, a niece of his wife, whose
parents had died in the Great
Sickness. We liked each other and
got married. We had twins together,
a boy and a girl.

EXT. CEMETERY HOUSE NUMBERS. DAY.

Next to a wall are 3 pits with 3 stones at the end. On each
stone is a strings of Numbers.

WHITE FISHERMAN

(off)

But a wave... of hatred, this time,
was about to hit my life. On the
calm sea of my life, I didn't see
when the clouds of human madness
were gathering and I couldn't
defend my family. When I returned
from fishing, after being away for
three days, all I found were
graves. I felt that the sky was
burning and the earth was
splitting.

EXT. WHITE FOREST IN THE WHITE WORLD. NIGHT.

The three sit around the fire. The White Fisherman continues.

WHITE FISHERMAN

Years went by when I could no longer speak, hear or even see well. Until one day a vision came to me. Then I saw some blue gold coins in my hand, a rogue in expensive clothes and jewels on his hands beside me, and a Scribe at his wooden desk. Then I heard that I had sold my family home in Blue Harbour.

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

The White Fisherman jumps up to the neck of Noble M. and squeezes it.

EXT. WHITE FOREST IN THE WHITE WORLD. NIGHT.

WHITE FISHERMAN

Then they tried me for trying to kill Noble M. They sent me to the salt mine with my friend Tasso. That's where I met you, Old Argument.

ARGUMENT

I'll tell you my story, my friends, but there's still time. We'll have more quiet nights like this.

The three said nothing, staring at the flames of the fire before them.

INT. BLUE TOWER PRISON. NIGHT.

Ayaju lies on his wooden bed. It's dark, except for a torch embedded in the wall somewhere in the corridor. A black silhouette appears next to the iron bars of the cell where the Grand Master is locked. The silhouette moves very slowly, without making the slightest sound. Ayaju lies on the bed. The silhouette unlocks the dungeon door, there is a soft clink. Then there is silence. Ayaju lies on the bed. There is another soft clink. Then silence. Ayaju doesn't move from the bed. The dungeon door opens silently. Silhouette approaching Ayaju. As he reaches him, the Grand Master suddenly raises the Ebony Rod and strikes at the silhouette.

Surprised, the silhouette takes the blow well, grabs the Ebony Rod and snatches it from Ayaju's hand. He stands and pushes the silhouette two steps backwards. The silhouette throws down the Ebony Rod and pulls a knife from his coat. The two are facing each other. Silhouette tries to stab Ayaju with a knife, but he grabs the knife with both hands, but with the other hand, silhouet

te pulls another knife from under his coat and slashes at Ayaju's throat. Surprised by the swift blow, Ayaju remains motionless for a moment, two, three.

The silhouette detaches itself from the Grand Master, slips out and disappears.

Ayaju falls to his knees and remains there.

INT. ROYAL BLUE PALACE DINING ROOM. DAY.

The King and Queen are having breakfast together. Okot is at the right end of the table and Ukamaka is at the left.

UKAMAKA

Are you busy today?

OKOT

As of today, I'm going to start my own research.

UKAMAKA

I hope you find those Elders of the Order.

OKKO

If they exist.

UKAMAKA

They exist, that's for sure.

OKOT

How is it so clear?

UKAMAKA

The scroll is addressed to them.

OKOT

If it's original.

UKAMAKA

Are we having the same discussion again? About the signature and the role of the Grand Master?

OKOT

Okay, I understand. Besides, with Ayaju locked up, I'll be able to investigate without him interfering.

Just then, the door to the hall opens and Lord Down enters in a hurry. The Lord approaches Okot and tries to whisper something into his ear. The King shrinks away in annoyance and says.

OKOT (CONT'D)

Lord Down, please speak, I have no secrets from the Queen.

Lord Down is confused, but recovers and says.

DOWN

Grand Master Ayaju is dying.

The news takes the King and Queen by surprise.

OKOT

(marvels)

What?

DOWN

The guard found the Grand Master on his knees in the middle of the dungeon this morning, with a pool of blood around him.

OKOT

Why?

DOWN

He has a bleeding wound on his neck.

OKOT

Is he dead?

DOWN

No, Your Majesty, we sent help to him in the dungeon. He's not dead, but I don't know how long he can live. He has lost a great deal of blood.

Okot and Ukamaka look at each other in amazement.

INT. KING'S CABINET. DAY.

The cabinet door opens. The King enters, followed by Lord Down.

OKOT
(screaming)
What happened? You idiot, what are you talking about?

