

THE ROYAL BLOOD CANNOT BE MIXED

A 3 act Play

By

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Synopsis

During the mid-sixteenth century, the king, his daughter, his brother and some civil servants admire the work of a young artist in the kingdom of Kongo. The artist has sculpted a stunning likeness of the princess's face. The king is so pleased with the artist's work that he promises to give him anything he would like in return. The artist, in love with the king's daughter, asks to marry the princess. Will the king honour the artist's request?

Author Biography

John Tshiamana NAMBOMBE was born in Central Africa, started acting at the age of twelve before studying Drama at the National Institute of the Arts. He has worked as an actor and director both in Kinshasa and Brussels. He has a BA (HONS) in scriptwriting at the University Centre, Doncaster and MA in Scriptwriting for ScreenMedia and Stage at the University of South Wales, Newport. In May 26th 2013 he performed as co-lead in a political play at the Hay-on-Wye festival. He has published two plays.

Characters

Garcia	The artist
Alvaro II	The king
BEATRIZ	The princess
BERNARDO	The king's brother
Dona Zabela	King's mother
Joao	Justice civil servant
Pedro	Foreign affairs civil servant
Ne-Nsaku	Commander-in-chief of the army
Ndungidi	The king's shaman
Simao	First notable
Other notables, messengers, guards, peasants and his two children, dancers (male and female), Ne-Nsaku's favourite wife	
...	

Prologue

In the darkness, before the opening, a traditional song sung by women and men is heard.

When the curtain rises, women and men dressed in multicoloured linen form a circle and dance. In the middle stands a young man who plays the drum. It is the courtyard.

An old man enters using walking sticks to walk and which stop him from falling. He sits on a traditional chair in the corner of the stage. He stands and walks.

STORYTELLER We are in the middle of the sixteenth-century in the ancient kingdom of Kongo. At the heart of the political edifice of the kingdom is the capital, the centre of all activity. The site offers the double advantage of a central position and excellent natural defence against enemy attack. Violence, however, remains the privilege of a multi faceted sovereign: one brutal and tyrannical, the other justice-loving and conciliatory.

BALLET I

Around the statue of Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo are men dressed in multicoloured linen covered up to their hips, and women covered up to their breasts. They are dancing. In the middle is a gentleman who plays the drum.

STORYTELLER The country was born in violence; down through the successive reigns power has always been taken by force; force has remained a fundamental value and its miracles

attributed by the existence of Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo, who delegated his power to a shaman who is the protector of women, men and children. The country's conflicts resembled civil wars and are noted in several old accounts. They resulted not only from rivalry for power, but also from economic competition, which was intense in a region where Negro slave trade found its outlet and where centuries of exchange with European slave traders were established. Vita Ntu, Ka Mabundu ko; war was the business of the chief, not the subjects.

Men and women dance in the frenzied sounds of drums and traditional songs like in the beginning.

STORYTELLER Then King ALVARO II arrives. The kingdom is in its political summit. ALVARO II is the King. Yes, a King who rules with equity and impartiality. Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo is the supreme god for all in the Kingdom and what it represents. (Pause) He's an intermediary between men and the spirits of the ancestors, which use Nkisi to cure people. (Pause) When an individual encounters hardship and fears it means a spirit has breached him, then it is necessary to consult a diviner, the Nganga, who often instructs the afflicted. He adds medicines to certain Nkisi in order to achieve well-being.

Men and women dance to the frenzied sounds of drums and traditional songs like in the beginning.

STORYTELLER ALVARO II, the King gives his subjects the opportunity to participate in decision making using contradictory debate. The activities of the royal court are supported by an expansive system of civil servants. And the most fearsome is Ne-Nsaku. He makes life a misery for villagers using extortion, bribery and assassinations. The

fact a sculptor loves the Princess does not please the commander-in-chief of the army. GARCIA is his sworn enemy, because he wants to marry the princess BEATRIZ, the woman whom he loves. However, the official reason is: "Royal blood cannot be mixed." But don't forget one thing: "Red is the royal blood."

Men and women dance in the frenzied sounds of drums and traditional songs.

