

Singles Forever

by

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ACT I

Scene 1

A keyboard rendition of 'Here comes the bride' reaches the end of the third line before the curtain opens to reveal Omotola taking tentative steps in the manner of a bride being led to the altar. The first time we meet her, it is obvious she has good taste in fashion and exhibits an unmistakable aura of sophistication. She is wearing a free-flowing white satin dress and a pointed toe-stiletto strap shoes. She is holding an unwieldy flower vase instead of a wedding bouquet and she assumes a rather serious demeanour to her imitation of the bridal march. She regards herself in the mirror and preens herself up, cupping and shoving up her breasts. Craning her neck, she scrutinizes her hair and deftly puts in place a hair strand that has fallen out of alignment. Spread on the centre table is a fat fashion catalogue. Naana, Omotola's close friend, a purveyor of bridal costumes who also dresses brides, watches in admiration. Naana has vowed never to get married. She is always elegantly dressed and takes pride in taking selfies at will.

NAANA

Stop! Stop, Stop, Stop, Stop, Stop!

OMOTOLA

(sighs)

What again?

NAANA

You are too stiff. You keep wobbling from side to side.

OMOTOLA

(clenching her fists)

I can't breathe.

NAANA

(making wild gesticulations)

Surprise, surprise! What do you expect when you squeeze this bulging mass into that wedding gown?

OMOTOLA

Don't go there, girl!

NAANA

Sorry but I'm not the one complaining here.

OMOTOLA

I must fit into this dress by hook or crook. I fell in love with it the moment I set eyes on it.

NAANA

You know what to do.

OMOTOLA

Do I?

NAANA

Tell me, how many pastries have you gobbled up this morning?

OMOTOLA

(poking her clenched fists at Naana)

How would you like one on your nose?

NAANA

Sorry but you can't eat your cake and have it, dear.

OMOTOLA

There's only one way out.

NAANA

And I hope it's not what I'm thinking.

OMOTOLA

It's Kantanka's credit card we're talking about here.

NAANA

(sighs)

Hey, don't you think you are overdoing things?

OMOTOLA

Has he complained to you, for crying out loud?

NAANA

No but I can hear him screaming inside, questioning his decision to succumb to your 'Let's get married now or else' ultimatum.

OMOTOLA

You'll make a good attorney for him.

(turning her back to Naana)

Here, unzip me. I'm not wearing this dress again.

NAANA

You know they won't take it back?

OMOTOLA

And who says I want to take it back?

NAANA

Oh, so what if nobody wants to buy it?

OMOTOLA

Sell it for what? I'll just chuck it somewhere.

NAANA

Let me have it. I'm sure a lot of women will kill to have this gratis.

OMOTOLA

That's peanuts to Kantanka. Peanuts.

Omotola drops the flower vase and comes to stand by Naana. They run their fingers through the catalogue as they chat.

OMOTOLA

Now, what have we got here?

NAANA

This is what the bride of the heir to the Brunei throne wore on her wedding day.

OMOTOLA

Really!

Omotola picks up the catalogue, stares intently at the picture in it and turns it this way and that way.

NAANA

My, she looked resplendent in it.

OMOTOLA

Yeah, but will I look equally good or even more resplendent in it?

Omotola regards the picture again, turning her neck in various angles as she struggles to make up her mind. She lays the catalogue back on the centre table, obviously unable to decide.

OMOTOLA

Now let me see what you've got for the primary sponsors.

They flip a couple of pages as they shake their heads several times, giving each other quizzical looks a couple of times and finally raising their heads, nodding and smiling to show they agree on something.

OMOTOLA

What about the Secondary Sponsors?

NAANA

Well, for those, you'll need three pairs.

OMOTOLA

What for?

NAANA

Omotola, you want to do this by the book, right?

OMOTOLA

By all means!

NAANA

I love you! The first pair will light the candles from the Paschal Candle. The second pair will drape and pin the veil over the groom's shoulder and the bride's veil. The last pair will lay the cord on the bride and groom.

OMOTOLA

Well, let me see what you've got for the Maid of Honour and Bridesmaids.

They flip several pages as they consider the options.

OMOTOLA

OK, tick that one and that one. Oh, that one instead. What do you think?

NAANA

I can't fault any of them really.

OMOTOLA

OK, the Best Man and Groomsmen?

They flip more pages.

OMOTOLA

And the Flower Girls?

Naana flips several pages back and forth before finding the evasive page. Omotola and Naana look at each other and nod.

OMOTOLA

Ring Bearer, Coin bearer and the Bible bearer?

They flip yet more pages quickly and nod much quicker and keep flipping. Enter Kizzita, Omotola's confidant, dressed in a black petticoat, white long-sleeved shirt with frills and a lawyer's tie. She is well-groomed and she knows it. At first glance we can see she has an overweening opinion of herself. She will turn several times within a short period of time to regard herself in anything that is shows her reflection. Whilst involved in the most engaging conversation she does not hesitate to give her make-up a quick brush up whenever she feels it needs retouching. She showcases an elaborate African style hairdo known as "Prayer Meeting", a type of braids that bear a striking resemblance to two clasped prayerful hands that gather at the top of her head. Her neck is strewn with assorted trinkets. Dangling precariously from each ear are elaborately crafted earrings. Her four fingers and even her thumbs glitter with expensive rings of various sizes. She has a propensity to nasalize her words and is at pains to stress her syllables which inevitably lead to her going over the top every now and then. She enters just as Omotola and Naana finish going through the catalogue. Carrying her briefcase in her right hand, Kizzita balances her lawyer's robe in the space between her upper and lower left arm. She stops in her tracks and rubs her eyes in disbelief but momentarily bursts into a raucous laughter. Omotola ignores her and keeps marching. Kizzita places her briefcase on a table and hangs her lawyer's robe on the wall. She switches off the CD player playing 'Here comes the bride' but Omotola continues her mock bridal march.

KIZZITA

(inhaling in an exaggerated manner)

Hmm Omotola, the sweet smell of marriage. Present everywhere.

OMOTOLA

You're telling me! I'm loving every bit of it, Kizzita.

KIZZITA

How long ago? Umm, let me see.

She counts on the fingers of one both hands and cranes her neck.

Wow, so just less than a month since Kantanka proposed and here you are cocooned in matrimonial bliss.

OMOTOLA

I know you have a way with words but even you, learned friend, would use all the superlatives in the English language and the kind of feelings that have taken over me at the prospect of getting hitched will still lack adequate description. Come on, give it a try. I know you thrive on challenges.

KIZZITA

(She gesticulates as she quotes Omotola's very words)

For crying out loud, Omotola of all people! Omotola! Hey, am I seeing things? Isn't this the same Omotola who dismisses men as 'sons of Adam' and vouches at the least opportunity never to give her heart to any of those 'dogs' again?

OMOTOLA

Well, when it doesn't affect you, you swear an action plan.

KIZZITA

(giving her a quizzical look)

Hmm? I must have dozed off whilst still on my feet. When did the abolitionist morph into an adherent, an enthusiast, and I guess a crusader before my very eyes? Gosh, I'm gob smacked! You know what? I can't believe you just stirred in me the desire for this monster called marriage just like that. All of a sudden I feel like it's not such a bad idea getting hitched.

(As an afterthought)

Look at you, grinning from ear to ear. Jeez, you used to have a morbid fear for marriage.

