

A319/11

POST PRODUCTION TRANSCRIPT

1/FOUA328X

DURATION: 91'27"

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SPOOL: HOU6734

COURSE: Literature in the Modern World

No. A319 TV11

NOT TO BE TAKEN
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M A D M E N A N D S P E C I A L I S T S

By

WOLE SOYINKA

AAFAA	Jude Akuwudike
CRIPPLE	Leo Wringer
GOYI	Craig Charles
BLINDMAN	Winston Crooke
SI BERO	Joy Elias Rilwan
IYA MATE	Ella Wilder
IYA AGBA	Pamela Nomvete
DR. BERO	Hepburn Graham
OLD MAN.....	Joseph Marcell
PRIEST	Ilario Bisi Pedro

Produced and Directed by Tony Coe

1_____
CU Dice showing
6 & 4. As they
are scooped up -
track back & left to
h/a loose o/s
Blindman 4-S

AAFAA
Six and Four. Good for you.

CRIPPLE

Your turn, Blindman.

[Give the dice and gourd to
BLINDMAN:

(Throws) Five and five.
Someone is going to give us
fivers.

GOYI:
Fat chance of that. (He throws)

AAFAA:
Three and two, born loser.
What did you stake ?

GOYI:
The stump of the left arm.

CRIPPLE:
Your last ?

GOYI:
No, I've got one left.

BLINDMAN:
Your last. You lost the right
stump to me yesterday.

GOYI:
Do you want it now or later ?

2_____
Rev. Angle l/a o/s
Goyi up to B/Man.

1_____
h/a 4-S
B/Man edge of left
frame

BLINDMAN:
Keep it for now.

CRIPPLE
When do I get my eye, Aafaa ?

-3-

AAFAA

Was it the right or the left ?

[TIGHTEN
TO]

GOYI

Does it matter ?

AAFA

Sure it does. If it's the
right one he can take it out
now. The left is my evil eye
and I need it a while longer.

3-S Aafaa, Goyi &
Cripple

CRIPPLE

It was the right.

AAFAA

I've just remembered the right
is my evil eye.

CRIPPLE

I'll make you an offer. Let me
throw against both of you for
Goyi's stumps. I'll stake the
eye Aafaa lost to me.

GOYI

Why leave me out ? I still want
to try my luck.

BLINDMAN

You have nothing left to stake.

3

2-S B/Man & Cripple

CRIPPLE

You're just a rubber ball,
Goyi. You need a hand to throw
with, anyway.

GOYI

I can use my mouth.

1

2-S Aafaa & Goyi

AAFAA

To throw dice ? You'll eat
sand my friend.

BLINDMAN

Sooner or later we all eat
sand.

2

1/a 4-S up to B/Man

CRIPPLE

Hey, you're beginning to sound
like the Old man.

-3-

1_____
MCU 2-S Aafaa/Goyi

AAFAA

(Voice change) Did you eat sand, my friend? We'll make you the Ostrich in our touring circus.

3_____
MS

BLINDMAN

The limbless acrobat will now perform his wonderful act - how to bite the dust from three classic positions.

2_____
2-S

GOYI

Upright, take off, and prone.

[AAFAA LIFTS GOYI
AND STEPS STAGE R.]

CRIPPLE

We'll never go on that tour.

1_____
4-S

AAFAA

Roll up - roll up. Presenting the Creatures of As in the timeless parade.

BLINDMAN

Think we'll ever make that tour?

AAFAA

We will. But until the millions start rolling in, we better not neglect the pennies.

[EXTRA SINGLE SHOTS]

[BLINDMAN]

(He nudges them, pointing to SI BERO)

[GOYI]

[CRIPPLE]

[AAFAA]

[SI BERO]

W/S TRACK in
BEHIND SI BERO TO
MENDS.

[Si Bero approaches
carrying a
small bag from which
protrude some twigs with
leaves and berries. The
MENDICANTS begin their
performance as soon as
they sense her approach.

(O V E R L A P)

BLINDMAN is alms collector,
GOYI repeats a single
acrobatic trick, AAFAA is
the 'dancer'.
BLINDMAN shakes the rattles
while the CRIPPLE drums
with his crutches and is
lead singer. BLINDMAN
collects alms in the
rattles.

CU ALMS GOURD
SI BERO WALKS UP TO
IT, IT STOPS PULL
BACK TO SEE HER.

SI BERO

(As Aafaa moves to intercept
her).

Don't try that nonsense with
me. I live in this
neighbourhood, remember ?

AAFAA

(His spasms ceasing abruptly.
The others also stop playing).
Don't they say charity begins
at home ?

SINGLE AAFAA

SI BERO

Your preaching is so good it's
a wonder you can't find
yourself a congregation.

SINGLE SI BERO

Loose SINGLA AAFAA

AAFAA

(Stiffening) What
congregation, woman ? Who said
I was ever a preacher ?

-6-

SI BERO

You were never anything. Go and find some decent work to do.

SINGLE SI BERO

AAFAA

With this affliction of mine?

SINGLE AAFAA

SINGLE WIDENS

& TRACK LEFT TO
BRING B/MAN, CRIPPLE
& GOYI

SI BERO

It comes and goes, not so ?
You can work in between.

AAFAA

And this one ? And that ? And that? (*Pointing lastly to Goyi*).

If it weren't for the iron rod holding up his spine he would collapse like a toad you step on. Just what sort of work do you want him to do ?

GOYI

A penny or two, Si Bero. We haven't eaten today.

BLINDMAN

And that is God's truth. Aafaa, why do you pick a quarrel with her ? Just ask her for a few pennies, you know she treats us well.

2-S AAFAA & B/MAN

CRIPPLE

The lane is deserted. Nobody comes and goes any more.

h/a 3-S SI BERO

f/g GOYI & CRIPPLE

GOYI

Something is driving them away from here. If there isn't something going on, then this isn't an iron I have in my back.

[AND PAN RIGHT AS
AAFAA BOUNCES INTO
SHOT]

AAFAA

It is your neighbourhood, you say, Si Bero. What are you doing to drive people away ?

-6-

SI BERO

Perhaps your mother's ghost is haunting the place. Why don't you ask her the next time she visits you ?

AAFAA

Why do you always pick on me, old woman ? What has my mother done to you ?

SI BERO

She gave birth to you for a start.

M.S. SINGLE SI BERO

[She throws a penny to the CRIPPLE who tosses it into the gourd]

[POSS. C/A NEEDED OF
COIN IN AIR &
CRIPPLE CATCHING]

If you want more than that, you know where to come. I still need people to sort out my herbs.

L.S. BY DRYING RACK
B/MAN, SI BERO...
AAFAA f/g

AAFAA

(Turns to rack.)

Herbs ! Herbs ! Herbs! Always - come and sort out herbs to earn yourself a decent coin.

SI BERO

And eat. You can have work and eat. The two go together.