STORYTELLER Can you hear the power of the sound of the drum? The drums, symbols of royalty and power, guarantee vigour and fecundity of the very existence of kings and political leaders - and also give out the word of war. Except this time it is not about the war, but a typical rejoissance of the kingdom's subjects who want to please the king.

BALLET II

Around the statue of Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo, men dressed in multicoloured linen covered up to their hips, and women covered up to their breasts carry out a dance. In the middle is the gentleman who plays the drum.

ACT I**Scene 1**

Sculptors workshop. Different traditional objects are displayed on the wall. **GARCIA**, the sculptor, dresses in plain linen fixed securely around the waist. He's finishing the sculpture of the princess's face. The Princess **BEATRIZ** is well adorned and dresses in a long multi coloured tunic extending from her neck to ankle.

GARCIA Woman? Or shall I call you wife? Today, I am shaping your face, which will be admired from generation to generation as proof of my infinite love.

BEATRIZ I will be your wife from eternity to eternity.

GARCIA How will your father react if he finds out about it? Could you convince him?

BEATRIZ My father is an understanding man. I know how he acts and reacts pretty well. The King my father wants my happiness. The only predictable antagonists will be his Notables. They are very conservative. For them, I am the princess, which means breaking taboos and tradition if I marry a sculptor.

GARCIA That is why I am wondering about those conservative men who only know one word: "*Tradition*"

BEATRIZ I know, we will face strong opposition, but we must not stop. Prejudices and chattering of the kingdom will never separate us.

GARCIA The power and strength of our love will break all those who will want to hinder it.

BEATRIZ In two weeks time, my father, his Notables and his civil servants will come and visit your workshop. Show him my

likeness. I am sure my sculpture will please him. Then, do not hesitate; express to him your feelings about me.

GARCIA Under no circumstances shall I allow people to destroy this love, because it has been increased by what we have been through together.

GARCIA finishes the sculpture and hands the sculpture to the princess.

BEATRIZ What wonderful work!

The princess put the sculpture on the floor, and embraces GARCIA.

BEATRIZ It's splendid! I have never received such a gift in my life before. I will do everything to take my sculpture to the royal palace. My father will admire it night and day, and the spirits of my ancestors will lead my mother to come to contemplate this wonderful sculpture, the like of which she has never been seen before.

GARCIA holds the princess by the right hand.

GARCIA Now, go back. You know that at this time, you must stay with your grandmother and help her in certain tasks.

Scene 2

Royal palace. In every corner are wooden Kongo sculptures made with nails which represent "Nkisi Nkondi" or the power figure, the dwelling place of an ancestral spirit used by Kongo divinity. Behind the king, a Kongo Ivory trumpet with a carving of a Royal figure is hung. King ALVARO II sits on a well adorned throne. He is dressed in a long multicoloured tunic, which covers him from neck to ankle. Near him sits his brother, the prince BERNARDO, who also dresses in a long tunic, but different to the King. On either side of the throne sit Notables, each dressed in a piece of cloth tied firmly around the waist, and above the knee another piece of cloth, which is tied across the chest and the back.

ALVARO II Gentlemen, I welcome you. Some time ago, our kingdom knew a troubled period. We lost our valuable civil servants during the war against our neighbours. The reason of your presence here is the confirmation of your appointment. (*After a pause*) JOAO.

JOAO stands.

ALVARO II (*continues*) Today, you shall have Justice's responsibility in the Kingdom. You will judge and condemn culprits and acquit innocents with proof and evidence. Be righteous and equitable. Are you be ready to be committed?

JOAO Yes, your Majesty. I am.

ALVARO II Ne-Nsaku!

Ne-Nsaku stands

ALVARO II (*continues*) I appoint you commander-in - chief of the army. Your job would be to avoid all future rebel

incursions in our land. Are you able to take this new responsibility to the point of sacrificing your own life?

NE-NSAKU Yes, your Majesty. I am and I promise to be faithful to your Majesty and in the kingdom.

ALVARO II Pedro!

PEDRO stands.

ALVARO II (*continues*) I appoint you to be responsible for Foreign Affairs. Are you ready to respect the code of good neighbours and be respectful to our guests?

PEDRO Yes, your Majesty. I am.

