

FADE IN:

EXT. BOULEVARD - DAY

An infinite number of Africans line the roadway, back toward the city of Kinshasa, dancing and singing to a distant beat.

Standing on shingles, vehicles, and tree limbs, the most foolhardy perched on electrical poles. All eager for that one glance at aristocracy.

EXT. BOULEVARD - DAY

Heavily-armed soldiers riding in jeeps flank a convoy of jet-black limousines.

Soldiers hold back a hive of surging BLACK FACES and gnashing white teeth. Those breaching the road are hit with AK-47s.

EXT. BOULEVARD - DAY

A rent-a-crowd of traditional AFRICAN DANCERS, robed in colorful dashikis, play a motley of musical instruments.

BANDLEADER

Djalelo tu muakidilayi balowpe
betu.

(turns, smiles at the
musicians)

Milele na milele.

Emerging from the crowd is a life-sized placard of PRESIDENT MOBUTO held up by a MAN wearing a sandy-colored suit. He approaches the Band.

MAN

(waving the placard)
Lokuta monene.

The Band are caught off-guard, and stop singing.

MAN

Lokuta monene.

One after another from the encircling CROWD begin to chant.

CROWD

Lokuta monene. Lokuta monene.

MAN

(spits at the placard)

It is a big lie if you think this
world will change.

The Man melts into the crowd, and the Band resumes playing.

EXT. BOULEVARD - DAY

A cavalry of Harley Davidson motorbikes come to a halt.
Soldiers and undercover Operatives scan the anxious herd.

Appearing more like an assassin's weapon than a telephoto
lens, a SOLDIER spots the intruder and raises the alarm.

The CAMERAMAN is tackled from behind by a burly OPERATIVE.

SOLDIERS rush in, kicking the vulnerable Cameraman senseless.
The crowd steps back in fear.

SOLDIER # 1

Who do you think you are?

A Soldier examines the device, while the others pin him down.

SOLDIER # 2

Botika ye.

(assertive)

Leave him now... eza camera eza
camera.

Bloodied Cameraman composes himself. The Soldiers leave,
except for one who continues to slap him across the face.

SOLDIER # 3

You are nothing but an animal.

EXT. BOULEVARD - DAY

Spanning several blocks, the contingent of VIPs wave from
their presidential limousines.

An array of armed soldiers repel the frenzied mob.

Behind a bullet-proof Mercedes, the Bishop of Rome gestures divine guidance to his followers.

A stampede breaks through the cordon. Emergency Personnel attend the injured.

EXT. BOULEVARD - DAY

The sound of gunfire, and the crowd jolt. Onlookers yield to an overladen VW minibus as it stops at an intersection.

PASSENGER # 1

We must go...

Impatient PASSENGERS crouched on the roof of the minibus tumble to the ground, and run for their lives.

PASSENGER # 2

...no use, we are dead.

A flustered DRIVER turns the ignition over, but it won't start. The rest spill out the doors and windows. The Driver kicks open the door and flees.

SOLDIER

(points)

Arrest those savages.

Soldiers move in on the melee, detaining the stragglers.

SOLDIER

Do not let them get away.

They strike the Passengers with fists and boots before dragging them beyond view of the fast approaching procession.

A Soldier blabs into his walkie-talkie. A tank breaks the cordon and trashes the minibus.

EXT. BOULEVARD - DAY

JORDAN SIMARO, mid 20s, handsome, tall, with athletic qualities, stands behind a group of well-dressed STUDENTS.

Limousines roll into view.

Jordan nods, and the Students turn and drop their pants and shirts, exposing backsides penned in white lettering to the converging entourage.

INSERT: BOYCOTT BAD REGIMES. WHERE IS HUMANITY. HYPOCRITES. JUSTIFY YOUR INTEREST.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

DIGNITARIES chuckle. Their African CHAUFFEUR ignores the circus act. A PRESS SECRETARY snaps a shot from her camera.

EXT. BOULEVARD - DAY

Hapless Soldiers look on as a flat-bed truck ferrying foreign JOURNALISTS film the bizarre spectacle.

INT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

Wooden tables and chairs litter a thatch-roofed tavern. A noisy CROWD watch as the day's highlights unfold on a TV mounted behind the bar.