CAM. GOES UP SI BERO
HAS TURNED, AAFAA
REACTS.

[She goes out]

CRIPPLE.

(Throwing the coin in the gourd, calls after her)
God bless you, Si Bero.

BLINDMAN

He shall, he will, he must.

GOYI

He'd better or I'll know the reason why.

CRIPPLE

Your turn, Aafaa.

AAFAA

What for ?

CRIPPLE

A penny is something.

AAFAA

Not for me.

GOYI

Give her a pennyworth, then.

AAFAA

Can't be bothered.

BLINDMAN

Go on. Don't be mean.

CRIPPLE

You're the priest, after all.

AAFAA

(Suddenly grinning and TURNS)

A penny's worth, you say ?

v/h/a 4-S (Crane?)
B/Man f/g

CRIPPLE

That's only fair

[OR TRACK RIGHT]

AAFAA

*(AS he goes LEFT shouting after
the now distant woman)*

God bless your brother !

[They all break out guffawing]

GOYI

More grease to his elbow.

AAFAA

Not forgetting his armpits.

BLINDMAN

More power to his
swagger-stick!

CRIPPLE

(On his back)

May light ever shine....

AAFAA

From his braids and buttons

-9-

GOYI

May he come home safely....

AAFAA

To your loving arms.

CRIPPLE

Not to mention his Daddy's.

GOYI

God help her, that is some brother she has. You may say he is dutiful.

SINGLE

CRIPPLE

Him a dutiful son ? You're crazy.

BLINDMAN

I know what he means. (*He points an imaginary gun*)
Bang ! All in the line of duty !

(GOYI clutches his chest, slumps over.)

AAFAA

Did we try him ?

4-S B/Man, Goyi
AAfaa

4-S Cripple & Aafaa
Goyi & B/Man b/g

CRIPPLE

Resurrect, you fool. Nobody tried you yet.

AAFAA

(*in a ringing voice*)
You are accused.

BLINDMAN

Satisfied ?

CRIPPLE.

Fair enough.

BLINDMAN

Bang !

[GOYI slumps]

AAFAA

(*rinsing his hand*). Nothing to do with me.

-9-

-10-

BLINDMAN

Fair trial, no ?

AAFAA

Decidedly yes.

BLINDMAN

What does he say himself ?

GOYI

Very fair, gentlemen. I have no complaints.

BLINDMAN

In that case we permit you to be buried.

GOYI

You are generous, gentlemen. I have a personal aversion to vultures.

SINGLE

BLINDMAN

Oh, come come. Nice birds they are. They clean up after the mess.

CRIPPLE

Not like some bastards we know.
(He spits)

SINGLE (Crane shot)

[AND UP ON AAFAA'S
SPEECH]

[AND WIDEN & PULL
BACK RIGHT AND UP
AND BACK TO..]

AAFAA

(posing) In a way you may call us vultures. We clean up the mess (the car) made by others. The populace should be grateful for our presence.

(He turns slowly round).

If there is anyone here who does not approve us, just say so and we quit. [LOOK UP TO

CAMERA] (His hand makes the motion of half-drawing out a gun) (LOOK DOWN TO RIGHT)

I mean, we are not here because we like it. We stay at immense sacrifice to ourselves, our leisure, our desires, vocation, specialization, etcetera, etcetera.

-10-

The moment you say, Go,
we..... (He gives another
inspection all round, smiles
broadly and turns to the
others). They insist we stay.

M.S. FROM JUDE
TO LOOK AT CAM.

h/a AS ABOVE

l/a M.S.
AS HE TURNS AWAY
CAM. TRACKS BACK
FROM HIM.

H/A FAVOURING
CRIPPLE

CRIPPLE
I thought they would.
Troublesome little insects
but... they have a sense of
gratitude. I mean, after all
we did for them.

[CRANE MOVES DOWN]

2-S GOYI & AAFAA

GOYI
And still do.
BLINDMAN
And will continue to do.
CHORUS
Hear hear hear hear. Very well
said, Sir.
GOYI
Oh, come on. Shall we follow
the woman or yap here all day?
Let's get spying.

AAFAA
She's a devil, that's my
complaint. She was born with a
stone in her stomach.

GOYI
What's wrong? It's the job we
are here to do, isn't it?

HERB RACK FOCUSSED

AAFAA
I still don't like messing
about with her herbs.

BLINDMAN
Herbs are herbs, not so? Let's
get going.

GOYI

I don't like the whole business. She has been good to us.

2-S GOYI & AAFAA

[WIDEN]

AAFAA

With the pennies she throws as if she's feeding a dog ? I spit on that kind of goodness !

CRIPPLE

I still don't like it. Why is he doing it ? His own family too, what's he up to ?

2-S & B/Man.

GOYI

He's a specialist.

AAFAA

Amen.

GOYI

What ?

AAFAA

Amen. He is a specialist. That takes care of everything, not so ?

SINGLE AAFAA

GOYI

There is bound to be something in it for us.

SINGLE

FOLLOW DOWN TO HAND
& STICK COMES IN

BLINDMAN

Something like burnt fingers ?

GOYI

What do you mean ?

BLINDMAN

(Shrugs) When things go wrong
it's the lowest who get it
first.

AAFAA

(INTO SHOT) [To himself]

There is money at the bottom of
it.

CRIPPLE

(places BLINDMAN'S hand on his
shoulder and starts off in the
direction of the house) And we
are at the bottom. So, let's
go and make sure the woman
doesn't stumble on any official
secrets.

AAFAA

(checks) Rem Acu Tetigisti.

[WITH THE ACTION]

CRIPPLE

What ? I don't get you.

AAFAA

[TURNS TO THEM]

R.A.T. ! R.A.T. ! I smell a
rat.

O/s CRIPPLE &
B/MAN, GOYI, AAFAA

GOYI

Is he having an attack?

CRIPPLE

What's up, Aafaa ?

AAFAA

You said it yourself - Official
Secrets. Official rat is what
I smell. Yessir ! We'll get
paid something decent.

Bottomless account. We'll get
overtime and risk allowance.

Single

3-S GOYI/CRIPPLE &
B/MAN.

GOYI

It's not going to be risky, is it ?

AAFAA

I know you have none, but I'll be risking my conscience. That needs compensation.

SINGLE

CRIPPLE

What do you think, Blindman ?

2-S

BLINDMAN

Hm. Aafaa may be right. For once.

AAFAA

(JOINS SHOT)

[BECOMES 3-S]

Never mind the cleverness. You agree.

BLINDMAN

R.A.T. You have touched the matter with a needle.

GOYI

Where ? I'm still lost.

SINGLE (Crane)

BECOMES 2-S

AND GOES UP

AAFAA

Where ? I'll soon show you, dumbclod. (He lunges for GOYI'S crotch).

GOYI

(protecting himself). No !

AAFAA

Why not ? You got any more use for it ?