OMOTOLA

(blushing as she holds her dress gingerly)

You know what Kizzita; I want to be the envy of every woman in this country, in Africa.

KIZZITA

(waving a Victory sign to Omotola as she squares up her shoulders in a show of appreciation.)

You've got the right person in your corner, Omotola. Go for it, girl! Go girl, go girl, go girl.

OMOTOLA

I want my wedding to be the yardstick by which the greatness of all other weddings is measured in this country, in Africa.

KIZZITA

(holding up her hands in mock reading of a non-existent crystal ball)

I did see that in my crystal ball, you know?

OMOTOLA

My wedding must be the wedding of the year.

KIZZITA

Piece of cake, girl. We're settling for nothing less than the mother of all weddings.

OMOTOLA

Did I say, year? No, I mean wedding of the decade. Wedding of the century. No, wedding of the millennium if I can have it my way.

KIZZITA

(singing and dancing as if possessed)

Go girl. Go girl. Go girl. Go girl.

OMOTOLA

Hey Kizzita, I'll not accept anything less than being the owner of the accolade of the wedding that left observers dumbstruck.

KIZZITA

We're going to give them an eyeful, girl.

OMOTOLA

I'm telling you girl, if my wedding doesn't leave wedding connoisseurs starry-eyed, I bet you, nothing ever will.

KIZZITA

They'll be rubbing their eyes all the way home.

NAANA

And with that comes the enviable title of the ultimate bride.

KIZZITA

That's the spirit girl!

OMOTOLA

I'm putting together nothing less than the most exquisite bridal party. Get ready girl. We'll be hitting Milan before you know it. I want people to forget very quickly all those apologies of a wedding that have suffocated this place.

KIZZITA

You bet. We're going to pull all the stops to make sure they all pale into obscurity.

OMOTOLA

I will not rest until I have banished them all, all of them, way down into the abyss of history.

NAANA

Each bride will have to admit after steadying their rattled nerves that their wedding was nothing more than blight, a disfigurement, and a great, gargantuan disservice to quality nuptials.

OMOTOLA

You're speaking my language, girl. All those women who thought their weddings took observers' breaths away, you know, I will make them feel the ignominy of a US president who got to serve only one term and got dumped by the electorate. I'll Change my name if I fail to leave that bitter taste in their mouths.

KIZZITA

They won't know what hit them, all those pretentious girls. Oh I can't wait to hear them confessing that they regret their hogwash weddings.

OMOTOLA

I'll show all those old crows that there are weddings and there are weddings.

NAANA

We need to spread the word that a new kind of bride has appeared on the scene. This game is about to change and so quickly.

OMOTOLA

Naana, I'm getting nothing less than the full wedding entourage.

KIZZITA

Why should you settle for anything less, girl?

OMOTOLA

Now, the Juliet's cap. How can I get it?

NAANA

Every bride wears a Juliet's cap.

OMOTOLA

Who's talking about a Juliet's cap?

KIZZITA

Of course you're going to wear a Juliet's cap.

OMOTOLA

You don't get it, do you? I don't want a Juliet's cap.

NAANA

(staring at Kizzita)

You just said you want a Juliet's cap.

OMOTOLA

Okay, let me bring you home. I want the Juliet cap.

NAANA

And how is that different from what I'm saying now?

OMOTOLA

(sighs and ruffles her hair)

Ugh! I want the Juliet cap. I want the cap that the first girl who played the role of Juliet in the original production of Romeo and Julie wore.

KIZZITA

(Stunned, Kizzita turns around slowly and gives Omotola a quizzical look)

Like, I mean, seriously?

OMOTOLA

I know it will cost a fortune but you know that money answers every question, right? And you also know that money is not one of my problems.

KIZZITA

Yes but even Kantanka will frown upon what I see as an unnecessarily extravagant purchase considering you're going to wear it for just a couple of hours.

OMOTOLA

(desperately trying to control her temper)

Hey girl, please tell me something. Has Kantanka complained to you? Huh? Tell me, buddy, whose side are you on any way?

KIZZITA

You know I'll never side against you.

OMOTOLA

So why do I get this nagging feeling that you have had a golden handshake with my Kantanka?

KIZZITA

I say things just the way they are and you jump to brand me a traitor?

OMOTOLA

(relaxing her posture)

I didn't say that but I can't help thinking your enthusiasm for the finer things in life has waned considerably.

KIZZITA

Where from this verbal diarrhoea? Oh, it must be from the wedding madness that has generated this opium effect on you.

OMOTOLA

Well, in any case, I reckon it will be worth the price. Can you imagine the look on the faces of all those pretenders and wannabes when they see me in the original Juliet's cap?

KIZZITA

Well, how exactly will anyone know you advertise it?

Kizzita gesticulates in a bid to feign some support for Omotola's insistence on acquiring the original Juliet's cap but it's obvious she is a novice in the field of pretense.

OMOTOLA

Kizzita, just be happy for me, okay?

Ring tone sounds on Omotola's phone. She picks it and listens.

OMOTOLA

(excitedly as she darts to switch on the CD player)

Wow! Are you kidding me? Kizzita girl, guess what, guess what? I landed the curtain raiser at the National Music Awards with my latest hit.

A piano rendition of 'Here comes the bride' blurts out. Omotola raises her arms in triumph and assumes the bridal pose ready to march again. Kizzita relaxes her posture and steps behind Omotola imitating every step she takes in her well-rehearsed bridal march. Kizzita removes a poster from her bag and hands it over to Omotola. She reads it and frowns. She dangles the paper casually as they speak.

KIZZITA

Omotola, I thought you might be interested in attending this fair. You understand? The things men do.

OMOTOLA

(surprised and confused she stammers out her words)
A divorce fair?

KIZZITA

Yes, a divorce fair, my dear.

OMOTOLA

Divorce fair, but isn't that for couples contemplating divorce or in the middle of the divorce process?

KIZZITA

(sighing)
Ugh Omotola, you're still reading the old version of the script. Welcome to the twenty-first century, dear.

OMOTOLA

Oh, give me a break. Here I am preparing for my wedding and you're already contemplating divorce? So tell me, with friends like this, who needs enemies?

KIZZITA

Girl, you must always be one step ahead of your man. Before he earns a bachelor in trickery, you have earned a masters in deception. Before he thinks, you've thought.

OMOTOLA

I don't know. I don't know. Kizzita!

KIZZITA

You sound so much like 1918, Omotola. You need to be adequately prepared when the time comes.

OMOTOLA

What time? And it's 'if', not 'when'.

KIZZITA

What time? Tell me, how long does the modern marriage last?

OMOTOLA

You seem so sure the time will come.

KIZZITA

Eventually! Whatever the distance you travel with your spouse, the time will come when you have to part company. It's the bane of modern marriages. Hey Omotola, you should have seen me when I got married to my fourth husband. I thought, finally I have found Mr. Right. It turned out that his was the shortest union that I ever had with a man.

OMOTOLA

My marriage will go the distance. In fact, my marriage to Kantanka will go all the way.

KIZZITA

Just in case, you know, Omotola, just in case.

OMOTOLA

Sorry Kizzita but I'm sure that time will never come.

KIZZITA

Stop sounding like an oracle.

OMOTOLA

No. I'm not sure I can ever go along with you on that.