ALVARO II: (*takes his sword and put it on the shoulder of each*) On the fourteenth day of May 1455, I declare you civil servants.

Scene 3

Forest of FISIMA. Traditional manufacturing of palm wine is occurring. There is wine in palm calabashes. Peasant's children, a boy and his beautiful daughter are on the stage. They are boiling the traditional alcohol drink.

PEASANT (*to his children*) Make sure it is boiling properly. I don't want people to die because of my alcohol.

PEASANT'S SON Are you afraid of going to prison?

PEASANT Not to prison. Is it the death penalty with the new commander-in-chief of the army.

PEASANT'S DAUGH Oh! The honourable Ne-Nsaku.

PEASANT Yes. Evil like I have never seen in my life.

PEASANT'S SON Can you hear that? People are coming here.

PEASANT Yes. What are they coming to do here? Let see. Oh God! Speaking of the devil!

Enter Ne-Nsaku and his favourite men.

NE-NSAKU (*arrogantly*) Peasant! (*Laughing*) Are you surprised?

PEASANT No. Not really, honourable notable.

NE-NSAKU Commander-in-chief, please! My men have informed me that you have not yet paid your tax for you protection.

PEASANT: My lord! I do not have money at the moment. This year, the palm tree and canes did not make good wine. Next month, I shall pay twice as much as usual.

NE-NSAKU (*roars with Laughter and to his men*) Have you heard that? Tell peasant how much Nzimbu someone who failed in the payment owes to the commander-in - chief of the army next time?

NE-NSAKU'S MAN Four.

NE-NSAKU Good. Have you heard that, peasant?

PEASANT Yes, my Lord. I...

NE-NSAKU (*Looks at the girl*) We shall retain her as a hostage.

PEASANT No, my lords. Pity!

NE-NSAKU Tell me, peasant. Is she betrothed to someone?

PEASANT Yes, my Lord. She is betrothed to Kiabelua's son.

NE-NSAKU Kiabelua's son? This mugger? (*To his men*) Take the girl away.

PEASANT Mercy my Lord. She has been very helpful since her mother passed away.

One of Ne-Nsaku men goes towards the girl and hold her.

PEASANT (*kneels*) Spare my daughter, my Lord, I shall pay four times.

NE-NSAKU Good. (*Makes small steps*) Release her.

Exit Ne-Nsaku and his men.

Scene 4

Royal palace. ALVARO II, BERNARDO, DONA ZABELA, and the princess BEATRIZ sit on the floor, dress long tunic extending from the neck to ankle with decoration at the hem. A similar piece of cloth extends across the chest. They assist in a traditional rite performance by NDUNGIDI, the shaman, who dresses in raffia. He holds a wand and casts a magical spell.

NDUNGIDI Get out from here! Let Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo protects the one who reigns among us with justice and fairness. Get out from here malevolent spirits that bring darkness. Let Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo protect our King and his family. (*He walks back to the King and kneels.*) Majesty, you are the greatest king on earth. Your Kingdom is the largest, most powerful and beautiful in Africa. You take care of your subjects. You treat them with kindness. When you give a feast for the principal men of the capital who come to visit you from everywhere, you regale them magnificently with the best millet bread, much meat, and mwamba in abundance. Our ancestors sent me to grant you force and strength to rule this Kingdom. Your reign will last for years and years. No malevolent spirits will be able to destroy you. Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo will protect you. The great way is not the work of men; the way of death, it is Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo A Mpungu Tulendo, who made it. Nobody can give you death. Nzambi

A Mpungu Tulendo A Mpungu Tulendo processes us and eats us.

ALVARO II Ndungi, you've all my confidence. From generations to generations, your family has been loyal to my family. In misfortune or in the happiness, they have always been near our family. Our gods bless you too.

NDUNGIDI Your Majesty! Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo sees all and rules all. This will be always done. He has given us basic laws, and traditions which derive all their power from reference to the beginning age. It was his law and his absolute wisdom that underlies the oaths and rituals of loyalty.

BERNARDO We can't go against his wishes, shaman Ndungi. We owe him reverence and respect.

NDUNGIDI Majesty! This morning, some of the notable of yours will try to oppose to your desire, but Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo will always be with you.