BLINDMAN

Maybe he wants to continue the line.

MCU
MIME OF NEEDLE &
FOLLOW IT DOWN.

2-S (FROM RIGHT)

CRANE
SHOT

[TIGHTEN IN]

AAFAA

What ! This crooked line ? It would be a disservice to humanity.

CRIPPLE

Hey. Think he'll do that to his own father ?

BLINDMAN

When the Specialist wants results badly enough...

CRIPPLE

Yes, but what results ?

AAFAA

Does it matter ? (Voice change. He points a 'needle' held low, at GOYI.) Say anything, say anything that comes into your head but SPEAK, MAN ! (Twisting the needle upwards.) [GOYI, hands over crotch, yells]

BLINDMAN

(solemnly) Rem Acu Tetigesti.

AAFAA

Believe me, this hurts you more than it hurts me. Or - vice versa. Truth hurts. I am a lover of truth. Do you find you also love truth ? Then let's have the truth. THE TRUTH !

(He give another push. GOYI screams)

CRIPPLE: }

BLINDMAN } Rem Acu Tetigisti

AAFAA

Think not that I hurt you but that Truth hurts. We are all seekers after truth. I am a Specialist in truth. Now shall we push it up all the way, all the way ? Or shall we have all the truth all the truth.

AAFA (Cont'd)

(Another push. GOYI screams,
then his head slumps.)
Hm, the poor man has fainted.

CRIPPLE: }
BLINDMAN:} Rem Acu Tetigisti

TIGHT CRANE SHOT
AAFAA & GOYI

[AAFAA makes a motion of
slapping his face several
times. GOYI revives]

GOYI
Where am I ?

4-S

CRIPPLE
Within the moment of truth,
dear friend.
AAFAA
(chanting) Rem Acu...
OTHERS
Tetgisti, tetigisti.
ALTOGETHER
Rem Acu Tetigisti.
AAFAA
You have touched it with a....
OTHERS
Fine needle, fine fine needle.

ALL
You have touched it with a fine
fine.
AAFAA
Rem Acu....

CRANE SHOT
& PULL BACK

[They repeat the song, AAFAA
singing Rem Acu Tetigisti in
counterpoint to the others 'You
have touched it with a needle']

Hey.
(He taps GOYI on the shoulder.)

Are you recovered ? Good.
Here we go again.

CRIPPLE

Perhaps he needs a drink of water.

AAFAA

Really ? Well, give him one, then. We are no monsters here. No one will charge me with heartlessness. Give him a drink of water. A large one.

CRANE DOWN

[TIGHTEN TO
2-S]

[BLINDMAN hands GOYI a 'bowl' of water. GOYI drains it while they all watch avidly.]

Satisfied ? Happy ? More ? No.

(He takes the bowl and hands it to BLINDMAN.)

Anything else ? Perhaps you would like to use the conveniences ? The toilet?
(Goyi nods.) Over there. Be my guest.

[GOYI turns, his hand goes to his fly, he stops, turns round slowly. A big grin appears on the faces of the other three.]

What's the matter ? No wan' pee-pee? Pee-pee pee-pee ? NO more pee-pee ? I know what it is. (Chanting) Rem Acu.....

WS CRANE AS THEY
SING

OTHERS

Tetigisti, tetigisti....

[As they go through the chant again SI BERO reappears with a small bunch of herbs. They quickly stop singing.]

CRIPPLE

Are we to come now, Si Bero ?
We need the work.

SI BERO

Wait here. [PAUSE] I'll tell
you [TURN] when I'm ready.
[DELAY AAFAA MOVE]

[They watch her pass. She goes
into the OLD WOMEN'S hut and
AAFAA sneaks near a moment
later, to try and eavesdrop.
The others pass the time
throwing dice.]

[In the OLD WOMEN's hut]

O V E R L A P

[AS SI BERO GOES PAST CAMERA &
CLEARS GOING UPSTAIRS THE
CAMERA GOES UP & PAN RIGHT TO
REVEAL SILHOUETTES IYA AGBA &
IYA MATE LOOKING OUT TOWARDS
THE MENDICANTS]

IYA MATE

A-ah, you have a good eye,
daughter.

IYA AGBA

Where did you find it ?

SI BERO

Not far from where I went
yesterday. Someone had emptied
a pile of rubbish near by,
that's why I missed it.

1/a UP TO WOMEN

3-S FROM RIGHT

IYA AGBA

(suddenly) Let me see that.
Let me see it !

IYA MATE

What's the matter ?

SINGLE

IYA AGBA

Bring it here. It's not the
right one at all.

IYA MATE

Here. Look for yourself.

[HOLDING BERRIES]

No one can tell me my eyes are
failing.

SINGLE & TILT
DOWN AS SHE BREAKS
STALK

IYA AGBA

Just now I remember what you
said - birds haven't attacked
it. Usually it's the poison
kind they don't go near.

(She breaks the stalk.)

[HOLDS IT UP]

I thought so. This is the
twin. Poison.

SI BERO

Poison ! But....

2-S

IYA MATE

It can't be poison.

MS AS SHE HOLDS
IT TO HER FACE

IYA AGBA

They don't grow much. Haven't
seen one in - oh, since I was a
child. Farmers destroy them as
soon as they see them. But
it's the poison twin all right.
Except for that red streak
along the stalk you wouldn't
tell them apart.

3CR2.DOC

SINGLE

IYA MATE

I didn't even know there was
the poison kind.

SINGLE
& TIGHTEN

IYA AGBA

You don't see them much. Once
in a lifetime. Farmers don't
let them live, you know. Burn
out the soil where they find it
growing, just to kill the
seeds. Foolishness. Poison
has its uses too. You can cure
with poison if you use it
right. Or kill.

3-S

SI BERO

I'll throw it in the fire.
[SHE TAKES IT]

START ON MATE

IYA MATE

Do nothing of the sort. You
don't learn good things unless
you learn evil.

PAN LEFT SLOWLY

OVER THE 3 TO

END ON AGBA

SI BERO

But it's poison.

IYA MATE

It grows.

IYA AGBA

Rain falls on it.

IYA MATE

It sucks the dew.

IYA AGBA

It lives.

IYA MATE

It dies.

IYA AGBA

Same as any other. An-hn, same
as any other.

SI BERO

That means I still have to find
the right one.

SCR2.DOC

IYA AGBA

It will be in the same place.
They grow together most of the
time.

SI BERO

I'll go tomorrow.

2-S

SI BERO & MATE

IYA MATE

Take some rest. Or... is he on
his way home ?

SI BERO

There is no news at all. I am
beginning to....

IYA AGBA

Beginning to worry like every
foolish woman. He'll come
back. He and his father.
There is too much binds them
down here. They will take root
with their spirit, not with
their bodies on some unblessed
soil. Let me see your hands

(She scrutinizes the hands
carefully, burst suddenly into
a peal of laughter.)