KIZZITA

Hmm, speaking like the novice that you are. Omotola, can you imagine the amount of alimony that I get from those romantic idiots? Marry them, let me mess up, kick them hard in the backside and take them to the 'cleaners'. And you know what I do with that money? I got so much money from them that I started a savings and loans company. I met this seriously dusted guy. He followed me like a dog. And you know the rules of attraction: The more I treated him like a dog doormat the more besotted he became. In spite of his wealth, he is still a 'wussy'. I'm sure he loved me more than his own mother but can you imagine how boring living with a man who does your every bidding, a man who can't stand his ground, you know? Kizzita, such men make me cringe. My skin recoils whenever I meet such weak, pathetic, whining men.

OMOTOLA

You need a man who will take charge.

KIZZITA

No, I can't stand a man who is too bossy. You know the type who comes throwing his weight around. Kizzita do this, Kizzita I want that. And you know what pisses me off most? He can't even say 'Thank you' when I try to please him. I never hesitate to chuck such men out of my life. Good riddance! The lot!

KIZZITA

You must be sure that he can fit into your life otherwise; he is not worth the trouble.

OMOTOLA

He must fit into my life. What does that mean?

KIZZITA

Get this straight. You must never allow him to dictate your schedule. Do what you want to do when you want to do it. You get me? Do as your heart pleases. Don't think like those miserable creatures who keep laboring under unrealistic hopes. And the worst types of women are those that keep saying: Oh, it's because of the children. What children? They are your children! Not his. Your children, you get me? Your children! They are yours and yours alone.

OMOTOLA

Hey what are you on about?

KIZZITA

If you've ever been in an extended labour, you'll appreciate what I'm on about.

OMOTOLA

But the courts . . .

KIZZITA

(cutting in rudely)

Oh, the courts. The courts. As for those courts, they are the least of our worries, my dear. You should learn to play them like a ukulele. Have you seen an ass being led before? That's how the courts should be treated. What can they do? Take it from me. Give the man grief. Look, those men who thought the courts would fight their corner, they have all come to realize that the law on fathers and their rights to see their children is not worth the

paper it's written on. Visitation rights! He should go and visit his mother.

Omotola walks away and stands at a distance from Kizzita. She folds her arms on her bosom and regards her rather suspiciously for a while.

Scene 2

The MUSTANG pub. A sign board with a mustang in full flight hangs prominently on the wall where members of the Sworn Bachelors' Club are meeting in an emergency session to deliberate on the news that their president, Kantanka, has decided to tie the knot. About half a dozen men mill around the pub floor speaking in agitated tones and making gesticulations to show their anger and frustration at the unpalatable news. We can hear several outbursts of 'No' and 'No way' between loud rumblings. After a while, Otoyo, the secretary of the Sworn Bachelors Club calls the meeting to order by ringing a bell.

OTOYO

Order!

Order! Meeting is in session.

Members of the Sworn Bachelors' Club pull up chairs and settle around a large rectangular table. Either side of them, a couple of friends sit around much smaller tables, chitchat and take swigs from beer mugs.

OTOYO

(clearing his throat)

The Sworn Bachelors' Pledge!

Everybody sitting around the large table gets up and raises their clenched fists in a defiant manner. The men sitting either side of them sit and watch with interest. Members of the Sworn Bachelors' Club recite their pledge.

BACHELORS

As a sworn bachelor, I will do my best to cherish, defend and promote the noble objectives of the Sworn Bachelors' Club. I promise to abstain from any action or inaction likely to bring the name of the Sworn Bachelors' Club into disrepute. I pledge to help disabuse the mind of the gullible sworn bachelor to the mirage called marriage. I also pledge to expose all the hidden traps set by the so-called weaker sex and to open the eyes of the

naive sworn bachelor to the bitterness hidden under the sugar-coated words and deceitful gestures of the daughters of Delilah. I pledge to guard the prodigal sworn bachelor back into the fold and to eschew any complacency. Finally, I promise to be vigilant in all my dealings with the ever scheming daughters of Delilah. So help me God.

Bachelors put their hands down and settle down on their seats.

OTOYO

(exclaiming)

Sworn Bachelors' Club!

BACHELORS

(punching the air each time they respond)

Singles forever!

OTOYO

Sworn Bachelors' Club!

BCHELORS

Singles forever!

OTOYO

Sworn Bachelors' Club!

BACHELORS

Singles forever!

OTOYO

SBC, I hate to be the bearer of bad news but our house is on fire.

JOMO

(bitterly)

We're sleeping in a room but our legs are hanging outside.

FALANA

(aggressively)

Sworn Bachelors' Club, this is as bad as it gets. This is terrible!

JOMO

Disastrous!

CHIDI

Catastrophic!

JOMO

(kicking the air)

I'm gob smacked!

FALANA

(waving his hands either side of his ears)

Flabbergasted!

CHIDI

(rubbing the middle of his chest)

Traumatised! Sworn Bachelors' Club, I am traumatised.

JOMO

It's a betrayal of the highest order!

FALANA

Treasonable felony!

OTOYO

Sworn Bachelors' Club, if you get bitten by an insect, it most probably came from your own clothes. This piece of news takes me far beyond my normal thinking limits. Kantanka stabbed us in the back.

CHIDI

Now you are talking, Otoyoy.

JOMO

I was wondering if you've succumbed to the change of mind virus.

FALANA

Well, if the captain has deserted ship, can you put it past his lieutenant?

OTOYO

Comrades, it is true that when the shepherd deserts the flock, the sheep lose their sense of direction but it is to forestall an unfortunate scenario like that, that we must draw up a programme of action to rescue our president from one of the daughters of Delilah. Sworn Bachelors' Club, we owe it to ourselves and to posterity to uncover the truth.

JOMO

By any means necessary.

CHIDI

I wouldn't rule out kidnapping him and having his head examined by a seasoned psychiatrist.

OTOYO

Hey hey hey, take it easy, Chidi.

FALANA

Take it like a man.

CHIDI

You think this is one of your 'Let's see how it goes' moments huh?

FALANA

Look here Otoyoyo, if you think anybody should take things easy, I suggest you give your noisy neighbour a piece of your mind as a matter of urgency, OK?

JOMO

Guys, I have been doing some digging since I heard the news.

FALANA

Smart move, Jomo!

(giving tony a quizzical look)

If you want to get to the root of things...

CHIDI

(triumphantly)

You've got to start digging, mate! We're all ears, man.

JOMO

I gather that Omotola girl is a serial jilter. You know how charming she can be. But as soon as she has ensnared you, you know, it's like she raises you up to dizzying heights then she drops you ...

FALANA

(adding quickly)

Like a hot potato!

CHIDI

And you come crushing down ...

JOMO

Like a mud house during an earthquake.

CHIDI

And that is the woman Kantanka fell head over heels in love with?

FALANA

A fraction above a town helper if you ask me.

JOMO

(holding up a photo of an attractive woman)

Can you believe this bimbo is the reason Kantanka wants to throw away a life of bliss, a life without restrictions.

FALANA

Huh, a life of unfettered right to determine what and where and when and how he wants?

JOMO

Why would a man of Kantanka's calibre want to stop exercising his absolute right to choose?