MASISI, mid 20s, balding, and overweight, beer in hand, joins his FRIENDS at the bar.

KEMBOLA

Your ass looks bigger than a baboons.

The clashing of bottles and glasses merge with loud cheers echoing out into the street.

ON THE TV

We see a group of semi-naked Protestors bending over to reveal a litany of content.

BACK TO SCENE

MOPEPE

At least I don't have a face to
match.

ON THE TV

A French reporter interviews a Minister.

MINISTER

...we regret this action which was
meant to destroy our relationship
with the world. We thank the Saint
Pope for this historical event...

BACK TO SCENE

JORDAN

We succeeded in making our presence
felt today.

MASISI

All you did was air out your stinky
underwear.

KEMBOLA

He is right. Nothing will come of
it.

MAMA FEZA, 60s, hair in braids, pale voodoo-face, hands over
the beers to the athletic-looking trio.

KEMBOLA

(pulls out a wad of cash
and pays her)
Only regret.

MOPEPE

If you are mocking Jordan than you
are laughing at me.

MASISI

Homeboys from the same province. On the same team. You don't understand how things work around here.

KEMBOLA

Where are you going with your studies? In this country it is not about who deserves it, but who is loyal to the Dictator and his friends.

JORDAN

Yes, I understand most graduates end up as domestics pushing trolleys.

MASISI

Those with no education are the ones getting the best jobs and opportunities.

(finishes off his bottle)

...with money, you can be happy. Have anything you want. Even a wife.

MOPEPE

Money won't give us a university degree.

(takes a sip from his bottle.)

...takes love and dedication.

JORDAN

Thank you, brother. You have given me reason to fulfil that dream.

Jordan stands up to leave.

MOPEPE

Where are you going?

JORDAN

My final exams are coming up tomorrow. I need to study.

Mopepe gestures to Kembola to buy more drinks.

MOPEPE

Stay for another...

JORDAN

I see you at the game next week.

MOPEPE

(shakes his hand)

Take care.

KEMBOLA

Okay, let him go. We are going to have fun.

(yells as Jordan exits)

Stay with your books and don't stress yourself with those useless theories.

Tavern Keeper plants beers on the bar.

KEMBOLA

(something catches his eye)

These celebrations won't be complete unless I get laid.

MASISI

(follows Kembola's gaze)

But you already have a woman.

KEMBOLA

If you are asking me why I need another woman.

(downs his bottle)

Then go ask the King of Swaziland why he has thirty-three wives.

MOPEPE

(laughs, then slaps Kembola's hand)

Man cannot feed the same woman banana everyday.

MAMY WENGE, young, tall and slender, with natural dark skin, charms every man's whim as she ambles over to an empty table.

MOPEPE

(looks about)

Who is she waving at?

Masisi smiles and waves.

KEMBOLA

How do you know her?

MASISI

Her name is Mamy Wenge. We met
sometime ago.

KEMBOLA

How come I don't know her?

MOPEPE

Don't you see? Masisi has something
going on with her.

KEMBOLA

As a friend, why don't you
introduce her to us?

MASISI

Just because you are buying the
drinks, you think every woman wants
to bed you.

(fondles the bottle)

She isn't easy.

KEMBOLA

Are you saying, she has no interest
in you?

MASISI

That is not true.

Masisi loosens his shirt button.

MASISI

She didn't want to hurt me. So she
said: I will think about it.

MOPEPE

Most women often make excuses.
Means she may or may not be
interested.

KEMBOLA

Why are we still here?

(stands)

Time for some action.

MASISI

Anyway, you will never have her.

Clientele watch in envy as the trio nudge toward her table.

MASISI

Hello, Mamy. Can we join you for a drink?

MAMY

(smiles at Masisi)

Come, sit with me.

MASISI

These are my friends: Mopepe and Kembola.

(plops beside her)

Long time no see. How has it been?

MAMY

(crosses her legs)

I am fine, thank you. How's business?

MASISI

Everything is perfect.

Kembola snaps his fingers. Mama Feza takes his order.

MAMY

Are you still selling cars?

MASISI

Today, I made a good commission.

Mama Feza returns with a tray full of beers and glasses.

KEMBOLA

(gives Masisi a foul look)

Since business is so good, perhaps you can pay for this round of drinks.