AND WIDEN

GRADUALLY TO INCLUDE

SI BERO & IYA AGBA

These hands are not yet ready
to wind shrouds. We shall drink
palm wine soon, very soon when
someone returns.

(She takes SI BERO by both
hands and begins to shuffles
with her, singing.)

Ofe gbe wa de'le o - Ofe...

Ofe gbe wa de'le o - Ofe

Oko epo.epa i runa

Gbe wa dele o

Ofe gbe wa de'le

< MENDICANTS JOIN IN >

SI BERO

"Stop that noise"

O V E R L A P

RECORDING BREAK

CR2.DOC

[The MENDICANTS look at one another, begin to beat time with them, then join the singing in a raucous, cynical tone. The WOMEN stop, amazed and offended. The OLD WOMEN fold their arms, retire deeper into the hut while SI BERO dashes out, furious.]

CRANE DOWN

SI BERO

Stop that noise ! Did I ask you here for entertainment ?

CRIPPLE

No offence, Si Bero, no offence. We only thought you had forgotten us.

SI BERO

And thought your horrible voices the best way of reminding me.

GOYI

It's not our fault our voices are no better.

1/a 5-S FROM RIGHT

AAFAA

We can't all have voices like choiring angels, you know.

SI BERO

That's enough from you. Come along if you still want to work, only keep your voices down and stop frightening the neighbourhood.

[They follow her to the front of the house]

CRIPPLE

So here we are, Si Bero. Bring out the herbs and let us catch the smell of something in your kitchen while we are about it.

AAFAA

How much are we getting today ?
Let's decide that first.

SI BERO

Depends how hard you work.

GOYI

Let's start work. It's a hot day and a man may as well stay close to shelter.

SI BERO

I have a whole sack my buyer brought in yesterday.

[She takes hold of BLINDMAN'S hand]

Loose MS B/Man

SI BERO WALKS INTO
SHOT TAKES HIS HAND

TRACK LEFT TO
REVEAL AAFAA IN
THE WAY

You can give me a hand, the sack is heavy. (AAFAA immediately positions himself to accompany her.)
Not you, damn your forwardness.
Did I talk to you ?

AAFAA

He's not much use. He'll trip over and break his neck.

SI BERO

And that's his business not yours. [SHOOS HIM TO THE LEFT]

[She leads BLINDMAN into the house]

TRACK CONTINUES
PAST CAR F/g AS
AAFAA GOES TO SIT IN
IT

AAFAA

Did you see that ?

CR3.DOC

GOYI

I am sure even the Blindman did.

CRIPPLE

She didn't want any of us three, that was certain, but I....

AAFAA

Picks the one who can't see a thing.

CRIPPLE

I saw.

AAFAA

I told you it's funny business.

CRIPPLE

I am trying to tell you I saw. [TURNS TO GOYI] I saw the herbs.

h/a MCU CRIPPLE

AND COME DOWN
TO 2-S
CRIPPLE & AAFAA

AAFAA

Where ? Where ?

CRIPPLE

From here. From down here I could see through a gap in the door when she opened it.

AAFAA

What then ? What did you see ?

CRIPPLE

Herbs. Roots. Nothing but dried plants. The shelves are right up to the ceiling and they were full of leaves. All browned and crinkled.

GOYI

What kind ?

CRIPPLE

All kinds.

GOYI

What is she going to do with all that forest ?

3-S
FROM FRONT OF CAR

SCR3.DOC

SINGLE (VLAD)

MOVES IN AS DOOR
OPENS THEN TILT UP

(VLAD) TRACKS BACK
FOLLOWED BY CRIPPLE
& THE REST

AAFAA

Perhaps now you will learn to
listen to me.

CRIPPLE

She must be slightly crazy.
Living all alone, I suppose.

AAFAA

S-sh. They're coming. See if
you can sneak another look.

[SI BERO and BLINDMAN enter,
carrying a heavy sack between
them]

SI BERO

(entering backwards, she
stumbles against the CRIPPLE
who is trying to see through a
crack.)

O V E R L A P
RECORDING BREAK

Get out of the way, will you.
Are you now the doorstep that I
must step on you to get out of
my own house ?

CRIPPLE

(forced to retreat).

You are in a bad mood today, Si
Bero.

SI BERO

Your mother is in a bad mood,
not me. Now get working
instead of dragging yourself in
people's way. Get busy. You
know how I like them sorted
out.

AAFAA

Yes, we know.

GOYI

First the roots.

CRIPPLE

Then peel the barks.

AAFAA

Slice the stalks.

CRIPPLE

Squeeze out the pulps.

GOYI

Pick the seeds.

AAFAA

Break the pods. Crack the plaster.

CRIPPLE

Probe the wound or it will never heal.

BLINDMAN

Cut off one root to save the other.

AAFAA

Cauterize.

CRIPPLE

Quick-quick-quick-quick, amputate !

[BLINDMAN lets out a loud groan]

AAFAA

What do you mean, sir! How dare you lie there and whine ?

GOYI

Cut his vocal chords.

AAFAA

'Before we operate we cut the vocal chords'.

BLINDMAN

That's only for the dogs.

CRIPPLE

Your case is worse. You are an underdog.

GOYI

Rip out his vocal chords.

[BLINDMAN lets out another scream]

AAFAA

We don't want you in this fraternity.

CRIPPLE

Fool! You should see the others and thank your stars.

BLINDMAN

I can't see them to thank.

AAFAA

(snatches his stick.) Shall I put them on his head ? He can have them in all colours.

CRIPPLE

Leave him for now, we'll simply
expel him.

BLINDMAN

(screaming again) Oh God !

GOYI

Who's got the flaming sword ?

AAFAA

Right here, Lord, right here.

GOYI

Show him the door.

AAFAA

Out of the garden, bum, don't
ever show your face in here
again.

BLINDMAN

I appeal.

CRIPPLE

Who to ?

BLINDMAN

As.

AAFAA

In the name of As of the
beginning, out!

BLINDMAN

No !

AAFAA

Out !

BLINDMAN

No !

AAFAA

No. I'm quite good at it, actually. One stroke and - clean through the tendons. Bang through the ball-and-socket, believe me. I never touch the marrow.

GOYI

Heh, stop. The woman.

SI BERO

I said have you gone mad ? Are you here to work or fool around?

CRIPPLE

Oh, never mind us. Come on.

[They settle down quickly. As the sack is emptied on the ground, SI BERO, already about to turn into the house, stops, goes over and picks out a bunch of roots which she turns about in her hand, inspecting it.]

The MENDICANTS cannot contain their curiosity, directly observing her action. BLINDMAN listens intensely into the silence. Finally she starts towards the OLD WOMEN'S hut.]

AAFAA

We can sort that bunch if you like. And give it a scraping. It seems dirty enough.

SI BERO

(turns slowly on him).
Not half as dirty as your anus. The day you scrape that you can tell me what needs scraping and what doesn't.