CHIDI

Why does Kantanka want to forgo his freewill, his sovereignty, his dominion, the pure and refreshing joy of not being subjugated by the whims and caprices of some dyed-in-the-wool daughter of Delilah?

OTOYO

It's awful, guys. When was the last time anybody had any contact with Kantanka?

JOMO

Oh, we spoke just a couple of days ago.

OTOYO

And you didn't have any reason to be concerned about his state of mind?

JOMO

And what sort of question is that?

OTOYO

I mean his mental health.

JOMO

Do I look or sound like a psychiatrist?

CHIDI

It doesn't take a psychiatrist to determine that somebody you know too well has lost it. This is the chairman of the Sworn Bachelors' Club for crying out loud.

OTOYO

How long ago did he meet this Omotola woman? She's a songstress, right?

FALANA

A songstress by profession and a seductress by reputation.

JOMO

Um, and to think that of all the divas in this country, Kantanka had to fall for this slapper.

CHIDI

(concurring with him)

Huh? A public toilet bowl, a courtesan! And Kantanka believes, in his recently acquired warped mind, that this whore is the reason he wants to sacrifice his freedom, his liberty, his emancipation that he has jealously guarded as if his very breath depended upon it? Is this the girl he wants to spend the rest of his life with?

OTOYO

Tell me, did I miss any major incident in Kantanka's life of late?

FALANA

As in?

OTOYO

As in when he got lobotomised or something?

JOMO

Yeah, from my prognostication, that bloke has had a brain file.

CHIDI

I have no doubt that Kantanka's decision to get hitched without consultation is a clear result of a temporary mental aberration.

JOMO

Spot on, Chidi. How else do you explain that?

FALANA

Huh? Kantanka, an alpha male who will never desert the pride. And we wakes up one nice morning only to hear his mind has been corrupted by a potion concocted by one of the daughters of Delilah.

CHIDI

That must be it!

JOMO

That's a stab in the heart.

FALANA

Huh, how can anyone conceive that?

CHIDI

Oh, can't you see? My, this is as clear as muddy water.

Members of the Sworn Bachelors' Club engage in chit-chat. They seem incensed and everyone tries to drive his point home with wild gesticulations and table banging. Some bump into each other as they try to manoeuvre their way among the group.

OTOYO

(raising his voice above the din)

Sworn Bachelors' Club!

BACHELORS

Singles Forever!

OTOYO

Sworn Bachelors' Club!

BACHELORS

Singles Forever!

OTOYO

Sworn Bachelors' Club!

BACHELORS

Singles Forever!

OTOYO

Sworn Bachelors, I reckon there's more to it than meets the eye.

FALANA

Oh, you didn't hear me, did you? I'm telling you I saw him barely two days ago and believe me when I say that he was as normal as normal can be. We exchanged pleasantries. And there was no indication, you know, I never miss those tell-tale signs. Trust me, if it was there, I would have seen it. Comrades, I'm telling you Kantanka gave me no reason to suspect that he was planning to betray the cause.

JOMO

See? No tell-tale signs at all.

CHIDI

None whatsoever!

OTOYO

How is that possible?

FALANA

No, it doesn't add up.

CHIDI

Not even if you apply Pythagoras' theorem.

JOMO

(giggling and struggling to pronounce Pythagoras)
Py-Py-Pytha- what?

CHIDI

Pythagoras theorem, mate! The values were all over the place!

OTOYO

SBC, what actually happened to Kantanka? That is what we need to find out.

FALANA

Absolutely, Otoyoy. Everybody knows Kantanka is no dithering bird so for him to turn around like a romantic idiot takes me far beyond my normal thinking limits.

CHIDI

That makes two of us Falana but what in the world must have caused Kantanka's decision to leave us so unceremoniously?

OTOYO

That, comrades, is worth finding out. But one thing I know: If a frog falls down on its haunches it remains in the same position. I have no doubt that Kantanka is a bachelor at heart and I

believe he will rescind this impulsive action. But before that happens we need to put our hands to the till. Kantanka is the thumb without which we can tie a knot. We need him but right now, he needs us badly. That is why I'm proposing that we set up a committee to execute a plan of action to make Kantanka rescind his decision.

The other members of the SBC chit-chat as they exit the stage. Jomo, Falana and Otoyoy speak in low tones. Chidi appears with beer mugs and places them on the table. The four clink glasses and take swigs.

FALANA
Cheers!

JOMO
To single life!

OTOYO
Singles forever!
(leaning forward and clenching his fists)
Comrades, the most dangerous thing a man needs is a woman.

CHIDI
Man, that's a lesson I learned the hard way. I was a guest of the queen for five years.

FALANA
You never told me you did time.

CHIDI
Oh, am I supposed to wear it like a badge?

OTOYO
The woman you married sent to jail?

CHIDI
No, my girlfriend of eight years.

FALANA
Eight years?

JOMO
What were you waiting for?

CHIDI

Well, we were trying to see how it goes.

FALANA

For eight years?

JOMO

The poor woman finally realised it had been going against her for far too long.

CHIDI

Comrades, I lost my job just when my woman started earning a fat salary. And you can't imagine how quickly all the terms of endearment my wife used to coax me into releasing my purse strings disappeared.

JOMO

Faster than rats leaving a sinking ship?

OTOYO

(shaking his head)

Tell me about it!

CHIDI

This dutiful wife suddenly started issuing commands like a Sergeant-Major desperately trying to endear himself to his superior officers. 'Chidi get up, Chidi sit down, Chidi squat, Chidi crouch. Chidi do a split, Chidi somersault. Chidi I never knew you are such a spineless man.

JOMO

Aw, that was below the belt.

FALANA

Turning of the tables, huh?

CHIDI

I never ordered her around. She revelled in her newly acquired powers like frogs welcoming the long-awaited rain and man did I feel it. It was like a quack acupuncturist sticking needles into your aching muscles. I had a rude awakening. My woman who would oblige whenever I wanted a bit of the other started issuing pre-conditions. She insisted I gave her a piggy back before we could get down to it.

FALANA

Sounds romantic to me.

CHIDI

Yeah, until you get to know she was like a baby elephant.

FALANA

You don't say, Chidi. Was she like a skinny ewe when you met her?

CHIDI

No mate, I've always been afflicted by the curse of the black man. I like them big, boy. Hey for me, the bigger the more mouth-watering.

OTOYO

Mouth-watering, are you predisposed to cannibalistic tendencies?

CHIDI

Oh, I salivate whenever I see them. I can sniff them out in a crowd. But that's beside the point. I broke my back when I tried to do her bidding.

FALANA

Oh, the things men do.

CHIDI

I was gagging for it, guys but you know that is when a woman is most dangerous. Well, I forced myself on her.

JOMO

Shag her against her will ... That's suicidal, mate.

CHIDI

Minutes later, I was being driven full speed in a police van. Guys, it was like watching myself in a movie.

JOMO

(cheekily)

You're sure *she* called the police?

CHIDI

Who else?

OTOYO

Some nosy neighbour?

CHIDI

No way! Days later I began my tenure as a guest of the queen. Then I heard that she had found herself a man who was just too happy to drip honey onto her tongue and I'm sure she licked it like a famished infant.

JOMO

The selfish cow!

CHIDI

Man, it was at that point I decided that marriage wasn't for me.

FALANA

No, marriage isn't for everyone.