MASISI

Unfortunately, my credit cards are not accepted here.

Kembola pays Mama Feza.

KEMBOLA

Oh, I see. And what kind do you have... American Express?

Masisi opens a bottle.

MAMY

(places her hand over the cap)

Leave mine for now, Masisi.

(to the others)

Excuse me, but I must powder my nose.

She giggles, as the clumsy trio grapple with her chair.

KEMBOLA

Now you are pretending to be me. What kind of voodoo-tricks are you playing here?

MASISI

Did you expect me to tell her the truth.

MOPEPE

There is no shame telling someone you repair motor cars.

MASISI

Nobody is interested in a grease monkey.

KEMBOLA

Listen to me. I have a plan.

Before Kembola can speak further, Mamy returns to the table.

MAMY

Tonight the stars are out. Life is wonderful.

Masisi cracks open a bottle and pours her a glass.

KEMBOLA

(flashes a smile)

Are you committed?

MAMY

Yes, I am hoping to marry my fiancée next month.

(takes a sip)

We have been together for seven-years.

MOPEPE

Why such a long delay?

MAMY

He lives in Canada.

Kembola grins.

MAMY

...for the last five-years it has been very intense, all the letters and phone calls.

MOPEPE

So you easily wait five-years to be with your man?

MAMY

Had I been born a bird or a witch, I would fly to him.

MOPEPE

It must frustrate you, all this waiting.

Mamy frowns, looks down at the table.

KEMBOLA

There are many African women who are in this situation.

MAMY

(licks her lips)

My only desire is to be with him.

Mama Feza collects the bottles.

KEMBOLA

(circles his finger for
another round)

Five-years without a woman. He must
be some kind of god.

They laugh.

MAMY

He said that he is committed to me.

(pours everyone a drink)

All I know is that I love him.

MOPEPE

Temptation from another man must be
hard to resist when he is rich and
handsome?

MAMY

(gazes at Mopepe)

Even though I come here to drink, I
am not after any man.

Awkward silence between them.

KEMBOLA

Mopepe, please stay with the young
lady.

(beckons Masisi)

Masisi...

MAMY

(studies Masisi's face)

Where are you going?

Masisi shrugs.

KEMBOLA

We must go outside to discuss some
private business.

EXT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

Soft music lingers through the calm night.

A teenage STREET-VENDOR drudges over a coal-fired grill.

KEMBOLA

I will die if I do not have her.

They chew on skewered meat.

MASISI

It is impossible. Many men have tried and failed.

KEMBOLA

You will also have a chance to bed her.

MASISI

Believe me, she is not a prostitute.

KEMBOLA

Tell me, which man can say no to a beautiful woman?

(shifts his glance)

First, we must make her drunk.

MASISI

But how? She drinks like a small fish.

KEMBOLA

Go back to the garage and get me some brake fluid.

MASISI

You have the keys. Why don't you go?

KEMBOLA

Because it is my plan. Now go.

MASISI

Why must I always be your slave?

KEMBOLA

Just do it, mother-fucker, if you want to get pussy.

Kembola watches Masisi scurry off.

KEMBOLA

...and be quick about it.

INT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

MAMY

Jordan is the one studying
medicine, and you are the gifted
engineer.

MOPEPE

Not exactly. Basketball is my real
passion. That is what I live for.

MAMY

(stands)

Can I buy you a drink?

MOPEPE

As long as it doesn't break your
budget.

She opens her purse, smiles, then sneaks over to the bar.

MOPEPE

(whispers to himself)

What a honey-pot.

EXT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

A shadowy figure approaches on foot. Kembola keeps watch.

MASISI

(sweaty and exhausted)

What use do you have for this?

KEMBOLA

Give it to me.

(looks at the label)

Go ask Mopepe and Mamy to join us.

INT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

Masisi barges in.

MOPEPE

Where is Kembola?

MASISI

Outside.

(looks around)

What happened to Mamy?

MOPEPE

Gone to buy drinks.

MASISI

Kembola wishes to talk to you.

MOPEPE

What about?

MASISI

Come, you will see.

EXT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

KEMBOLA

Enjoy my friend.

(gives Mopepe a meat
skewer)

While the night is still young.