AAFAA

(raising his stick).
You go too far with that mouth of yours !

[SI BERO looks him up and down contemptuously. She continues on her way.]

I have a mind to set fire to every single herb in that house.

BLINDMAN

Why don't you learn to leave her alone ?

AAFAA

What did I do ? What did I say? Just because of one stinking root. She has a mouth like a running gutter.

BLINDMAN

Leave the woman alone. She minds her own business, you mind yours.

AAFAA

And that's enough from you, Mr. Blind Advocate. I don't have to listen to you take her side all the time. One more word from you...

[He feints a slap across BLINDMAN'S face. BLINDMAN, alert, springs suddenly backwards and grasps his staff. AAFAA looks at him a moment, then bursts out laughing.]

Did you see what I see ? The man actually wants to fight me, Did you see ? Did you see him? He has no eyes but he actually wants to fight. Hm? Is it really a fight you're looking for, Blind One ?

[He kicks aside his staff but BLINDMAN immediately closes in on AAFAA, reaches for his arms and imprisons them. They strain against each other.]

CRIPPLE

Bloody fools !

GOYI

Look ! The specialist.

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[He points to the spot where they were first seen. Standing there is BERO, uniformed, carrying a hold-all. He watches. The CRIPPLE tugs at the clothes of the struggling men.]

CRIPPLE

Better stop that, he's here.

GOYI

He's waiting for use. Come on.

[The two men break apart. AAFAA is panting heavily. The CRIPPLE dashes quickly and brings BLINDMAN his stick. Somewhat sheepishly they troop towards BERO.]

BERO

(gives them a long cold stare).
Was that what I sent you to do in that house ?

AAFAA

He started it. And the woman.

CRIPPLE

Aafaa hit him first. Knocked off his stick. A blind man too.

[He spits]

CRIPPLE

A blind man. (He spits again.)

AAFAA

(raises the rattle threateningly).

Don't think because of him being here I can't....

[The CRIPPLE counters immediately by raising his crutch.]

-30-

BERO

Shut up ! Shut up all of you.
I didn't send you to the house
to fight. I asked you to keep
your eyes open and keep her
from going down. (He looks at
them with contempt, then jerks
his thumb in the direction of
the cellar.) What about him.
Is he staying quiet ?

AAFAA

(jerking his thumb at
BLINDMAN). Ask him. He is the
only one who got to enter the
house.

when we got him into that
underground place she was fast
asleep. We didn't make a
noise.

BLINDMAN

Excuse me, I wish to say
something.

BERO

Yes ?

BLINDMAN

I can only tell you what I felt
- in that room where I stood
with her. There is more love
in there than you'll find in
the arms of a hundred women. I
don't know what unhappiness you
intend for her but....

BERO

That's enough. You don't know
a thing about anything, so shut
up.

[BLINDMAN shrugs and retires
to one side.]

GOYI

My feeling is, I can't help
agreeing with him. In any case
we are not much use to anyone.

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BERO

I said that's enough. You're under orders.

AAFAA

I am not. And I haven't eaten today.

BERO

Very good.

AAFAA

Enh? Say that again. Which of what is very good ?

BERO

The fact that you haven't eaten today. If you fall down on the job you know you will go back to being hungry.

AAFAA

Good. I am glad to hear where we stand. We've done one thing already and don't think it was easy getting him in that hole without waking the neighbours or your sister. So what about for now ? Have we already fallen down on the job that we see nothing of what you promised ?

BERO

(studies him for a while, then turns to the others). Have you told him who I am exactly ?

AAFAA

Oh yes, Dr. Bero. I know who you are. The specialist. We all do. So what about it ? You say we are under orders but I tell you I am not. I know these three are discharged. As for me, I have never even taken orders from you before.

BERO

These are no longer discharged and you now take orders from me. You either get that into your twisted mind or get out now.

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AAFAA

You can't tell me to get out.
We teamed together without your
help and we are not doing badly
as it is. You can't come here
and break us up. If we have
anybody to thank it's him down
there. Not that I care. I
always thought he was crazy.

AAFAA - Cont'd

But just don't you forget we
are a team - one for all and
all for one.

BERO

You prefer that ? Begging for
pennies and getting spat upon ?

AAFAA

That's what you think. Ho ho,
that's a good one, isn't it ?
Isn't it ? You don't know
anything about us, do you ?

CRIPPLE

If you'll make up for our
losses, Sir....we were on our
way to greater things.

GOYI

I'll say that for us. We were
just beginning.

BERO

To do what ?

CRIPPLE

Well, you know...your Old Man
did come up with some ripe
ideas...;

BERO

You'll be taken care of.
That's a promise.

CRIPPLE

Then as I said before, that's
all right by me.

GOYI

Me too.

AAFAA

No, it isn't. I don't mind the
risks we are taking right
now...

-34-

BERO

I said, no more risks.

AAFAA

That's for us to decide until you say how much. What does he know about risks anyway? Even if I was only a chaplain to the men out there I knew what risk was. I nearly had it once or twice. Quite different from working for Intelligence where all you had to do was sift through papers full of lies and know how to slap people around....

[BERO cuts him across the face with his swagger stick. AAFAA staggers back, clutching the wound. BERO stands still, watching him. At the sound of pain IYA AGBA looks out of the hut and impassively observes the scene.]

BERO

That should remind you I do know how to slap people around. And you'd better remember some other things I know. You weren't just discharged because of your - sickness. Just remember that.... and other things.

[He stands gazing towards the house for a while.]
I am due home now. You know when to follow. Just remember to carry out my instructions to the letter.

[He walks purposefully to the house. As he passess by the OLD WOMEN'S hut IYA AGBA leans back to avoid being seen by him. A moment later SI BERO emerges, sees BERO and shouts, running towards him. IYA MATE joins the other women to watch the reunion.]

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SI BERO

Bero ! Bero ! (She embraces him, then tears herself off and shouts.)

BERO

Don't do that !

SI BERO

(rushing about, she doesn't hear). He's home ! He's....

BERO

(chases after and restrains her). Be quiet !

SI BERO

What ?

BERO

I don't want my return announced.

I'm tired. Let's talk of something else.

SI BERO

Oh yes, you must be. Come inside. No, wait. You mustn't come in yet. Be patient now, Bero. (Hurrying into the house.) Don't move from there. Stand still.

[BERO looks slowly round him, he gazes as if he is trying to pierce through walls into neighbouring homes. The expression on his face is contempt.]

[SI BERO re-appears with a gourd of palm wine, pours it on the ground in front of the doorstep. Then she moves to unlace his boots.]

BERO

You still keep up these little habits.

SI BERO

I like to keep close to earth.

BERO

(stepping back to prevent her from taking off his boots). Bare feet, wet earth. We've wetted your good earth with something more potent than that, you know.