CHIDI

She tried to reconcile with me whilst I was in there but I was having none of it. When I came out I scurried away like a prey that has just wriggled its neck out of a noose.

JOMO

(banging the table)

Spot on brother! For some of us, marriage is nothing more than a beautiful coffin but no matter how striking and well-crafted a coffin might look it will not make you wish for death.

OTOYO

(folding his arms steadfastly on his chest and staring into space)

And it's only a stupid cow that rejoices at the prospect of being taken to a beautiful abattoir.

CHIDI

Oh if I could just wave a magic wand to stop Kantanka from being goaded to this enchanting slaughter house!

(spitting out the words)

Marriage! Marriage!

FALANA

Oh, I can't stand that word 'marriage'.

CHIDI

(As he places the pointed fingers of his right hand against the downward looking palm of his left hand)

Falana, point of correction. Marriage is not a word; it is a sentence; a compound-complex complicated, bewildering, convoluted, tortuous and irritating sentence for that matter.

JOMO

You say it just the way it is, mate.

CHIDI

Marriage, Mirage, Madness. What's the difference?

OTOYO

A wedding is just like a funeral except that you get to smell your own flowers.

CHIDI

Man, if this chameleon called love should mess up any man's mind, it shouldn't be Kantanka's.

JOMO

Don't be cynical, Otoyoy. Love is one long sweet dream, you know.

CHIDI

Yeah, and marriage is the alarm clock that scares the daylight into you.

JOMO

Well, there's always divorce.

OTOYO

Make no mistake about it guys; love is grand but divorce a hundred grand.

JOMO

But not every marriage ends in divorce.

FALANA

Well, they don't always use that word but rest assured, the modern marriage always ends one way or the other. It's only a romantic idiot who believes all is well when one partner punishes the other by refusing to consummate their marriage.

CHIDI

Makes it easier then.

OTOYO

What you talking, mate?

CHIDI

Well, as I gather, refusal or inability to consummate a marriage is enough grounds to file for divorce.

OTOYO

Umm, so tell me, how many men want to announce to the whole world that all those scowls on their face, all the melancholic moods they exhibit, all the outbursts and the utterly eccentric

behaviour they display are jointly and severally traceable to their wife's refusal to allow them to have a bit of the other?

JOMO

(acting as if he has just bumped into a phantom)

Marriage means commitment.

OTOYO

So does insanity. And that was exactly how I felt, mate. You know that whenever I woke up every morning and saw my wedding ring ... well, I couldn't put a finger on it, but it always felt so much like the world's smallest handcuffs?

JOMO

Mine felt like a metal noose around my finger and you know, I really could feel the choleric effect running through my veins all the way to my heart.

OTOYO

After I got divorced I felt like a caged bird that had just managed to free its self and flown away.

FALANA

And you swore never to get married again?

JOMO

(teasing Otoyoy)

But that was all before you met your second victim ,sorry I mean wife.

CHIDI

And there I thought you've been cured of your verbal diarrhoea.

OTOYO

I played the field and I loved it. Then I met another daughter of Delilah and fell head over heels in love with her.

JOMO

Romantic idiot! So you're a secondary bachelor after all. You know, as in secondary virgin?

OTOYO

(in mock commendation)

Oh primary bachelor, you rock, you know. Make no mistake about it, once you get married, you're dead, finished. You, Jomo, as we know you, you're finished. You cease to exist. You're gone, forever. You have become past tense. Something else

replaces you. You never get to be you again. You morph into this ever-changing creature known as 'we'. You, Jomo, become a first person plural pronoun. You become two people rolled into one. Guys, I'm telling you, you suddenly realise you can't do anything without the approval of a certain leech referred to as your 'better half'. That's what most happily single guys lose sight of when their necks are being guided into the noose.

CHIDI

Well you know in reality I've never tied the knot?

JOMO

Like seriously?

CHIDI

There was a ceremony of some sort but it didn't constitute marriage in the strict sense of the word.

OTOYO

What was it then?

CHIDI

Knocking. That's what we call it. It's meant to introduce the man to the woman's family, you know, to tell them that you're with their daughter.

JOMO

You're with their daughter, doing what?

FALANA

Didn't they see you were with their daughter when you went home with her?

OTOYO

(cheekily)

Or did they mistake you for her personal bodyguard? Hey Falana, you've always kept your story close to your chest.

FALANA

(trying to do a rap)

Hmm, my story goes something like this: The boy so loved the girl that he gave her this one of a kind pearl, that whenever she felt sad or that all was lost, she'll not moan but consider the cost. So just imagine how he felt when he found out just by chance, She never had an infinitesimal sentiment for him. Clearly she'd always loved someone else. A sucker he had always been to her.

It's sad but you're always the last person to know that you were just in love with yourself.

JOMO

I can feel your pain, mate but with the rap thing, I'll suggest that you keep the day job.

OTOYO

Your woman was sleeping around?

CHIDI

Man, that's a recipe for romantic disaster.

JOMO

And you never slept around?

FALANA

Steady mate, men don't sleep around.

CHIDI

Really! So tell me, what do men do?

FALANA

Good question, mate. What men do is called serial monogamy.
(nodding reassuringly to himself)

Yeah, I'm a serial monogamist. That's it. Serial monogamist!

Ring tone sounds. Otoyoy picks his phone and listens for a while.

OTOYO

(turning to the other three)

Mates, Kantanka has just asked me to be his best man.

Otoyoy throws his arms either side of him as if to say he is confused.

FALANA

Silence is calling, comrades. Silence is calling.

The four men turn and stare at one another in a pensive mood.

Kantanka's bedroom. It is a spacious room. Facing sideways in the middle is a king size bed with gilt-edge bedspread, bed sheet and pillows. There is an exquisite bedside lamp that provides the only source of light for the room. At one end is an ornate full-length mirror and the general atmosphere is one of opulent lifestyle. Kantanka is lying on the bed face down and wearing gold coloured pyjamas. He stretches himself and yawns audibly. He turns over to lie on his back. After a few seconds he raises his body lazily and sits at the edge of the bed facing the audience. He brings both palms together and buries his face in them. He remains in that position for about 20 seconds before sitting up and cupping his chin in his left palm. Rather reluctantly, he finally gets off the bed and steadies himself. Slipping into a pair of flip flops, he begins to pace up and down the stage. It is obvious he is in a confused state of mind. He stops momentarily and stares at the mirror for a while. Letting off a deep sigh, he shuffles towards it, stopping right in front of the mirror to scrutinise his reflection. He takes several steps backwards and forwards whilst giving his reflection a quizzical look in the mirror. He finds a towel, moistens it with some water from a cask then charges at the mirror and wipes it like a shoe-black who is sensing a big tip. He steps back and folds his arms on his chest. Once again he takes a couple of steps backwards. He contemplates for a moment, dips his left foot like a ballerina, and takes a measured step forward that further betrays a serious state of self-doubt. His behaviour is best described as eccentric. He sighs, sighs again and sighs yet again, each time a bit longer than the last.

KANTANKA

(placing his hands on his head)

What have I done? Huh, Kantanka, what-have-I-done? What in the name of witches and wizards have I done now?

(He paces up and down)

Huh? What have I gotten myself into?

He waves at his reflection in the mirror and stutters as he speaks.