MASISI

Kembola has big plans for us to
make love to Mamy. I will be the
first, and you will be second.

Mopepe staggers toward him.

KEMBOLA

Fool! I told you to keep your mouth
shut.

Masisi helps Mopepe sit on a plastic beer crate.

MOPEPE

How can you have sex without her
blessing?

Mopepe steadies his head.

MOPEPE

That is rape.

KEMBOLA

No, no, you are not witnessing everything. Rape is when you force someone to sleep with you.

INT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

Tavern Keeper serves Mamy. She returns, places the bottles down on a deserted table, looks about.

A MAN at a nearby table, points to an exit. She looks at her watch.

EXT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN

MASISI

People do these kind of things.
 (takes another meat skewer
 from the Vendor)
 Very often they are too drunk to
 even care.

KEMBOLA

Look at it as our little secret. I
 promise you, she won't mind.

Mopepe looks on.

KEMBOLA

Wait one minute then fetch her.
 (places his hand on
 Masisi's face)
 ...be careful. Say nothing.

INT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

Kembola mingles with the Crowd at the bar, looks across the smoke-filled room, and spots Masisi entering.

Mamy smiles, she opens the bottles and pours for one.

MASISI

Leave them for now. Everyone is
 waiting outside.

Masisi leads her out. Kembola moves past the clutter, sits at his table. He glances about, pours brake fluid into a bottle.

EXT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

Mamy nibbles away at the skewered meat.

MOPEPE

Are you fine?

MAMY

Of course. Why? Is something wrong?

MASISI

Don't concern yourself. He has had too much to drink.

Kembola startles Mopepe.

MOPEPE

Where did you go?

KEMBOLA

To the men's room.

(to Mamy)

Where is your drink?

MAMY

Sorry but no one said to bring them.

They watch her leave.

KEMBOLA

Aha, we have got her.

Masisi slaps him a high-five.

INT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

Mamy spots a tray and exits with the drinks.

EXT. CHEZ MAMA FEZA TAVERN - NIGHT

Masisi takes a big swig and burps.

MAMY

We must call your doctor friend
sometime and go out.

Kembola sneaks a look as she pours herself a drink.

MOPEPE

Invitations to party are out of
season for Jordan.

KEMBOLA

(gives Mopepe cash)
Get us some more beers.

MAMY

Enough!
(checks her watch)
What woman feels safe walking the
streets at this hour?

KEMBOLA

Please stay a little longer. Masisi
can take you home.

Masisi falls on his face.

MOPEPE

Yes, very late. Better we cool off.

Mamy goes to his aid. Masisi stammers his words.

KEMBOLA

No, no, my friends. Please wake up.
(slaps Masisi's face)
He is not drunk. Only tired from
working all day.

Kembola and Mopepe sling Masisi's arms over their shoulders.

MAMY

Men, you are all the same.
(eye's narrow)
What are you looking at? Take him
with you.

EXT. DIRT TRACK - NIGHT

Partly lit by the moon, monster-like shadows move along a bushy landscape. A dog barks in front of a mud hut.

MOPEPE

He weighs more than a baby
elephant.

INT. MUD HUT - NIGHT

They set Masisi down on a straw mat beside his sleeping WIFE.

KEMBOLA

(whispers)

Sleep like a baby, idiot! You have
cost me everything.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAR PARK - LATE AFTERNOON

PROFESSOR KAYEMBE, 50s, grey-cropped hair and goatee, looking resolute in an olive suit, checked shirt and mismatched tie.

FLAVIO, tall, bony, with youthful ebony features, attired in loose-fitting threads that clash against Jordan's white suit.

JORDAN

Hello.

FLAVIO

Good to see you again, Professor.

The Professor places his briefcase in the boot.

PROFESSOR

Where is Mopepe?

JORDAN

No sign of him in class.

FLAVIO

I haven't seen him all week.

PROFESSOR

Give him a moment to arrive. After
all he is worthy of our respect.

INT. PEUGEOT - LATE AFTERNOON

The Professor at the wheel.

PROFESSOR

Doctor Mabasele is the Special
Adviser to the President.

(adjusts his mirror)

On most days he can be a reasonable
man.

FLAVIO

Then politics is off limits.