DOWN
The Grand Master has a wound on his neck, not deep enough to kill him, but not shallow enough not to affect him. He's lost a lot of blood. Aides sent to him say the Grand Master is alive, but they do not know for how long.

OKOT
Summon the Royal Council immediately.

INT. ROYAL COUNCIL HALL. DAY.

At the long table, the Counts Gamma and Deltta, the Marquises Epsilon and Ypsilon, General Psi, Queen Mother Halima and Queen Ukamaka are all seated. No one speaks, all are silent, waiting for the King.

The door to the room opens and Lord Down enters,

DOWN
His Majesty, the King.

Everyone doesn't get to their feet as Okot rushes in.

OKOT
You have heard what has happened.
(and the king sits down in his chair)
What do we do now? General Psi.

PSI
We must investigate...

OKOT
(interrupts Psi)
What do we do now, quickly. Marquis Epsilon.

EPSILON

We are choosing a successor to the Grand Master. I hear he doesn't have long to live.

OKOT

Then we break with tradition. The Grand Master must choose his own successor.

GAMMA

(in a steady, calm, mature voice, as if it were not his own)

Your Majesty, may I?

OKOT

(surprised at the Count's voice)

Yes, Count Gamma.

GAMMA

Count Deltta and I have thought of supporting the election of a Master to succeed Grand Master Ayaju.

(Marquises Epsilon and Ypsilon also look on in amazement at how beautifully and maturely Count Gamma speaks)

And the most suitable person for this is Your Majesty.

(The counts stand up)

Please, Your Majesty, choose a successor to Grand Master Ayaju.

The Marquises Epsilon and Ypsilon also rise.

EPSILON AND YPSILON

We agree.

General Psi stands up.

PSI

Please, Your Majesty.

The Queen Mother also rises.

HALIMA

Although all of this could have been avoided with a wise decision in time.

(MORE)

HALIMA (CONT'D)
 (and Halima stares at
 King)

I also support this proposal.

Ukamaka looks at the King and nods to agree.

INT. GRAND MASTER'S OFFICE. DAY.

The door opens and the 6 Masters enter. The last is Master Ijere, who closes the door behind him. They all sit down at the long table in the cabinet, but he leaves the chair where the Grand Master usually sits empty. For a moment, two, three, no one speaks. Master Ijere speaks first.

IJERE

As you have heard, King Okot has informed us that he will be coming to us to appoint a successor to the dying Grand Master Ayjau.

No one knows what has happened, but this morning the Grand Master was found in a pool of blood. He's not dead, but he's gone into a state of preparation for the Sacred Numerological Ritual. The King has asked us to choose a successor.

MASTER WITH GLOVES

According to tradition, the Grand Master must choose his successor.

UGONNA

Tradition must be respected.

MASTER BEARDLESS

I think we can make a small exception this time.

MASTER GENTLE

Why?

MASTER BEARDLESS

Because this is an exceptional situation, and exceptional situations require exceptional solutions.

IJERE

I think so. We are facing the risk that the Grand Master will die without being able to make the transfer. In that case, we must act quickly and find quick solutions.

MASTER WITH GLOVES

A quick fix does not mean we have to break with Tradition. That is an illegal solution, not a quick fix.

UGONNA

And I believe that even in these exceptional circumstances we can respect Tradition.

MASTER GENTLE

Tradition must not be broken.

MASTER LEFT EYELESS

And if we take the quick solution, Master Ijere, who would be the successor of Grand Master Ayaju?

They are all silent and look at Ijere, who doesn't answer immediately. After a while he says.

IJERE

But what would be the solution that would keep the Tradition intact, Master Left Eyeless?

MASTER LEFT EYELESS

As we do not have much time for deliberation, and as King Okot is due to arrive any minute, I propose that we vote. We have two options. Firstly, the quick solution of choosing ourselves a successor to Grand Master Ayaju that the King will accept, and secondly, to go to the prison so that the Grand Master can choose his successor.

MASTER GENTLE

Right, let's vote

MASTER BEARDLESS

And if the Grand Master can't choose his own successor, what do we do?

MASTER GENTLE

Then we will choose the successor, because we are sure that Grand Master Ayaju cannot do it himself.

UGONNA

Let's vote, we're running out of time.

IJERE

All right, we'll vote, we're in a hurry because the King must arrive and I'll present our decision to him.

The Masters nodded in agreement.

IJERE (CONT'D)

Who will vote for the solution to elect us, the successor of Great Master Ayaju?