And wh-wh-what is that? Wh-Wh-Who is that? Who is that staring at me? Huh? I'm asking you a question. Huh? Are you deaf? Answer me. Who are you?

(pointing at his image in the mirror)

You! Hey you! Yes You. Whoever you are. Yes, you. I demand that you tell me promptly who you are.

Kantanka paces the stage like a lion that has just been put in a cage. He stops abruptly and charges at his reflection in the mirror.

Will you stop staring at me? Hey, haven't you got anything to say in your defence? Huh? Who-are-you, because I know you're not Kantanka! No, you are not me. You can't be me. I'm me and you're you so whoever you are, I can assure you, your game is up. But I must admit, you almost pulled it off. You almost fooled me.

He turns on his heels and lets out a raucous laughter as he saunters away from the mirror.

Nice try, but I refuse to be bundled over by you this impostor. If you think you can usurp my very being, think again Einstein!

He walks away flexing his muscles with the satisfaction of a boxer who has just floored his opponent with a sucker punch. He struts back and forth, raises his hands and ruffles his hair. He shakes his head and squares his shoulders like a nervous boxer being introduced to the audience before the start of the fight of his life. He stops abruptly as if he has just seen an apparition. Craning his neck, he shuffles towards the mirror and stops at a respectable distance, peering into the mirror like an investigator in his moment of great discovery. He stretches his left arm and points his index finger like an adult rebuking a recalcitrant child. He clears his throat in a guttural fashion and proceeds to address the 'stranger' in the mirror.

You, yes you, that impostor in the mirror. I put it to you that you're nothing more than a con artist and swindler. You think you can usurp this frame of mine, huh? You think you can take over my body and play wanton games with it, huh? Now, by the count of three, I want you to melt away. Got it? Dissolve. Just evaporate! Vanish, just like that! Scatter! I command you by the power ...

Kantanka hesitates and waves his left hand as in the manner of a confident man who suddenly becomes uncertain of his conviction.

Um, which power? Whatever! It's my body and I command you to disappear forever and never dare hijack my reflection ever again.

He turns away for a moment and turns back abruptly.

Huh, you're still there! You! The impudence. You're still standing there, occupying the space where my true, authentic, genuine, original, reflection should be? Which part of 'disappear

and never come back' don't you understand? Alright, let me put it this way: there can never, and I mean never in a million years, can there be enough space for the two of us in this mirror. So whoever you are, you will never be me. Got that? You will never be Kantanka. You can only remain the impostor that you're fated to be! You will never be Kantanka; Not in a million years.

He shuffles closer to the mirror and peers at his reflection again, repeatedly craning his neck.

Hey Kantanka, is that you? No, this can't be me. No, that can't be Kantanka. I refuse to admit this is me. I mean, is this truly me? Huh? Is this what has become of me? Kantanka!

He turns round on his heels and tries desperately not to look back.

Nah! You in the mirror, you must be some alien being and you stole my body whilst I was asleep. That must be it. Otherwise how come, me, Kantanka, the oak tree of the Sworn Bachelors' Club, getting ready to lose all the freedoms that I have sworn to protect. So what happened to me? What happened to Kantanka? Kantanka, what have you done to yourself? What happened to your principles? What has become of your ideals? Are you no longer a man?

Kantanka paces the floor and stops abruptly.

What happened to me, Kantanka? What happened to me, founder and life president of the Sworn Bachelors Club?

He resumes his pacing as he gestures a strong aversion to what must have happened. He stops all of a sudden and turns on his heel.

Oh, I've got it. I think I know what happened, I fell. That's it. I fell. I fell like a house of cards. How else can I make sense of it? I fell. I fell when I should have stood. I should have stood in love, not fall in love! That's more like it. I have always stood in love and everything has been fine. So back to the essential question: What happened?

Kantanka cups his chin in his palm and reminisces for a moment. I must have dozed off and fallen. Yes, I fell. Man, I fell. I fell. I, Kantanka of all people, fell, head over heels, in love.

He chuckles.

Amazing!

He throws up his arms in utter dejection.

Oh, I fell. Huh-huh, that's it. I, Kantanka, alias Guy Solo, aka Mustang, I, for whom love has always been a thing apart, fell, just like that. Pathetic. Hey, but that was all before I met Omotola. Ever since I met this temptress, love started feeling like an octopus. Thoughts of her constantly invaded my mind and succeeded in occupying every inch of my body. Of course I tried to fight it. I remember very well, I tried desperately to think straight. I told myself, Kantanka, you must disentangle yourself from this stranglehold that this seductress has managed to have on you. Yes, I did all that, so how come her iron grip on me has tightened beyond imagination since then? How did I allow this damsel to have such monopoly on me? Ugh, and she has hung on to me like a leech ever since.

He keeps shaking his head as he stares curiously and points to his reflection in the mirror, shrugging his shoulders and shaking his head as he walks back and forth.

ACT 2

Scene 1

The Mustang pub. Jomo, Chidi, Falana and Otoyoyo are engrossed in a disagreement over supposed conflict of interest on Falana's part.

JOMO

Sorry Falana but I can recognise divided loyalty when I see it.

CHIDI

No mate, you can't be head ranger and chief poacher at the same time.

FALANA

Guys, let me remind you that the impossible is what has not yet been tried.

Ring tone goes off and Falana picks it. Falana listens for a moment. He indicates he has to answer the call.

FALANA

(placing phone firmly on his left ear)

Hey, hang on. You don't just call me and start making unrealistic demands: 'I want the front row and the front row it must be'.

Yes, I know who you are but wait till you hear the names of some Very Important People on the waiting list.

OTOYO

(sneering)

Yeah, very important peanuts.

FALANA

(ignoring Otoyoyo's disparaging remark)

The president himself will be there. The vice-president, speaker of parliament, chief Justice, ministers, ranking members of parliament as well as back-benchers, business tycoons, traditional heads ... the full works, you know?

JOMO

Are you serious?

OTOYO

I'm as serious a heart attack, Jomo.

CHIDI

(motioning to Jomo)

Shush!

FALANA

(still on the phone)

Even the only king in this land will be there with a full entourage. And there will be paramount chiefs, professors and even emeritus professors.

FALANA

Did I mention the president and Secretary-General of FIFA? President of the Confederation of African Football? The national Football Association chairman, world renowned footballers past and present? Ministers of religion, award winning musicians, actors and 'A' list actresses and media gurus?

CHIDI

(inquisitive)

You mean ...

FALANA

(motioning to Chidi as he talks on the phone)

They will all be there live and coloured, mate. Take it from me; all these Very Important Peanuts have confirmed they will be there. In fact, majority of them deem it an honour to be invited to Kantanka's wedding.

CHIDI

Enough of the porkies now.

FALANA

(dismissing Chidi's rant with a wave of the left hand)

So how come that of all the high profile wedding planners in this country, on the continent, even on this planet, I, Falana, I am the one that was assigned the arduous task of ensuring that everything goes like clockwork? Tell me.

CHIDI

This mouth of yours huh?

FALANA

This mouth has taken me places, mate.

(speaking into the phone)

Look, I don't have the appetite to make extravagant claims but I can assure you that wedding planning is in my blood.

OTOYO

Go tell that to the some green horns, Falana.

FALANA

If you care to know, I hold a Masters in Wedding Planning with specialisation in Exotic Weddings.

OTOYO

Spare me please!