Passing shanty towns blur across the passenger window.

PROFESSOR

Exactly.

Jordan turns and gives Flavio a dismayed look.

PROFESSOR

Purpose of our visit is to secure
sponsorship dollars.

JORDAN

Earlier you said: he has the power
to influence others.

PROFESSOR

Yes, but we must stick to the
agenda. Not debate how the regime
has squandered the nation's mineral
resources for their own benefit.

EXT. MANSION - LATE AFTERNOON

Armed SOLDIERS flag down the Peugeot arriving at the gates.

SOLDIER # 1

What is your business here?

PROFESSOR

(winds down his window)

I have made arrangements to see
Doctor Mabasele.

SOLDIER # 1
(looks at his manifest)
Names?

Soldiers order them out of the vehicle while they search it.

SOLDIER # 1
(eyes off Jordan and
Flavio)
You are not on this list.

PROFESSOR
He is expecting us. I am a former
colleague of his from the
University.

The Soldier steps away, and blabs into his walkie-talkie.

EXT. MANSION - LATER

SENTRIES keep watch as the Peugeot rolls past manicured gardens nestled along a private road.

Two GUARDS grab hold of gold-plated handles and swing open the wide mahogany doors. The intrepid trio enter.

INT. MILITARY COMPOUND - LATE AFTERNOON

Dismal lighting lay bare walls and floors spattered with blood and excrement.

A dozen decrepit souls wither away in a cramped prison cell.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Trembling and gagged, uttering pitiful whimpers, Kembola sits hog-tied to a stool.

A SOLDIER lashes his naked flesh with a chicotte.

COLONEL ZOMBA, mid 20s, wild-looking, conditioned by the luster of brutality, signals to the Soldier to stop.

ZOMBA

Equality in Black Africa is a myth.

Zomba unsheathes his knife and cuts Kembola's muzzle.

ZOMBA

A man has been poisoned. And you are responsible.

KEMBOLA

I beg of you, please. It was an accident.

ZOMBA

Why should I believe you?

Zomba picks up the chicotte.

ZOMBA

The wife of a dead man does not ask for forgiveness.

(circles his prey)

She is asking for blood to be spilled.

Blood-red streaks run down Kembola's back.

ZOMBA

Rule of authority must be obeyed.

INT. MANSION - LATE AFTERNOON

The Professor, Flavio and Jordan admire the opulent courtyard setting and pool.

A WAITER wheels over a beverage trolley, serves them juice and coffee.

DOCTOR MABASELE, paunchy, middle-aged conservative, dressed in satin robes, steps into view.

He gestures to his BODYGUARD to leave. The visitors rise to their feet.

DOCTOR

Well, well, isn't this a pleasant surprise.

PROFESSOR
(gestures to the
lavishness)
Who can resist all this?

DOCTOR
(chuckles)
These days I am too scared to weigh
myself.

PROFESSOR
Over indulgence is a Western
disease. We Africans pride
ourselves on wellbeing and morals.

Doctor's face registers the verity.

PROFESSOR
May I acquaint you with our team
captain, Jordan Simaro.

DOCTOR
(shakes his hand)
So you are Congo's finest?
(grasps Flavio's hand)
And you must be the vice captain?

PROFESSOR
(coughs)
Acting vice captain.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

ZOMBA
These are serious charges. Who put
you up to it?

MOPEPE
I don't know what you are talking
about.

ZOMBA
The protesters.

He grabs Mopepe by the throat.

ZOMBA

We have an informant who has testified against you.

MOPEPE

They are liars.

ZOMBA

(places a transcript on his desk)

In exchange for your freedom, you must sign this document charging Professor Kayembe with treason.

MOPEPE

Go to hell.

Zomba backhands him.

ZOMBA

Bastard! Who are you to defy me?

INT. MANSION - LATE AFTERNOON

PROFESSOR

Tomorrow night's game is likely to be my last as coach.

Jordan and Flavio make faces at each other.

PROFESSOR

Preoccupations. This fine-line between conformity and juggling academic tasks.

MABASELE

On the phone you sounded optimistic. Why the gloom?

PROFESSOR

Consent to lecture at the University of Paris has been endorsed.

MABASELE

A tentative position of course.