ALVARO II Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo deserves our devotion. (*To DONA ZABELA and BEATRIZ*) Ladies, Notable's Council will soon begin.

DONA ZABELA and BEATRIZ exit.

Scene 5

Morning time. Tom-tom sounds announce the commencement of the elders' council. Enter PEDRO, JOAO and others Notables and civil servants council. NE-NSAKU is the last to enter. The Notables are dressed in coloured loincloths, which cover them from hip to feet. Some minutes later, the King re-enters with two guards. JOAO claps his hands.

JOAO Gentleman, the King ALVARO II. All stand.

NDUNGIDI holds a statue, moves slowly to the King's throne, and starts incantations.

NDUNGIDI Oh Majesty! The Master of the Universe! You are the protector of our Kingdom against malevolent forces. You are the protector of our wives and our children. Without you, no life exists. We are here to honour your greatness. You provide the light and the rain, which sprinkle our harvest. Be blessed by our gods and our ancestors. We are here to glorify you. We are...

NE-NSAKU (*interrupting*) Oh Ndungidi! You, shut up and stop this humbug.

NDUNGIDI Humbug? What are you talking about?

NE-NSAKU I am talking about you, humbug. His majesty does not need your flattery. Do you forget your role? You are here to predict the future and especially to tell us when our enemies will attack us. Of course *you* have only bad omens. And another thing, in this Kingdom, Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo A Mpungu Tulendo ya Mpungu is our God. We have to glorify only his name.

NDUNGIDI Does your rank of a dignitary give you the right to defy the ancestors and the established order?

NE-NSAKU Established order? Established order? I am neither defying ancestors nor the established order. Do you want to cast a spell on me? Who was the last person you put a spell on? Ah! I remember now. Matondo's husband. (*Pause*) Why? This is because you desired his woman. Very funny, isn't it? Poor little man! Now he cannot walk anymore. Nor can he perform in the marital bed.

Notables amused by this. Ndungidi turns on them.

NDUNGIDI Sacrilege! There is the natural power of nature, which is sacred. The force of domination which is political and powerful comes from our ancestors and tradition. The second is derived from the third and this leads to permanent order. Transforming these powers just for innovation will lead to disorder. Honourable Ne-Nsaku has to respect the order.

NE-NSAKU Philosophy! Philosophy! Always philosophy!

NDUNGIDI Insane person.

NE-NSAKU No. I am not insane. You are insane.

NDUNGIDI How dare you insult the protector of all spirits? Tell us about your concubines. To carry out some superstition, one of them sacrificed her baby. Do you remember? She strangled him and buried the body in the Kenge's field. She thought this act would increase her fertility. It's ridiculous isn't it?

CHORUS This is ridiculous. This is ridiculous.

NDUNGIDI You came and asked me for help. I gave you idols to protect you, your concubines, your family and your house.

Shall I continue?

NE-NSAKU Rubbish. I did not do such thing.

NDUNGIDI Rubbish? I know many secrets in this Kingdom.

ALL NOTAB Oh! Oh! Oh!

NDUNGIDI No one can challenge me.

PEDRO Have you no shame, you two? It is a dishonour of you to wrangle in front of his Majesty. Today is the tenth anniversary since her Royal Highness passed away. We accept the duty to honour her memory. (*To his Majesty*) Your Majesty! Forgive us for this misunderstanding.

ALVARO II Our concern today is to seal our bond with the Mani Soyo. Nevertheless, our spies tell us the chief of Mani Soyo is trying to help the rebellion.

PEDRO What can we do your Majesty?

NDUNGIDI (*raises his wand in his right hand, a statue on the left, and steps toward notables*) Have we lost faith in our gods?

NE-NSAKU Always wand and statue in your hand. What do you think to do with that? I command the armed forces of this Kingdom. Our soldiers are sufficiently equipped to fight any army.

BERNARDO Silence! What is the matter with you two today? What kind of rivalry is this? We should be discussing the current problem. We should look to the interest of the Kingdom. Your arguments are beyond pathetic.

PEDRO Majesty! We are really sorry about this argument.