(Ijere and Master Beardless raise their hands, then lower them)

Who votes against?

(The other 4 Masters raise their hands, then lower them)

Who votes to go to Grand Master Ayaju to choose his successor?

(Masters Gentle, Ugonna, with Gloves and Left Eyeless raise their hands, then put them down)

Who votes against?

(Only Ijere raises his hand)

Who abstains?

(Master Beardless raises his hand. At this point the cabinet door opens and Chimananda, Master Ijere's Apprentice, enters.)

CHIMANANDA

His Majesty the King.

Everyone stands up as the King rushes into the room.

Ijere runs up and stands before him. He bows, as does everyone else.

OKOT

This is urgent. The Grand Master doesn't have long to live. Have you decided?

IJERE

Yes, Your Majesty.

OKOT

Who have you chosen to succeed the
Grand Master?

IJERE

Me, Your Majesty, I am Master
Ijere.

OKOT

Good. Follow me.

And the King turns and rushes out of the room, followed by
Master Ijere, who is followed by his apprentice, who closes
the door behind him.

There is total silence. The other 5 Masters are frozen,
unable to believe what they have just witnessed.

We hear the door to the Grand Master's office being locked.

UGONNA

That bastard used us.

And Ugonna rushes to the door, but it's locked. Ugonna starts
banging on the door.

Masters with Gloves climbs out of the window and looks
outside.

MASTER WITH GLOVES

The King and Ijere are leaving in
the Royal Sleigh.

MASTER GENTLE

I think they plotted together. We
don't stand a chance.

Ugonna keeps banging on the office door, which won't budge.

MASTER GENTLE (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

Ugonna, hold still.

Ugonna looks at Master Gentle.

UGONNA

The door is locked. I jump out the
window.

The Master with Gloves comes down from the window and stops
Ugonna from approaching.

MASTER WITH GLOVES
 Ugonna, stop it, are you crazy?
 You'll break your neck, it's too
 high.

Masters Gentle, Beardless and Left Eyeless sit down at the
 table.

UGONNA
 And we let him steal from us?

MASTER WITH GLOVES
 Hold still, can't you see he has
 the Queen's permission?

Ugonna stops abruptly. Master Gentle turns to the Master with
 Gloves.

MASTER GENTLE
 You meant he has the King's
 consent, not the Queen's.

MASTER WITH GLOVES
 (he's very confused, he's
 really freaking out
 because he made a
 mistake)
 Yes, of course, I meant the King's.

MASTER LEFT EYESLESS
 But you said the Queen's.

MASTER WITH GLOVES
 I was wrong, I got confused.

UGONNA
 Is that so?

All Masters will be seated at the table.

MASTER GENTLE
 I feel like we're always beating
 around the bush and not daring to
 speak up.

UGONNA
 I'll say what I think.

MASTER BEARDLESS
 You're the youngest of us, you
 should speak last.

MASTER GENTLE
 And the least corrupt of us.

MASTER BEARDLESS

I think you speak more than you should.

MASTER LEFT EYELESS

I'm the eldest, so please be quiet. Say what you wish, Master Ugonna.

UGONNA

I have researched the scroll that the Queen gave to the King, the report of Grand Master Ayaju to the so-called Elders of the Order. I have researched the document with the Master with Gloves and we have a way of understanding something about this document.

MASTER LEFT EYELESS

More clearly, please. What is this about?

MASTER WITH GLOVES

The signature of Grand Master Ayaju at the bottom right of the scroll is original. 2. The text has 3 strings of Numbers written in Master Ijere's style. Only he uses them in this way, none of us or the Grand Master. And 3. There are 6 strings of Numbers that Ayaju only used in this form when he was a Master, and he had changed them since he became a Grand Master.

MASTER GENTLE

In conclusion?

UGONNA

In conclusion, we're trying to understand why Master Ijere's imprint appears in this text and not the imprint of another Master.

MASTER BEARDLESS

But that doesn't mean it has the Queen's approval.

MASTER WITH GLOVES

And today?

MASTER BEARDLESS

Why do we keep pretending that we don't know that Master Ijere wants to be Grand Master and that he has difficulty accepting Grand Master Okigbo's decision?

UGONNA

And then he uses the King without the King realising it? Manipulating him? What if the King finds out? Master Ijere, I think his future is safe between four planks.

It's getting quiet. Each Master is with his own thoughts.

INT. BLUE TOWER PRISON. DAY.

In his dungeon, Ayaju lies on a wooden bed with two Scribes watching over him. Voices can be heard in the corridor. Ayaju has a bandage on his neck and is breathing heavily.