PROFESSOR

(nods)

My last request is that you take up
chairmanship of the basketball team
while I am away.

MABASELE

Trust and mutual esteem is
something one cannot buy.

Mabasele hugs him.

MABASELE

Accepted with honor.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Zomba picks up a chicotte and machete from the desk.

ZOMBA

These were the tools of our
Oppressors. A cure for our
sickness.

A subdued Mopepe stares ahead.

ZOMBA

(gives his men a knowing
look)

It was not so long ago that we
forget.

Soldiers force Mopepe's hands out on the desk.

ZOMBA

(regards him shrewdly)

This is your choosing not mine.

The machete comes down hard. Mopepe blinks.

ZOMBA

(beckons his men to
release their grip)

I see you have no fear of death.

Mopepe's limbs are intact. Zomba frees the wedged blade.

ZOMBA

Everybody loves a champion.

Mopepe's face tightens.

ZOMBA

Your captain, Jordan Simaro. Does he also have a death wish?

MOPEPE

He is innocent.

ZOMBA

This is not true. We have many signed confessions confirming his guilt.

MOPEPE

These are confessions made under torture.

INT. PEUGEOT - NIGHT

FLAVIO

Most politicians have one thing in common with whores.

Professor turns the wheel.

PROFESSOR

And what may I ask is that?

FLAVIO

They don't care who they screw.

JORDAN

Be kind to our new benefactor, Flavio.

EXT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Convulsive moans emit from the walls. Two smirking Soldiers stand to attention outside the doorway.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Mamy's skirt hitched up to the thigh; exposed breasts bounce in unbridled rhythm as she arches her back in a rush of ecstasy. Zomba riding her like a wild beast.

EXT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

ZOMBA (O.C.)

You are free to go.

Door opens. Mamy adjusts her skirt. Zomba falls in behind.

ZOMBA

Report here once a week for the next three-weeks. By then the necessary travel documents should be in order.

Soldiers compete for her attention.

ZOMBA

Bring him to me.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

ZOMBA

(holds out a pen)

Have you made a decision?

MOPEPE

Swear it on the grave of your ancestors.

ZOMBA

No harm will come to him. You have my word.

Mopepe signs, throws the pen on the desk.

MOPEPE

Then it is done.

ZOMBA

Good! Now you are my property.

INT. PEUGEOT - NIGHT

Professor pulls up by the road. A light glows from a passageway near concrete dwellings. Jordan opens the car door.

PROFESSOR

Here, before I forget. Give this money to Mopepe.

(passes him an envelope)

Tell him, he sits on the bench.

JORDAN

Don't joke with me, Professor.

Without him there can be no victory.

Professor smiles.

EXT. CONCRETE DWELLINGS.

Jordan fumbles with the key to his room. Muffled voices catch his attention. He finds the LANDLADY'S door ajar.

JORDAN

Mama Lopango.

(pushes open the door)

Do you have a moment?

A knife wielding BANDIT lunges at him. He slams the door on the intruder's hand. The knife falls to the ground.

LOPANGO (O.C.)

Let go of me.

JORDAN

(kicks open the door)

What is happening here?

The Bandit spits out profanity, before brushing past him.

LOPANGO

A thief who does not pay his rent.

JORDAN

(picks up the knife)

Are you okay?

LOPANGO

(hugs him)

One minute more and...

JORDAN

Is there someone I can call?

LOPANGO

No, I am a widow.

JORDAN

Anytime you need me...

(kisses her forehead)

Thank you for allowing me to wear these clothes.

LOPANGO

Keep them. My son is in the military. I know he would be grateful for your kindness.

INT. MUD HUT - AFTERNOON

ASSYNA SIMARO, late 40s, soft sisterly face, dressed in a sari that shrouds her obesity.

ASSYNA

(shooes off kids stealing food from her kitchen)

Mutoke mweye batoto amuna eshima.

INT. SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

School desks piled to one side of a small classroom.

A TEACHER, 50s, bright, alert eyes, gray hair lines along his temples, stands by the door and collects the admission fee.

TEACHER

Always you come with excuses.

A TEENAGER, wearing oversized clothes, hands over crumpled notes.

TEACHER

Instead of five Francs, you give me two Francs.

(smiles as Assyna enters)

Do you think I urinate petrol to run this generator?