ALVARO II Dear compatriots, today is the tenth anniversary of the death of her royal highness. We cannot forget her because she did many good works in the country. But, today we have another priority which means there is no official ceremony for the queen. The situation is extremely serious. Our Kingdom is threatened by rebels. Their swords are more powerful than ours. I accept that times are very tough at the moment, but quarrels between us will simply destroy the Kingdom. We have to extend our Sovereignty and our territorial area of influence, annexing rebellious provinces. We are and remain the powerful Kingdom in Africa. The villagers have to contribute and make some effort. Now! (*To Ne-Nsaku, the commander in chief of the army*) Can you explain your plan?

NE-NSAKU (*stands and carries the map*) Thank you very much your Majesty. I will recruit all males between the ages of fourteen and forty.

ALVARO II Honourable Ne-Nsaku. Fourteen years?

JOAO Your Majesty! Shall I suggest sixteen years old?

ALVARO II What is your suggestion, BERNARDO?

BERNARDO Sixteen years old is a reasonable age. I agree with honourable JOAO.

ALVARO II: Pedro?

PEDRO Sixteen as the honourable Joao said.

ALVARO II: Honourable Ne-Nsaku! Go on.

NE-NSAKU: At the moment, a smaller corps of heavy infantry will be necessary. I will require soldiers to hold two weeks worth of food upon reporting for campaign duty.

(*Produces the map*) We will take the position from the North to South and West to East. We will defeat them. We must encircle enemies on all corners.

PEDRO Is that all?

NE-NSAKU What do you mean?

PEDRO You know what I am talking about. Your plan is unclear. We know your position. You will attack from North to South, West to East. However, you do not tell us how you would proceed.

JOAO: We need a coherent plan, otherwise...

NE-NSAKU (*interrupting*) I know their position. In order to raise support against our enemies, we have to make concessions to others. One of the most important concessions is to forge an alliance with the Duke of Kimpanzu and Mbwila.

PEDRO Are you sure?

NE-NSAKU Yes, of course. Instead of having the Kingdom fall into the hands of Soyo and its allies, we have to stick with my plan.

Notables murmur.

ALVARO II Alright. (*To Ne-Nsaku*) I hope that your plan will work; otherwise, we will be all reduced to slavery. Dispatch a spy to go and find out what is happening on our borders. Send

our emissary in order to make contact with our future allies. Your plan has to be explained in depth.

NE-NSAKU Yes, your majesty. I will go at once. (*To notables and elders*) Next week, we will initiate the second period of slashing-and-burning fields in Mpyaza. It will be the beginning of the thirteenth month. Everyone knows this date is marked by the death of Mbenza, the initiator of our painting workshop. Every year we make this visit to appreciate the talent of our artists.

Exit King ALVARO II and prince BERNARDO. All notables bow and kneel.)

Scene 6

GARCIA's Arts workshop. Various sculptural objects are displayed. Enter the King ALVARO II, BERNARDO, BEATRIZ, PEDRO, NE-NSAKU, JOAO and other notables. While admiring the works sculpted by GARCIA, they pick up the princess BEATRIZ's sculpture. They approach near it.

ALL NOTAB (*all notables stunned, except Ne-Nsaku*) Oh! Oh! Oh!
BERNARDO: What beautiful work!

ALVARO II (*caresses the face of the sculpture*) It is, indeed.
 (To the princess) My daughter! Have you seen the way you have been honoured by Garcia?

BEATRIZ: Yes, father. It's so wonderful.

Ne-Nsaku Looks at the princess with dissatisfaction.

ALVARO II Garcia, your sculpture displays a rare sense of emotion and beauty. This is something magical and wonderful. Everything is sacred. In my lifetime, I have never thought

work of arts could be splendid like that. It really seems like have brought paradise to Nsundi Kingdom.

GARCIA Your Majesty. It's an honour for me that his Majesty recognizes the value of my work. I am an artist. I am working with wood and clay, but only artistic eyes like your Majesties can understand the beauty of the work. A sculptor can see his dream becoming reality in his art.

For me as an artist, sculpture is not only a work, but also the conservation of the tradition of whom his Majesty is the guardian. (*Kneeling*) Your Majesty, you gave me the freedom to realise my art. I am thankful to you.