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SI BERO

Not you. Neither you nor Father. You had nothing to do with it. On the contrary.

BERO

What, on the contrary ?

SI BERO

Were you together ? Did you manage to work together ?

BERO

We were together. For some time.

SI BERO

Is he going to stay with us ?

BERO

We'll... discuss him later.

SI BERO

(suddenly fearful) What is it, Bero ? Is he....

BERO

(stares back at her, letting the pause hang). Well, is he - what ?

SI BERO

(laughing) Stop trying to frighten me.

BERO

Who's trying to ?

SI BERO

Where are you hiding him ? I bet he's waiting round the corner.

BERO

He'll rejoin us in his own time.

SI BERO

(disappointed). Oh. But he's safe.

BERO

(impatiently). Of course he is.

SI BERO

(takes his hand). Come with me. I must show you to the Old Women and tell them also Father is safe.

BERO

What Old Women ?

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SI BERO

Over there in the hut.

BERO

Who are they ?

SI BERO

Herbalists. They helped me
with your work.

BERO

But why bring them here ? Why
camp them on my doorstep ?

SI BERO

They were good to me. I
couldn't have done a thing
without them. Come and talk to
them.

[BERO does not move.

Immediately, the OLD WOMEN
start to speak. BERO and SI
BERO remain still, BERO looking
towards the OLD WOMEN'S hut
while SI BERO watches him.

IYA AGBA

Well, has it been worth it, do
you think ?

IYA MATE

She is good woman.

IYA AGBA

Yes, but what about him ?

IYA MATE

You sense something wrong in
him ?

IYA AGBA

It's my life that's gone into
his. I haven't burrowed so
deep to cast good earth on
worthless seeds.

IYA MATE

Nor she.

IYA AGBA

So let him watch it. I haven't come this far to put my whole being in a sieve.

_[She turns abruptly and returns into the hut. IYA MATE remains for a while.]

SI BERO

They told me what to look for, where to look for it. How to sort them and preserve them.

BERO

(nods) You haven't wasted your time. I still need things from my former vocation.

SI BERO

Former vocation ?

BERO

A means, not an end.

SI BERO

We heard terrible things. So much evil. Then I would console myself that I earned the balance by carrying on your work. One thing cancels out another. Bero, they're waiting. Go and greet them Bero. They held your life together while you were away.

BERO

What is that supposed to mean?

SI BERO

I never feared for you while they were here.

BERO

You really disappoint me. You are supposed to be intelligent. It was you I asked to do my work, not some stupid old hags. I suppose they filled your hand with all that evil stuff. You've been pretty free with that word.

MR4.DOC

SI BERO

Not you yourself Bero, but
guilt contaminates. And often
I was afraid....(suddenly
determined). Bero, where is
Father ! ?

BERO

Safe.

SI BERO

(stubbornly). But you must
know when he's coming.

BERO

Sometime. —

SI BERO

When ? Why didn't you return
together ?

BERO

He's a sick man. He is coming
home to be cured.

SI BERO

Sick ? Wounded ?

BERO

Mind sickness. We must be kind
to him. Madmen have
such diabolical cunning.
It was fortunate I had already
proved myself. He was
dangerous. Dangerous !

SI BERO

What do you mean ? Did he
endanger you ?

3CR4.DOC

BERO

Did he ! He was in a different sector, working among the convalescents. I wouldn't have known what was going on if I had still been with the Medical Corps.

SI BERO

If you had still been ?

BERO

I told you. I switched.

SI BERO

But how ? You have your training. How does one switch, just like that ?

BERO

You are everything once you go out there. In an emergency....(he shrugs). The head of the Intelligence Section died rather suddenly. Natural causes.

SI BERO

And that's the new vocation ?

BERO

None other, sister, none other. The Big Braids agreed I was born into it. Not that that was any recommendation. They are all submental apes.

SI BERO

(studying him avidly, a slow apprehension beginning to show on her face). But you have....you have given that up now. You are back to your real work. Your practice.

BERO

(turns calmly to meet her gaze). Practice ? Yes

Control, sister, control. Power comes from bending Nature to your will. The Specialist they called me, and a specialist is - well - a specialist. You analyse, you diagnose, you - (He aims an imaginary gun.) - prescribe.

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SI BERO

(more to herself). You should have told me. I have made pledges I cannot fulfil.

BERO

Pledges ? What are you talking about ?

SI BERO

They held nothing back from me.

[The PRIEST enters, hails them from a distance.]

PRIEST

A-ah, there you are. Bero, my boy, welcome home. I caught a glimpse of you from my vestry and I said, No, it's not him, it can't be. But of course, who else could it be looking so handsome and imposing. Your prayers are answered, I said to myself, your prayers are answered, you doubting Thomas. And how is the little lady, the courageous one who kept the fort in the absence of brother and father ? Overjoyed, I am sure, overjoyed. So are we all.

[He observes nothing of BERO's cold attitude nor the fact that BERO has moved casually away from the patronizing arm which he tried to place on his shoulder.]

I meant to call on one or two neighbours on the way but that's just the selfish sinner I am, may God forgive me. No, I decided, I'll just have him all to myself for a little bit.

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PRIEST

When is your father coming, my lad ?

BERO

Soon.

SI BERO

Bero was just telling me.....

PRIEST

Soon. How soon ?

BERO

Soon enough.

PRIEST

Not soon enough for me, boy, no soon enough. I can't wait to take issue with him on all our old debates. Such an argumentative man, your father, such an argumentative man. And he'll have some stories to tell me, I'm sure. I couldn't believe my ears when he got up one day and said he was going to join you. At your age, I said, you doddering old thing ? I used to call him that, you know, and he would call me the mitred hyprocrite.

PRIEST: Cont'd

All in play, of course, only in play. So he.... where was I ? Something about your father, I believe. Oh yes, he suddenly got up one evening, right in the midst of our argument and said, I am going to see what's going on. He was just reading me a letter from you he and got all worked up. It can't be, he shouted. And then he leapt up and said - right out of the blue - we've got to legalize cannibalism. Yes, right out of the blue.

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What do you mean, I said, thinking he only wanted to start another argument. But no, he repeats it over and over and of course, I took him on. Legalize cannibalism? It's a damnable and heathenish idea. Yes, that's how we started the argument. Warmest session we ever had together. He wouldn't yield one foot and I wouldn't budge one inch. Not one fraction of an inch. My polemical spirit was aroused. Not to talk of Christian principles. For three hours I fought him foot by foot. Never been in better form. Nearly all night we argued, if you please, and then in the morning he was gone. What do you make of that?

SI BERO

Pastor, I think Bero is a little tired...

PRIEST:

Had only one letter from him all that time. Told me he was doing recuperative work among some disabled fellows. No forwarding address, if you please.

PRIEST:

I couldn't even continue our old debate by post. Strange man, your father, very strange. You didn't run into him out there, did you? I'm really anxious to know if he still intends to legalize cannibalism.