Assyna balances a full basket of sweet cassava on her head.

TEENAGER

What about her?

TEACHER

I cannot take money from the mother of Goma's favorite son.

(hands him a ticket)

This is why we are here today.

TEENAGERS and MEN jam chairs in front of a small TV. Wires lead out of an open window to a noisy generator.

INT. BASKETBALL STADIUM - AFTERNOON

A FILM CREW set up their equipment near the sideline. FANS and SUPPORTERS clamber toward the balcony.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER

The TEAM look relaxed and euphoric.

PROFESSOR

He's not coming.

Jordan pulls on his number six jersey.

JORDAN

(laces up his trainers)

This is not like him.

PROFESSOR

(looks at his watch)

We don't have much time.

INT. BASKETBALL STADIUM - LATER

Lead by Jordan, the University Team jostle amongst themselves as they make their entrance from the tunnel.

FEMALE FANS

yelelelelele... yelelelelele...

Flavio throws a chest pass to a Team Player who whips around to his right and shoots.

MILITARY BAND strikes up a chord.

INT. SCHOOL - LATER

ON THE TV

Flavio dribbles across center court, lobs it high.

Jordan charges toward the backboard, leaps, catches the ball in midair before slam dunking it into the hoop.

BACK TO SCENE

Screams of joy as overzealous fans jump on their chairs.

TEACHER

Please, stop this nonsense.
Celebrate, but do not break my
chairs.

MAN

We are very sorry.
(looks about)
The match has not started yet.
(points to a Teenager)
This one is making too much noise.

TEACHER

If you continue, I will chase you
out. Then you can go and hear the
game on your battery radio.

INT. BASKETBALL STADIUM - LATER

Mopepe spearheads the MILITARY TEAM into the arena. He bounces the ball across court with a brave look on his face.

MILITARY SUPPORTERS

Boma ye boma ye boma ye.

Professor motions to Jordan in a vague defensive gesture.

JORDAN

Has he gone mad?

Mopepe, wearing the number five jersey, snubs provoking glances from his former Teammates.

PROFESSOR

The people's enemy have created a Devil.

FLAVIO

I prefer to die than let them win.

Colonel Zomba struts the court like he owns it.

ZOMBA

Better you die on the field than lose.

(off Flavio's look)

I like it.

The Professor calls his team into a huddle.

PROFESSOR

(to Jordan)

Go with your heart.

(to the Team)

Make yourselves proud. Win this for me.

FLAVIO

Play close defense. Pressure their weak points.

INT. BASKETBALL STADIUM - LATER

REFEREE, 40s, tall, lean, with missing front teeth, dressed in cotton white shorts and top. An imitation gold chain and whistle dangle from his neck.

ZOMBA
Take their Defenders out of
position.

Referee blows his whistle.

ZOMBA
(to Mopepe)
You hold the key.
(mops his eyebrow)
Guard him with your life.

Teams break their huddle.

Mopepe and Jordan at center court for the tip-off.

INT. SCHOOL - LATER

Viewers' faces are glued to the screen.

TEENAGER
Go with him. Wear him down.
(claws his cheeks)
Run... throw him the ball.

TEACHER
You!
(turns up the volume)
Do you want to disappear?

INT. BASKETBALL STADIUM - LATER

Referee signals an illegal dribble.

BUKATIDO, a gentle giant, polished shaved head, riveted to
the floor like a tree, steadies and shoots.

The ball banks off the backboard, rattles the rim and rolls
off. The Crowd gasp.

JORDAN
(shakes his head)
Not good enough.

Opposing Team win the rebound. Players sprint back across the
center-line.

ZOMBA
(checks the scoreboard)
Go my tigers.

Mopepe sneaks past a Defender, intercepts the ball and scores
and uncontested goal.

Boos and cheers boom from the crowd.

PROFESSOR
You have less than forty-seconds on
the clock.

A flurry of movement before a Defender drops the ball in low
to Flavio.

PROFESSOR
(motions his players to
move back)
Create an opening.

Flavio's closely guarded. He spins clockwise, searches, can't
pass. Referee signals a three-second violation.

INT. BASKETBALL STADIUM - LATER

Mopepe makes contact with Flavio, and falls.