ALVARO II No. Stand up GARCIA. I have to thank you because you are furthering the greatness of our Kingdom. People can die. Generations can overtake, but your art can never be destroyed. The glory of our Kingdom will be sung, tales will be told from generation to generation. Artist, tell me. How can I reward you for this? What gift can I give you?

GARCIA Majesty, your appreciation is the best thing I got from you. An artist does not need material gifts but the recognition of his work.

ALVARO II GARCIA, I know I really appreciate your art, and I must reward you. This will be the proof of my gratitude. If I did not reward, how can I convince myself that I really appreciated your work?

GARCIA Majesty, I cannot answer you. It's a huge dilemma for me. My inspiration has come from his Majesty. It's only his Majesty, who can grant me. [*Pause*] Majesty! If I ask you something precious, will you give it to me?

ALVARO II I will give you anything you want, GARCIA.

GARCIA Majesty, I am smitten.

ALVARO II (*Laughs*) Are you, GARCIA? Tell me who's this woman? Since I am your king, I can give you whatever you want. Who's she? My guard will be ready to bring her to you now.

GARCIA Majesty! I would devote all my soul and my body to her. I have never stopped loving her.

ALVARO II Tell me who is she?

GARCIA Princess BEATRIZ, your daughter is the one, I...

Princess BEATRIZ astonished, has no word to say.

NE-NSAKU (*interrupting*) Sacrilege! Blasphemy! Profanity! This is an offence against your Majesty. He deserves the death sentence for this, Majesty.

BEATRIZ Death sentence? Did you say a death sentence? Are you serious? Who are you to pronounce a death sentence? Why does a man in love deserve this kind of penalty?

NE-NSAKU You are a mere girl and as such have no right to speak in front of the elders and notables of the Kingdom.

BEATRIZ Mere girl? A girl who can provide seed, do all those things that a woman can carry out at home, and satisfy a husband, still a mere girl? It is a long time since I was a small girl. I am now a woman. The choice belongs to me; and I alone.

NE-NSAKU Do you know why your grandmother, Dona Zabela does not come here? Because she knows that her place is not among men.

BEATRIZ Really? Do you usually ask questions and give answers yourself? Are you God for taking decisions in the stead of others? My grandmother? My grandmother, however, belongs to the old class, who believes women have no rights.

BERNARDO Ne-Nsaku! Can you leave my niece to express her opinion on this matter?

NE-NSAKU Your Royal Highness, with all due respect, the rules concerning the silence of women in front of men are strict. Garcia deserves a death sentence.

BERNARDO Who are you to pronounce a death sentence?

NE-NSAKU Then his heart has to be pulled away. Consequently, he will cease loving a princess with pure blood.

ALL NOTAB Oh! Oh! What a sacrilege!

GARCIA Death sentence? Majesty said, he could give me whatever I ask. Does someone deserve a death sentence because his heart decides to feel love for someone?

NE-NSAKU Shut up Garcia. Do you suppose you own the world because you are a good artist?

GARCIA I wonder, you appreciate my art, but...

NE-NSAKU That's insane. And...

BERNARDO Notable Ne-Nsaku. You should avoid confrontation all time with others. This often makes you enemies.

NE-NSAKU: What are you talking about?

BERNARDO Don't you remember your last confrontation? Ndungidi did not appreciate your words.

GARCIA Do you know why the mouth is first to rot after death? Because it talks a lot of nonsense.

NE-NSAKU Garcia, you should turn your tongue a thousand times before speaking. It will be better for everybody.

ALVARO II (*interrupting*) Enough. (*To GARCIA*) I heard your demand. A decision will be taken in the next council session.

GARCIA Majesty...

ALVARO II Notable? I said a decision would be taken in the next council session. I have spoken.

GARCIA Yes, Majesty. Your decisions are incontestable.

ALVARO II Good. A decision will be made. You will be notified as soon as possible.

NE-NSAKU Majesty, Lions and sheep will never drink water from the same pond.

ALVARO II Notable! Keep your expression for yourself. Council will decide. Either GARCIA will be or not authorized to marry princess BEATRIZ.

GARCIA (kneeling bows) Thank you, your Majesty.