FALANA

Look, what do you take me for? One of those lousy wayside Wedding Planners? Get this straight: I plan only the most glamorous and out-of-this-world weddings. I mean weddings that will bowl you over. I must confess I'm not good at bragging but I was born to plan weddings.

JOMO

Yeah?

FALANA

Look, my father was a wedding planner. His father, my grandfather and his father before him were all wedding planners. So you see, it's genetic.

OTOYO

The wedding planning gene huh?

FALANA

And it may interest you to know that my grandpa passed on whilst planning a talk-of-the-town wedding.

He listens and speaks into the phone.

Hey, it may sound like a cliché but believe me when I say that it's like putting a camel through the eye of a needle. Look, this is not the wedding of the year. It's the wedding of the decade. Wedding of the century maybe.

Falana listens and gesticulating in frustration at not having the right words to express himself.

You don't get it. Uh, uh, this wedding can only be compared to a syzygy.

JOMO

A what?

FALANA

Syzygy ... opposition of three astronomical objects such as the Sun, Earth and Moon. Tell me, how often does a mere mortal get to witness such a spectacle?

He listens to his phone for a while.

What do you expect? He is the second African ever to win the FIFA Ballon D'Or? And you're surprised anybody who is somebody is lining up to show his or her face at his wedding?

He listens again, this time for a shorter period of time.

Hey, what you're asking for, huh, this is tough, mate, it's impossible.

He throws up his arms in an exaggerated fashion.

Well okay, I'll see what I can do. Trust me, even with all the skills at y disposal, I'll still have to squeeze water out of stone to pull this off. You should see the A list that I have to deal with. If you've ever had to negotiate your way through a field full of landmines you would appreciate what I'm talking about, mate. You can't avoid bruising egos but then that's one of the occupational hazards I've battled with since I began my illustrious career, you know?

Falana presses the knob to end the phone chat.

Oh, the kind of stops you need pull sometimes.

JOMO

(pointing accusing fingers at Falana)

You're a traitor to the marrow.

FALANA

What's new under the sun?

JOMO

How can you be a Wedding Planner and claim to be a bona fide member of the SBC?

OTOYO

That smacks of hypocrisy, mate.

JOMO

You want to enjoy the best of two worlds.

OTOYO

And why not? I will enjoy the very best of three worlds if everybody decides to go to sleep.

FALANA

It may interest you to know that the chief butcher in my area is a vegetarian. In fact, he's been for as long as I can remember.

OTOYO

Well, I don't have a problem as long as you can maintain your professionalism.

FALANA

Thank you, Otoyoy. How good are you in what you do? That's the ultimate question.

JOMO

No doubt about that but I still can't get my head around it.

OTOYO

Come on, it's not rocket science. Just keep your private life and your working life separate.

FALANA

Why am I one of the most sought after Wedding Planners in this part of the world? Hey, I'm the best in what I do, okay?

Falana raises his beer mug and all four clink glasses and gulp down the contents.

Scene 2

Kantanka's Bedroom. He is sitting slumped in an armchair lost in thought. Omotola is sitting in front of a dressing mirror preening herself up. As she applies make-up rather generously she turns around intermittently to see if Kantanka has taken any notice of her new hairstyle. She gets up and tries to catch his attention by flashing her bits in lingerie.

OMOTOLA

(She is profoundly excited as she admires her well-manicured acrylic nails)

Kantanka, can you believe the glamorous Koby 'One Touch' and his alluring partner Yaa Baby have graciously agreed to be our primary sponsors?

KANTANKA

Primary sponsor! Sponsoring exactly what? Aren't Agya Jato and Eno Bruwa better role models? They have been married for fifty-four years and they still have a baobab tree of a marriage.

OMOTOLA

(ignoring Kantanka's comments)

Well, primary sponsors are a legal requirement in a proper wedding.

KANTANKA

Proper wedding! Well, you haven't answered my question.

OMOTOLA

Which is?

KANTANKA

What do they do? Can't we get married without them?

OMOTOLA

Well, it will not be the same, you know.

KANTANKA

No, I don't. Enlighten me please.

OMOTOLA

They are legally required in any wedding ceremony. They provide a sense of validity to our union.

KANTANKA

You mean witnesses?

OMOTOLA

Well, in a sense.

KANTANKA

Won't our relatives do just fine?

OMOTOLA

No, I prefer a more modern couple, the kind of couple whose married life we want to emulate as we grow older, you know? These are socialites. Do you know what people will do to have them grace their weddings?

KANTANKA

So they'll be there just for cosmetic purposes. Tell me Omotola, is this our wedding or theirs? And what if they fail to turn up?

OMOTOLA

(fuming and fretting)

You know you're not ready for marriage? Here I am, trying to carry you along and all you do is ...

KANTANKA
(*interjecting*)
Carry me along?

OMOTOLA
What at all have you done about this wedding? Huh? You have shown absolutely no interest in the nitty-gritty of our wedding arrangements. You have left everything to me.

KANTANKA
Sorry, point of correction. You get yourself bogged down with the inconsequential bits of this wedding, Jeez, and you go blowing your own trumpet all over the place.

OMOTOLA
The ghost of my fathers. Why do I keep getting the feeling that for you, this is just a convenient arrangement? Something to make some loved ones happy rather than your own willful desire to settle down with the woman you love?

KANTANKA
Whoever made that pronouncement about a nagging wife in the Bible must have had people like you in mind.

OMOTOLA
Oh religion to the rescue. This is not nagging.

KANTANKA
What is it then?

OMOTOLA
(*struggling to find the right words*)
It is just me having to constantly ask my fiancée to do something that he is reluctant to do even when he doesn't need any prompting.

KANTANKA
Um, thank you for that disguised definition of nagging.

OMOTOLA
I don't nag.

KANTANKA

No, you don't. You just pester and harass and badger and plague me with your relentless and incessant whining.

OMOTOLA

(breathing heavily and charging at Kantanka as she waves accusing fingers at him)

Kantanka, look into my eyes and tell me you are not being pushed into this apology of a marriage. Tell me, Kantanka, that you are sure you are going ahead with this wedding because of your own personal conviction, your very own well-thought out decision.

KANTANKA

Omotola, tell me your step-mother has not cast a spell on you to keep talking gibberish.

OMOTOLA

You know my mother doesn't have a rival and she is still married to my father and their marriage has been a blissful one. In fact, their marriage has been described as textbook marriage.

KANTANKA

Then it's obvious you haven't taken a single leaf from them.

OMOTOLA

Tell me you are ready to give me your heart completely as I did before I agreed to marry you. Tell me, Kantanka. I'm talking to you. Look me in the eye and talk to me.

KANTANKA

(sighing)

You know what, I haven't got time for those tantrums of yours. One thing I can tell you, I wasn't drunk when I went on one knee to ask you to be my wife.

OMOTOLA

Some men go on both knees and remain kneeling until they are told to get up. You assume a half-hearted kneeling posture and expect me to morph into your private praise singer?

KANTANKA

In your dreams, girl ... in your dreams.

Kantanka exits stage in a huff. Omotola shakes her head and giggles. Slowly, she exits stage as she gestures and considers how to get even with Kantanka.

Kantanka returns to the stage and begins to go back and forth. Chidi follows hard on his heels. Kantanka is in a very bad mood as he moans to Chidi.