The King approaches the cell, followed by Ijere and Chimananda. Behind them are four soldiers from the King's Guard and Captain Ash. The latter is carrying a stretcher.

The Scribes stand up and take a few steps away as the King enters the dungeon.

OKOT

Is he alive?

SCRIBE1

Yes, Your Majesty, he lives.

The King approaches the wooden bed.

OKOT

How long will he live?

SCRIBE1

We don't know, 3 or 4 hours. We think the sunset will not take him alive.

OKOT

Quick, get him.
(and the king signals to
the soldiers)

(MORE)

OKOT (CONT'D)

The soldiers put down the stretcher, lift Ayaju from the bed and place him on the stretcher, then lift him from the floor and leave the dungeon, followed by Okot.

Ijere enters the dungeon and approaches the Ebony Rod, stands for a moment and looks at it without touching it, then takes it and leaves the dungeon.

EXT. THE BLUE TOWER. DAY.

By the wooden gate of the tower is the Royal Sleigh, with horses behind it.

The gate opens and soldiers come out with a stretcher carrying Ayaju. The soldiers put the stretcher on the sledge and the King, Ijere, Chimananda and the soldiers get on the horses. The sleigh moves off, followed by the others.

EXT. HOUSE OF NUMBERS. DAY.

It is an ordinary day in the square in front of the House of Numbers, with people going about their business.

The Royal Sleigh and the other riders enter the square and stop in front of the stairs. The soldiers dismount and take the stretcher from the sleigh, climb the steps, followed by Okot, Ijere and Chimananda, and enter the House of Numbers.

EXT. CEMETERY OF THE HOUSE OF NUMBERS. DAY.

The soldiers with the stretcher carrying Ayaju come out of the House of Numbers and make their way down the main avenue. They are followed by Okot, Ijere and Chimananda.

They all arrive at the Tomb of the Grand Master of the Order of Numbers. Ijere takes the key to the iron door from his coat and opens it. The soldiers with the stretcher enter the crypt, followed by Okot, Ijere and Chimananda.

INT. TOMB OF THE GRAND MASTERS. DAY.

The soldiers place Ayaju's body on the rectangular stone table in the middle of the room, where it is half dark because the interior is dimly lit only by the light coming in from outside. After placing Ayaju's body, the soldiers bow and climb the stairs to the exit, Captain Ash being the last to leave.

Inside is a wooden desk with an open book on it. Only Okot and Ijere are left.

OKOT

Is everything ready?

IJERE

Yes, Your Majesty, everything is ready, I have the book and the place where I will place the body of the Grand Master.

On the stone table, Ayaju is breathing heavily, panting, and the bandage around his neck is full of blood.

IJERE (CONT'D)

Your Majesty, I must begin the ritual.

The King looks at the Grand Master who is lying on the large rectangular stone.

OKOT

(sad)

I didn't think this would be the end of our friendship, Ay. I miss you already. But I swear I'll keep trying to find out the truth about that damn scroll.

(King pauses, one, two, three)

You are my friend, Ay, not a traitor.

The King stands for a second or two and looks at Ayaju's body. A gasp comes from the Grand Master's throat. The King turns and walks up the stone steps, reaches the top and exits through the iron door. Chimananda is seen closing the iron gate and standing outside.

Left alone, Ijere looks at the strings of Numbers written in the book on the wooden desk in front of him.

Ayaju gasps a little louder than before.

Ijere looks at Ayaju for a moment or two, then closes his eyes and begins to mumble unintelligible Numbers from the book in front of him on the wooden desk.

Amos, Ayaju's apprentice, emerges from the darkness.

Ijere recites the strings of numbers in a muffled voice.

Amos approaches Ijere, who is unaware of him, and continues to recite the numbers. Amos picks up a club and prepares to hit Ijere over the head.

INT. BLUE TOWER PRISON. NIGHT.

In the dungeon are Ayaju, Halima and the Queen Mother's Captain.

 HALIMA
 (to Ayaju)
 I'll get you out of here, don't
 worry.

The two are silent and look at each other.

 AYAJU
 Your Majesty, I have a request.

 HALIMA
 I am listening.

 AYAJU
 I wish to speak to my Apprentice,
 Amos.

 HALIMA
 Where can we find him?

 AYAJU
 At the House of Numbers. I think
 he's in disgrace now. He must be in
 the stables.

Halima looks at her Captain, who nods, then looks at Ayaju and nods in his direction as well. Ayaju nods in response.