ALVARO II Now, it is time to let GARCIA continue his extraordinary work.

Exit the king, notables and guards.

Scene 7

Forest of Loango. GARCIA and the princess sit on a branch of a tree.

BEATRIZ I am praying to Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo day and night. I am asking him to withdraw any notable resistance.

GARCIA What can we do if there is one?

BEATRIZ We shall fight. We shall fight till the end of my life. Nobody, not my father, my uncle, my grandmother nor the Notables will be able to take away what I feel for you. I want our meeting not to be secret anymore.

GARCIA My love for you will remain endless. I shall live with this love to my tomb. You are my love and you will be forever.

BEATRIZ You are kind and honest.

They hear something moving.

BEATRIZ Did you heard that noise?

GARCIA Yes. What was it?

BEATRIZ It was very strange. It was as if someone was spying on us.

GARCIA Do you think...

BEATRIZ I do not know. We have to go now. This forest is full of rebels and bad spirits.

GARCIA Then, we shall leave. Besides, it will be soon be nightfall.

Everyone exits.

BALLET III

Around objects representative Nzambi A Mpungu Tulendo, men dressed in multicoloured linen covered up to their hips, and women covered up to their breasts, carry out a dance. In the middle is the gentleman who plays the drum.

ACT II

Scene 1

Ne-Nsaku's house. All walls are adorned with animal skins expressing his talent as a hunter. He sits on a well-decorated chair. His wife enters, kneels down and puts down a bowl full of wild bean and maize.

NE-NSAKU Good. A woman must look after her husband in this way.

NE-NSAKU FAV. WIFE I am your wife. I must satisfy all wishes of my dear husband.

NE-NSAKU Matondo, you are my favourite. I am so proud of you. You differ from my other spouses.

Enter Ne-Nsaku's man. He's out of breath. Ne-Nsaku slams his hands down and his wife exits.

NE-NSAKU Speak. What happened?

THE MAN I have seen the princess together with Garcia in the forest.

NE-NSAKU Sacrilege! The notables have not made their decision yet!

NE-NSAKU What were they doing?

THE MAN Talking. (*raises his tone*) Talking? Good Lord! What is this?

THE MAN I was not sure.

NE-NSAKU (*embarrassed*). This is simply foolishness. I want you to find something for God sake! I need something to tell the king.

THE MAN Oh! Yes. I remember. They were doing foolish things.

NE-NSAKU That is much better.

Scene 2

Royal Palace. Same set. Late night. The king sits with his mother.

ALVARO II Mother, during our visit to the workshop of arts, Garcia, the artist expressed to me his wish to marry BEATRIZ as a reward for the work he had done.

DONA ZABELA: What was your answer?

ALVARO II The Notables' council has to take a decision. If they say "yes", he will marry my daughter. If not, I shall not be able to do anything for him.

DONA ZABELA My son, you are the king, the protector of our usages. You can take a decision without consulting the notables. It is about the life of your own daughter.

ALVARO II Mother. I am of course the guardian of our usages, but a guardian of usages must also listen to his subjects.

At the same time, between the Alvaro II and Ne-Nsaku. Exit the queen's mother.

ALVARO II Take your place, notable.

Ne-Nsaku sits.

ALVARO II What brings you here so late? It's one o'clock. Something of the utmost importance?

NE-NSAKU It is regarding GARCIA and the princess. They were together.

ALVARO II So?

NE-NSAKU In the forest your Majesty.

ALVARO II Continue b...

NE-NSAKU (*interrupting*) ...behaving badly.

ALVARO II How?

NE-NSAKU I mean doing foolish things, your Majesty.

ALVARO II Like what, notable?

NE-NSAKU What the law prohibits. I mean - fornication.

ALVARO II Are you sure of your accusations? They are very serious.

NE-NSAKU Yes, your Majesty.

ALVARO II What do yo want, Ne-Nsaku?

NE-NSAKU Notables have to delay their decision about Garcia.

ALVARO II Have you seen it with your own eyes?

NE-NSAKU Not your Majesty. I mean....

ALVARO II I want witnesses. Come back to me when you have one. Good night, notable.

Scene 3

Royal palace. King ALVARO II sits in his ornate chair. Enter BEATRIZ.