KANTANKA

I don't understand her, Chidi, I don't understand Omotola.

CHIDI

Stop trying to understand her, Kantanka. You'll go crazy! remember, the wedding is all about what the woman wants.

KANTANKA

You know that scarecrow of a wedding gown cost me an arm and a limb? I went all the way to Milan. Actually, she dragged me all the way to Milan. I mean Milan in Italy, not Milan in Africa. Day trip, just to get this ridiculous thing for her and now she says she can't wear it. That she's found something else and she swears she won't wear anything other than her latest fancy.

CHIDI

So what's the problem with the one you bought in Milan?

KANTANKA

She claims it doesn't fit.

CHIDI

But they can do something about it.

KANTANKA

She's dead against the idea; she claims it'll get ruined.

CHIDI

Did it fit when she forced you to buy it?

KANTANKA

That's the question she refuses to answer, Chidi. And whenever I question her judgment, I always get this grossly nasalised moaning: (mimicking Omotola) 'Kantanka, you know you are not ready for marriage?'

Enter Omotola, shuffling her feet and regarding Kantanka like a stern mother superior contemplating what punishment to mete out a recalcitrant nun.

KANTANKA

Here we go again.

OMOTOLA

Seriously, what kind of a man talks behind his wife's back?

KANTANKA

Hey, get a grip, woman; you're not my wife yet.

OMOTOLA

Isn't it just a matter of time now?

(reflecting)

Kantanka, are you sure you want to marry me? I want you to go and think over it very well. Ask yourself: Am I, Kantanka, seriously, wholeheartedly, absolutely, ready to commit myself to one woman, namely, Omotola? Kantanka, I reckon you need to be brutally frank with yourself and answer the question: Am I, Kantanka, sincerely, undoubtedly ready to commit myself to a life with Omotola?

KANTANKA

Don't be ridiculous, woman!

OMOTOLA

Did I hear you right? You owe me an apology, Kantanka. You must apologise now!

KANTANKA

Apologise? What for?

OMOTOLA

You must apologise. Stop arguing with me and just apologise. Kantanka, apologise. There's no way you're getting away with this.

KANTANKA

Getting away with what?

OMOTOLA

Instead of you apologising, you stand there and jaw-jaw with me, huh?

Enter Fafali in a very cheerful mood. She is in her sixties and dresses casually.

KANTANKA

(fuming and fretting)

Apologise! Apologise! You insist I apologise. Exactly why should I apologise? Oh, thank goodness, auntie you are here.

FAFALI

What have you done wrong?

KANTANKA

What are you talking?

FAFALI

Have you been unfaithful to her?

KANTANKA

Me? No.

FAFALI

What did you do then?

KANTANKA

Why must you assume I did something?

FAFALI

I'm just trying to get to the root of this matter.

KANTANKA

Nothing. I did absolutely nothing wrong. If anything, she has to apologise for accusing me of cheating on her.

FAFALI

You didn't cheat on her?

KANTANKA

No!

FAFALI

Go on, apologise to her.

KANTANKA

Apologise to her! Did you just say ...?

FAFALI

(interrupting him)

You heard me. Apologise to your fiancée.

KANTANKA

Apologise to her?

FAFALI

I said apologise to Omotola.

KANTANKA

Why must I apologise for a wrong that I have not done?

FAFALI

That's the whole point.

KANTANKA

Oh, it's as clear as muddy water now, auntie.

FAFALI

You say you haven't done anything to warrant an apology.

KANTANKA

Absolutely.

FAFALI

(emphatically)

Good, so go ahead and apologise to her.

KANTANKA

(wringing his left hand as if to suggest that Fafali has gone round the bend)

Auntie, tell me you're not in some secret society, some cult, with Omotola.

FAFALI

Oh as a matter of fact, I am. You see, she also happens to be the leader of our cult and I must lick her boots otherwise, I'm dead meat. So you see, you have to swallow your pride and apologise to Omotola. Kantanka, go ahead and apologise to Omotola now.

Kantanka shakes his head and gesticulates to indicate that what Fafali is saying doesn't make sense and there's no way he is going to do as she says.

KANTANKA

Why should I apologise, for crying out loud?

FAFALI

Trust me Kantanka, you need to do this.

KANTANKA

But it doesn't make sense.

FAFALI

Most marriages don't make sense and yet that's why they work.

KANTANKA

How can something work when it doesn't make any sense?

FAFALI

Hm, you see, boys will always be boys. Kantanka, do this for me please and I'll tell you a secret.

Kantanka paces the stage in a rather agitated manner. He stares at Fafali in a quizzical manner and runs his hands through his hair several times. Finally he manages to steady his rattled nerves and proceeds to apologise to Omotola.

KANTANKA

Alright Omotola, I'm sorry.

FAFALI

Good boy. Now you're ready to be a husband.

OMOTOLA

Cheeky! It's not enough to just say I'm sorry.

Kantanka clenches his fists and stamps his foot in anger.

FAFALI

Don't push it, Omotola. Don't push it.

Omotola spins on her feet and swings her hips so forcefully as if to drive home the message that she has scored a massive victory over Kantanka.

Scene 3

Kantanka's living room. A sulking Omotola stamps her way in. She huffs and puffs as she clumsily gathers a bed sheet around her body and tucks the upper hem under her armpit before turning around to face Kantanka who is hot on her heels. She stretches her arms in a bid to stop Kantanka from getting close to her.

OMOTOLA

For crying out loud stop behaving as if we are atypical bonobos couple.

KANTANKA

You can't help but admire bonobos, Omotola.

OMOTOLA

Of course you would admire them when their whole social structure revolves around having carnal knowledge of one another.

KANTANKA

Even then you would admit that they are the most peaceful, unaggressive species of mammals.

OMOTOLA

Yeah, so you must establish your own bonobos colony in this house! When we have to resolve an argument, a bit of the other does it. When we have to make up for fights, bonk! You fill me in when you need to show how much you appreciate me. A quickie settles it when you're mad at me. So for you there's no specific time for hanky-panky.

KANTANKA

That's the whole point! In line with the bonobo lifestyle. It's heaven!

OMOTOLA

You're shameless. Don't you ever get tired of exercising your waist?

KANTANKA

No! Not at all! As a matter of fact, I have enough erotic energy to last me a lifetime.

OMOTOLA

My, did I fall for a sex addict gosh, I don't even want to think about it.

KANTANKA

It diffuses tension; it strengthens bonds.

OMOTOLA

Obviously there are other ways of diffusing tensions and strengthening bonds.

KANTANKA

Why should we fight when we can have a bit of the other?

Kantanka leans towards Omotola but she steps away quickly and maintains the distance between them with outstretched arms and a vigorous shaking of her head.

OMOTOLA

There is no way I'm going to allow this bonobo lifestyle become the norm in our relationship let alone our marriage.

KANTANKA

So what will you settle for? Surely you are not proposing we draw up a time table, dear?

OMOTOLA

And why not?

KANTANKA

You and your expensive jokes eh?

OMOTOLA

Oh, you reckon?

KANTANKA

I see. Would you rather turn me into a frigate bird? That's not going to happen, Omotola; not in a million years!

OMOTOLA

But you will put your wings over my eyes whilst at it, won't you?

KANTANKA

And what are you going to demand next? The Manakin moonwalk?