INT. THE STABLE OF THE HOUSE OF NUMBERS. NIGHT.

Amos is washing the stable floor. Brook is also there, taking hay to the horses.

The Queen Mother's Captain appears at the stable door. He is standing and looking into the stable. Amos notices him and goes over to him.

 AMOS
 Hello.

 CAPTAIN
 Hello.

AMOS
Would you like anything?

CAPTAIN
(does not answer
immediately, looks at
Amos)
Are you an Apprentice?

AMOS
Yes.

CAPTAIN
Do Apprentices work in the stables?

AMOS
Those who love work.

CAPTAIN
And those who no longer have a
master by their side.

Amos is surprised by this remark and falls silent.

CAPTAIN (CONTINUING) (CONT'D)
Whose Apprentice are you?

Brook approaches them curiously.

AMOS
As you said, by a... Master who is
no longer with me.

CAPTAIN
A mere...Master?

AMOS
I see you know all about me. What
do you want?

CAPTAIN
I have business with you tonight.

AMOS
What business?

CAPTAIN
I come on behalf of your Master,
who is no mere... Master.

INT. BLUE TOWER PRISON. NIGHT.

Ayaju is in the dungeon. Amos approaches the iron gate.

AMOS
Good evening, Grand Master.

AYAJU
(approaching Amos)
Amos, my boy.

AMOS
Are you well?

AYAJU
Yes, for now. How are you?

AMOS
Master Ijere sent me to the
stables. That's where I came from
anyway. He said my fate would be
decided by your judgement.

AYAJU
I don't think I'll end up in court.

AMOS
Will they let you go?

AYAJU
Yes, but not in the way you want.

AMOS
But how?

AYAJU
We don't have time. Listen
carefully. If you find out that
I've done anything wrong, you must
go immediately and enter the Tomb
of the Great Masters in the
Cemetery of Numbers.

AMOS
I don't understand. Why?

AYAJU
If you find out that I've done
something to my health, you must go
to the Tomb of the Grand Masters of
the Cemetery and hide there.

AMOS
How do I get in?

AYAJU
On the wall opposite the entrance
door is a window with iron bars.

(MORE)

AYAJU (CONT'D)

The bars can be removed. Take them out, go in and put them back. Then find a hidden corner and stand there. And have something to protect yourself with.

AMOS

Why?

AYAJU

You must stop Ijere from doing what he wants. Then we must both hide in the White World.

AMOS

Master Ijere?

AYAJU

Yes. Now go and do as I have told you.

INT. THE STABLE OF THE HOUSE OF NUMBERS. DAY.

Chimananda enters the stable and looks around.

CHIMANANDA

Boy! Boy, where are you?

Brook looks up.

BROOK

Yeah.

CHIMANANDA

Prepare Master Ijere's horses quickly, we're leaving in a few minutes.

Chimananda runs out of the stable. Brook hurries to prepare the two horses.

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

The scribe Nonso comes out of the House of Numbers, goes down the stairs and heads for the stables. On the way, he sees Amos crossing the square with a large sack on his back.

NONSO

Amos!

Amos turns and sees him.

AMOS
Hello, my friend.

NONSO
Not good at all. Have you heard the news?

AMOS
No, what news?

NONSO
Grand Master Ayaju is seriously injured.

AMOS
(stunned)
How?

NONSO
No one knows. Two scribes have gone to the dungeon in the Blue Tower to check on him and see what condition he's in.

Amos can't hear Nonso anymore, only Ayaju's words: "If you find out that I'm hurt...". Amos comes back to reality and he hears Nonso.

AMOS
...nothing is known. There will be a Council of Masters to decide...

AMOS (CONTINUES) (CONT'D)
(interrupts Nonso)
Nonso, my friend, I have work to do.

And Amos runs off in the direction of the stable.

INT. TOMB OF THE GRAND MASTERS. DAY.

Ayaju lies on the rectangular stone table inside the chapel. Ijere is reading strings of Numbers in a whisper next to Ayaju. Amos approaches Ijere with a club, picks it up and strikes him hard on the head. Ijere stops suddenly, turns his head towards Amos, his eyes turn red, he stays like that for a second, two, three, then he falls like a log on the floor.

Amos removes Ayaju's body from the stone table and places it on the floor. He takes the Ebony Rod and sticks it into the ground. The stone table moves and you can see the stone steps leading down. Amos takes Ayaju's body down the steps.

EXT. WHITE WORLD. DAY.