BEATRIZ Good afternoon father. Your servant said you wanted to see me.

ALVARO II Yes, indeed.

BEATRIZ It is late now. Is it anything very important, and which cannot wait until tomorrow?

ALVARO II Yes, my daughter. It is about you and the artist. People have seen you alone with him in the forest. What were you doing in there?

BEATRIZ (*disappointed*) Do your men spy on me?

ALVARO II No. I am your father. It is my duty to care of my child.

BEATRIZ Believe me, father. I will not dishonour you. I am not a foolish girl.

ALVARO II You are the princess. You have to be careful.

BEATRIZ I am virgin, and I shall remain until the day of my marriage. Listen to your own heart, and not to people's speculations. Do not you trust in me?

ALVARO II I do, my daughter.

BEATRIZ I have to go and meet my grandmother. We shall go to Nkenge.

ALVARO II Then hurry and rush over to your Grandmother.

Scene 4

Royal Court. Same set as the Royal palace. The royal throne is the middle back stage. Some notables and elders stand on the corner of the council room.

NE-NSAKU Have you ever heard of such a thing?

(*Ironic*) An artist wants to marry the princess. Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! In addition, we have to give a ruling on this case. Yes. We will give it a ruling. How can we mix blood? Sacrilege! Do you really want to accept things like that?

NOTABLES Oh no! We can't let it happen.

NE-NSAKU We have to fight for the nobility. We must stop this kind of insanity.

NOTABLES Yes, we have. This is unacceptable.

King ALVARO II enters. Ne-Nsaku group stops talking.

JOAO Gentleman, the King ALVARO II.

Everybody approaches.

JOAO All kneel!

ALVARO II sits. Near him King, sits BERNARDO, the prince. All notables, elders and civil servants and Ndungi take place.

ALVARO II Notables, elders and wise men of the Kingdom, a week ago we promised the answer to Garcia concerns his request to marry the princess. During this business, our judgement must be just and without prejudice. We must be fair and forget our differences. I open this to the audience and ask the prince Bernardo to make the statement on the situation.

King ALVARO II beckons prince BERNARDO approaches him and whispers in his ear.

BERNARDO Guards, go and fetch GARCIA.

Guards enter with GARCIA.

BERNARDO (*stands*) As his Majesty has just said, we must rule on a case. This case is not really difficult, but it is complex. It is the first time our Kingdom will rule on a case like this. What is it about? As a gift, a subject of different class wants to marry a princess. I know that during this debate, the opinions will be contradictory. However, I want everyone to be guided by his heart. Whatever the grievance you

have against GARCIA, I ask you to be objective. JOAO, the assembly wants to hear you now. (*He sits*)

JOAO (*stands*) Majesty, your royal highness, notables and constituent members of assembly of the provinces. After having admired the extraordinary beauty of the work of our artist, Garcia, the king decided to ask him to propose the gift he wishes. Garcia has expressed to our Majesty his love of Princess BEATRIZ. However, our wise majesty promised to him to await the decision of the council. I believe that he deserves to obtain an answer, which is appropriate for him. Be it positive or negative, the reasons will have to be explained to him. By the name of the wise and the notables, I have spoken.

(*He sits*)

BERNARDO (*stands*) Ne-Nsaku, the council wants to hear you.

NE-NSAKU (*stands*) Your majesty, your royal highness, Notables. Let us not let this man deride our traditions. As I said before, it is an offence to fall in love with a virgin princess. It is ridiculous, impossible, absurd, incredible and insane. Royal blood cannot be mixed with common blood. And you...

PEDRO (*interrupting*) Why not? Red is the royal blood.

NE-NSAKU Yes, but it is sacred.

CHORUS Oh! Oh! Oh!

NE-NSAKU Do you want to allow this artist to taint royal blood? We cannot amend the ancestral law.

PEDRO Honourable Ne-Nsaku. You have never accepted the established order. Why now?

JOAO Honourable Ne- Nsaku! May I remind you of the origins of the kingdom of Kongo? In the beginning, the higher position was occupied by the profession of ironwork. All those who worked with iron and paint, came from the nobility. They are the founders of our Kingdom.