FLAVIO
Son of a dog.

Referee calls a foul.

MOPEPE
(to the Referee)
He tripped me.

The Crowd boo the decision.

JORDAN
What is wrong with you?

Mopepe shoulders him.

MOPEPE
(mumbles)
I hate this game.

JORDAN
...put your mind at ease, brother.

MOPEPE
(leers at him)
Forget about me.

Mopepe shoots for goal as the siren sounds.

INT. SCHOOL - LATER

The screen goes blank. Everyone gives a frustrated sigh.

TEACHER

Let me have a look.

EXT. SCHOOL - LATER

Expectant Teenagers watch from an open window as the Teacher pours fuel into a tank, then pulls the starter cord.

INT. BASKETBALL STADIUM - LATER

The Players spill onto the court.

Bukatido and Mopepe jump for the tip-off.

PROFESSOR

Shut him down. Do not give him space.

Players rummage for the ball. Flavio takes possession, outruns his Opponent, leaps and throws.

The ball falls a metre short of the hoop. Jordan doubles back, snatches up the ball and rams it into the basket.

ZOMBA

Prove to me you are warriors.

Defensive Guard fumbles the ball. Jordan steals it back. Mopepe pressures him. Jordan sets up a shot and scores.

He follows up with a victory salute to the Crowd.

FANS

Jordan, Jordan, Jordan.

Unnerved by the Crowd, Zomba slaps a CAMERAMAN filming him.

ZOMBA

Stay out of my way.

Referee blows his whistle. The Teams huddle.

ZOMBA

I cannot be humiliated on national television. Do you hear me?

Restless Players listen in silence.

ZOMBA

Sacrifices are to be made. Or you answer to me. Understand?

Crowd rejoice.

KAYEMBE

Without success the torment of life
is meaningless. We have trained
hard for this day.

(off their ardent looks)
Go out there and punish them.

INT. BASKETBALL STADIUM - LATER

Offense Defender throws to a Team Player on wing.

Mopepe throws up a shot and scores.

Flavio dribbles the ball wide, spins, and heads across court.

PROFESSOR

Pick up the pace.

Roused by Supporters, Jordan and Mopepe go head-to-head.

Bukatido cuts back to the basket, thwarts a shot for goal.

Opposition Players cluster around the ball.

Ball's flung wide. Jordan seizes it, throws from inside the
three-point line, and delivers.

Mopepe elbows him.

JORDAN

Is this the way you want the game
to end?

Mopepe levies a fleeting glance at Zomba.

MOPEPE

I have a debt to pay.

Crowd teeter on the edge of hysterics.

JORDAN

Don't abandon your friends.

Corner Guards cut back to the key. Jordan slips in behind
Mopepe, takes a pass, pivots, and shoots for goal.

JORDAN

Unless you have morals, you yield
to a tyrant.

A Player barrels down court. Jordan's forced to guard Mopepe.

MOPEPE

What reason must I give you?

Mopepe receives a pass, then backs in on Jordan.

Whistle blows, the Referee awards Mopepe the ball.

JORDAN
Hold up your beliefs for the world
to see.

Flavio contests the Referee's decision.

MOPEPE
Someday we may learn from our
mistakes.

Teams jostle each other.

JORDAN
Take back what is yours.

Mopepe looks confused.

JORDAN
Your self-respect.

The Referee halts play.

Zomba senses trouble, runs his fingers across his throat.

Soldiers pull the plug on all media coverage. There's uproar.

Zomba nervously fingers his weapon, flicks open the holster.

ZOMBA
Level the score, and I ask for
extra time.

The Crowd fall silent.

MOPEPE
(takes a deep breath)
God... forgive me...

Ball's in flight. It recoils off the rim.

ZOMBA
Can you believe this shit!

Referee blows his whistle: GAME OVER. The crowd roars.

Mopepe looks on, as Jordan and his Team celebrate the win.

ZOMBA
(draws his weapon)
This is how you repay me?

Jordan's expression changes.

Mopepe notes the fear in his former teammate's eyes, and a language that makes no sense.

MOPEPE
(risks a grin)
Brothers of Africa... never stop
dreaming.

Zomba takes aim and fires.

Mopepe crashes to the floor like a controlled demolition.

FADE OUT.