The cliff wall opens up and Amos emerges, carrying Ayaju, and starts down the narrow path towards the White Forest.

Amos reaches the White House near the White Lake and enters the house with Ayaju behind him.

INT. WHITE HOUSE. DAY.

Amos sits Ayaju down on the small bed. He looks at the Great Master, then turns and leaves the hut.

EXT. WHITE WORLD. DAY.

Amos climbs the path up the stone wall to the opening. He enters and the wall moves back into place, covering the opening.

INT. TOMB OF THE GRAND MASTERS. DAY.

Amos emerges from the hole under the rectangular stone table and pulls out the Ebony Rod, and the stone table moves back into place, blocking the way to the White World. Amos climbs up the wall with the Ebony Rod, removes the window bars and steps outside.

In the Tomb of the Great Masters, only Master Ijere remains, lying unconscious on the floor.

INT. KING'S CABINET. NIGHT.

In the cabinet are Okot and Ukamaka. The cabinet is well lit by several candles. The Queen is sitting on a chair while the King is walking around the room.

OKOT

It takes a long time. It's never taken this long.

UKAMAKA

Only once have you experienced something like this first hand.

OKOT

And it was short-lived. It got dark and the Master didn't come.

UKAMAKA

Maybe it's more complicated this time.

OKOT

See, I told you it's not good to do it any other way than saying Tradition.

UKAMAKA

Now we go forward.

OKOT

I need to know what's going on.

Ukamaka rises from his chair, takes the bell from the table and rings it.

The door to the Royal Cabinet opens and Lord Down enters.

DOWN

Your Majesty.

UKAMAKA

Call Captain Ash.

Lord Down bows and leaves. After a moment, two, three, Captain Ash enters.

UKAMAKA (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)

You go to the Tomb of the Great Masters and see what happens there.

Captain Ash bows and comes out.

OKOT

I should have sent Lord Down as well.

UKAMAKA

Leave it to my Captain, he knows what to do.

EXT. NUMBER HOUSE CEMETERY. NIGHT.

Chimananda is standing at the iron door of the Tomb of the Great Masters. Captain Ash approaches with a burning torch in his hand. Chimananda sits down, but gets to his feet when he sees Ash.

ASH

What's going on here?

CHIMANANDA
Nothing. This is not good.

ASH
Why is that?

CHIMANANDA
It takes a long time. It's never
taken this long. It can't be good,
what's going on down there.

ASH
We have to go in.

CHIMANANDA
(getting scared)
No, it's no good. It's a curse if
we interrupt the Sacred
Numerological Ritual.

Ash brushes against the iron door and opens it.

CHIMANANDA (CONTINUED) (CONT'D)
(grabs Ash by the arm)
It's something sacred.

ASH
There is nothing sacred for me.

He pushes Chimananda and enters the tomb.

INT. TOMB OF THE GRAND MASTERS. NIGHT.

Ash descends the stone stairs with a burning torch in his
right hand. The Captain reaches the bottom and looks around.
He approaches the rectangular stone table and pauses. Down on
the floor he sees Master Ijere standing in a pool of blood.

INT. KING'S CABINET. NIGHT.

The cabinet door opens and Lord Down enters, followed by Ash.

ASH
Your Majesty.

Okot stands up impatiently.

OKOT
What is it?

ASH

Master Ijere lies unconscious in a pool of blood on the floor of the Tomb of the Grand Masters. He's not dead, he has a pulse. Grand Master Ayaju is nowhere to be found.

OKOT

What?

ASH

The Tomb contains only the body of Master Ijere.

OKOT

And Ay?

ASH

The body of Grand Master Ayaju is nowhere to be found.

OKOT

But where is he?

ASH

I don't know.

There is silence for a second, two, three.

ASH (CONT'D)

What to do with Master Ijere?

Okot is completely stunned and sits on his desk chair like a robot. Everyone is silent. After a while, Ukamaka asks.

UKAMAKA

Where is Master Ijere?

ASH

I left him in the Tomb, I didn't know what to do with him.

UKAMAKA

(to the King)

What are we to do with Master Ijere, King?

(Okot says nothing, he has a lost look in the distance. Ukamaka looks at Ash)

Take the Master to where his Apprentice says, perhaps he will save him.

Ash bends down and walks out. Lord Down follows, closing the door behind him.

Only Okot and Ukamaka remain in the Royal Cabinet. The King looks away without saying anything. Ukamaka looks at him and also wonders. Copyright: 0402/12.12.2024/DACINSARA

END OF EPISODE 6