BERO:

He does.

PRIEST

I knew it-- A stubborn man, once he gets hold of an idea. You won't believe it but he actually said to me, I'm going

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to try and persuade those fools
not to waste all that meat.
Mind you he never could stand
wastage, could he ? I remember
he used to wade into you both
if he caught you wasting
anything. But human flesh,
why, that's another matter
altogether.

BERO

But why, Pastor. It's quite
delicious, you know.

PRIEST

Just what I say. It's.....
what did you say ?

BERO

(reaches out and pulls out the
PRIEST'S cheek). This.
Delicious.

PRIEST

(struggles free). You're
joking, of course.

BERO

No. Your friend will confirm
it when he comes.

PRIEST

(increasingly horrified). You
mean he.....

BERO

No, not him. He never meant
anything. At least, not that
way. But we found it delicious
just the same.

PRIEST

You ?

BERO

I give you the personal word of
a scientist. Human flesh is
delicious. Of course, not all
parts of the body. I prefer
the balls myself.

PRIEST

(vehemently). I don't believe
you.

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BERO

You don't ? Well, then, why don't you stay to dinner ?

PRIEST

Dinner ? (Cheering up.) Of course. I see all you want is an argument like your old man. Delighted, of course. Only too delighted to oblige....(He is stricken by a sudden doubt.) Er... dinner.... did you say dinner ?

BERO

Dinner. I came well-laden with supplies

[The PRIEST glances at BERO'S bulging briefcase lying near by, gulps.]

PRIEST

I....er....I am wondering if I haven't got a little christening to attend to.

I....er.... couldn't simply come for drinks afterwards ?

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[They watch him take flight]

SI BERO

(laughing). You know, for a moment I nearly believed you.

BERO

Oh ? (Turns and looks at her pityingly.) You didn't ?

[Pause. They look each other in the face. Her laughter dies slowly.]

SI BERO

Oh God.

BERO

Out of your world, little sister, out of your little world. Stay in it and do only what I tell you. That way you'll be safe.

SI BERO

(vehemently). Abomination !

BERO

Delicious, you heard me say.

SI BERO

Abomination !

BERO

(deliberately cruelly). Delicious. The balls, to be exact. I thought I told you to stay in your little world ! Go and take tea with the senile pastor or gossip with your old women. Don't come out from where you're safe. (Quietly.) Or sane.

SI BERO

But at least tell me why ? In God's name why ?

BERO

No, not in God's name - in the name of As!

SI BERO

What ?

BERO

As. The new god and the old - As.

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SI BERO

What are you trying to be, Bero
- evil ?

BERO

Does it sound that bad ? It
was no brain-child of mine. We
thought it was a joke. I'll
bless the meat, he said. And
then - As Was the Beginning, As
is, Now, As Ever shall be
...world without.... We said
amen with a straight face and
sat down to eat. Then
afterwards.....

SI BERO

Yes ?

BERO

He told us. (Pause. He laughs
suddenly.) But why not ?
Afterwards I said why not ?
What is one flesh from another?
So I tried it again, just to be
sure of myself. It was the
first step to power you
understand. Power in its
purest sense.

BERO: Cont'd

The end of inhibitions. The
conquest of the weakness of
your too human flesh with all
its sentiment. So again, all
to myself I said Amen to his
grace.

SI BERO

I don't follow you, Bero. Who
said grace ? Whose words are
these ?

BERO

Father's part of the liturgy of
his bed-ridden audience. Wait
a minute. (Pointing to the
MENDICANTS.) They can tell you
more about it.

SI BERO

Who ? These ? What have they
to do with....?

BERO

Have you never thought how they
came to beg so close to here ?
At the beginning, that is.
Before I found out about them.

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CR5.DOC

SI BERO

Oh, is that it ? You mean he sent them ? But you know him - Liberty House. It's not a crime. I found them work to do.

BERO

(heatedly). It's not his charitable propensities I am concerned with. Father's assignment was to help the wounded readjust to the pieces and remnants of their bodies. Physically. Teach them to make baskets if they still had fingers. To use their mouths to ply needles if they had none, or use it to sing if their vocal chords had not been shot away. Teach them to amuse themselves, make something of themselves. Instead he began to teach them to think, think, THINK ! Can you picture a more treacherous deed than to place a working mind in a mangled body ?

SI BERO

Where is he ?

BERO

Where ? Here.

SI BERO

Here ?

BERO

(pointing to the MENDICANTS). There. When they open their mouths you can hear him. You ! Come here ! Tell her. Would you call yourself sane ?

[The MENDICANTS have approached, AAFAA in the lead.]

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AAFAA

Certainly not, sir.

BERO

You got off lightly, Why ?

AAFAA

I pleaded insanity.

BERO

Who made you insane ?

AAFAA

(by rote, raising his eyes to heaven).

The Old Man, sir. He said things, he said things. My mind...I beg your pardon, sir, the thing I call my mind, well, was no longer there. He took advantage of me, sir, in that convalescent home. I was unconscious long stretches at a time. Whatever I saw when I came to was real. Whatever voice I heard was the truth. It was always him. Bending over my bed. I asked him, Who are you ? He answered, The one and only truth.

CRIPPLE

Hear, hear.

GOYI

Same here.

AAFAA

Always at me, he was, sir. I plead insanity.

CRIPPLE

Hear hear.

GOYI

Same here.

AAFAA

(pointing to BLINDMAN). Even him.

BLINDMAN

Once I even thought I could see him.

GOYI

Oh, but you did, you did.

BLINDMAN

No, not really.

CRIPPLE

You did, you did. The picture forms in the mind, remember ?

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GOYI

His very words. But any fool
knows they form on the eye.

AAFAA

Lord, he mixed us up.

BLINDMAN

You can see me, he said, you
can see me. Look at me with
your mind. I swear I began to
see him. Then I knew I was
insane.

CRIPPLE

Hear hear.

GOYI

Same here.

AAFAA

We all did.

CRIPPLE

And getting me all choosy !

BLINDMAN

Poor you.

CRIPPLE

Beggars can't be choosers, we
all knew that.

AAFAA

Yet he got you choosy.

CRIPPLE

I was mad.

BLINDMAN

(changing his voice).

Remember, even if you have
nothing left but your vermin,
discriminate between one bug
and the next.

CRIPPLE

Some bugs are friendly, others
wild.

GOYI

The one sucks gently, the other
nips.

BLINDMAN

If you must eat a toad....

CRIPPLE

...pick the fat one, with eggs
in its belly.

AAFAA

Listen to the fool. It's you
he's calling a toad.

[The CRIPPLE advances on him]

GOYI

No, it wasn't. Don't listen to him.

AAFAA

(voice change). You'll listen now or you'll listen later !

SI BERO

Where is Father ?

AAFAA

Where is he, where is he ? As is everywhere.

CRIPPLE

(picking a flea from his rags).

Got him !

SI BERO

(turning sharply). What !

CRIPPLE

(throwing it in his mouth).

A fat one.

GOYI

Greedy beggar.

AAFAA

Did you choose it ?

CRIPPLE

It chose me.

BLINDMAN

Chose ? An enemy of As.

AAFAA

Sure ? Not a disciple.

BLINDMAN

An enemy. Subversive agent.

AAFAA

Quite right. As chooses, man accepts. Had it sucked any blood ?

CRIPPLE

It tasted bloody.

GOYI

Accept my sympathies.

CRIPPLE

Not needed. The blood is back where it belongs.

AAFAA

The cycle is complete ?

CRIPPLE

Definitely.

GOYI

Then you can't complain.

CR5.DOC

SI BERO

What is this, Bero ? Where is Father ?

AAFAA

Within the cycle.

BLINDMAN

That's good. The cycle of As. Tell the Old Man that - he'll be pleased.

SI BERO

Where is he ?

AAFAA

Where the cycle is complete there will As be found. As of the beginning, we praise thee.

SI BERO

(shutting her ears). Oh God !

BERO

(pointing to the MENDICANTS). Do you still want to see him ?

AAFAA

As - Was - Is - Now.

SI BERO

Shut up, you loathsome toads !

[There is a brief silence.
They all look at her]

AAFAA

(grinning). Toads again. You hear that ?

CRIPPLE

She was looking at you.

AAFAA

What ! I must say I feel insulted.

CRIPPLE

A man must have some pride.

GOVI

My pride is - As.

AAFAA

And all in the line of duty. Sir, I demand protection.

BERO

That's enough. Open the surgery. (He turns to SI BERO)
You want to see him ? You shall.

MENDICANTS

(already moving towards the surgery). As - Was - Is - Now
- As Ever Shall Be...

Bi o ti wa
Ni yio se wa
Bi o ti wa
Ni yio se wa
Bi o ti wa l'atete ko se.....

SI BERO

And what in God's name is that?

BERO

One of their chants. (he grabs her arm as she tries to run after the MENDICANTS). Now listen, and always remember this - he is wholly in my charge.

SI BERO

How long ? How long has he been home ?

BERO

Home ? What home ? I tell you he is here in my charge. It was either this or... Do not interfere !

[He hold her with his eyes for a few moments, then moves to follow the MENDICANTS. He stops when he sees that she has made no attempt to follow.]

You want to see him ? Come on.

[Pause. SI BERO looks at him with increasing horror and disbelief. She turns and runs towards the OLD WOMEN who receive her at the door of the hut. BERO goes on into the clinic where the light has come on, revealing the OLD MAN seated in the midst of the chanting MENDICANTS. Lights fade slowly.]

-54-

THE SURGERY, BELOW THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE HOUSE. AN EXAMINATION COUCH, ASSORTMENT OF A FEW INSTRUMENTS AND JARS IN A LOCKED GLASS CASE, A CHROMIUM STERILIZING UNIT ETC.ETC., A TABLE, SWIVEL CHAIR ETC., A WHITE SMOCK HANGS AGAINST A SHELF, WITH SURGICAL MASK AND GLOVES TUCKED IN THE POCKETS. THE MENDICANTS ARE CROUCHED, STANDING, STOOPING IN THEIR NORMAL POSTURES, HUMMING THEIR CHANT AND LISTLESSLY THROWING DICE. THE OLD MAN'S ATTITUDE VARIES FROM BOREDOM TO TOLERANT AMUSEMENT.

AAFAA

A. As is Acceptance, Adjustment. Adjustment of Ego to the Acceptance of As....hm. Not bad. B....B..(His eye roams over the room for inspiration, falls on the BLINDMAN.) Of course. B, Blindness. Blindness in As. I say this unto you, As is all-seeing; All shall see in As who render themselves blind to all else. C...C ? (He looks at the others one by one but ends up shaking his head.) No, nothing from you lot this time. Can't see how I can ask the flock to get crippled for some reward in As. C...No, I'll have to skip it for now. D- good - I don't have to go far for that. D, Divinity. That's us. For Destiny too. In fact Destiny first, then Divinity. Destiny is the Duty of Divinity.

-54-

AAFAA: Cont'd
D-D-D - Destiny in 3-Dimension.
We the Divinity shall guide the
flock along the path of
Destiny. E....

BLINDMAN
Epilepsy ?

AAFAA
(sharply). Watch your mouth !

BLINDMAN
For your Divinity to have
control, the flock must be
without control. Epilepsy
seems to be the commonest form
- at least, I have witnessed
much that is similar.

GOYI
I know what you mean. Taken by
the spirit, they call it. It's
a good circus turn any day.
Aafaa should know.

AAFAA
You are suggesting I exploited
human infirmities, are you ?

CRIPPLE
I wish I had the power. Gives
a man a sense of power to watch
others twitch like so many
broken worms. Broken worms,
ah, that's a fine thing to come
from my mouth.

AAFAA
Before we get to Z I promise
you your private and personal
consolation. F...F...F..

GOYI
As farts, damn you ! (He turns
his rear and gestures
obscenely.)

AAFAA
I was going to suggest Fulfils.
As fulfils.

GOYI
And I say Farts.

AAFAA
Are you going to confront your
Destiny with a fart ?

MR6.DOC

GOYI

I have done before. I did it in that place where they treated us. Treatment ! No doctor. Only nurses who couldn't tell a man's end from their own. Hey, listen, and let me tell you, it was the cleverest thing I ever thought all those sweet times we spent with the Old Man. With him saying this and saying that to us and me on my side - couldn't turn on my back and couldn't on my belly - and the sun would come up one day and I wouldn't see it again until it come up the next. One time he told us - remember that day ? - he told us the earth goes round and round, which if you remember was just too much for someone like me to swallow.

GOYI: Cont'd

So, the following morning when the sun came round again, I said to myself, well, I suppose the Old Man must be right. I don't know what makes the world go round but I do know what goes round the world. It's wind. And I broke it loudly and felt better.

CRIPPLE

Dirty pig.

GOYI

It's all very well for you to talk. You could get around even then. I sometimes think God made you out of rubber or something.

AAFAA

(who has been thinking his own thoughts, gives a sudden shout.)

God, that's it. Godhead ! What a real pagan I've become if that took me so long. G, As is Godhead. I is next.

BLINDMAN

I am I, what more do you want ?

AAFAA

(chews it over) I am I, thus sayeth As. No.... that might cause trouble.

BLINDMAN

What kind of trouble ?

AAFAA

Think of it yourself. Sooner or later someone is going to say it and leave out 'so sayeth As'. And that means trouble.

GOYI

I don't follow.

CRIPPLE

Ask the Old Man. He'll settle the question.

[They turn towards the OLD MAN, but he is still motionless, unresponsive.]

AAFAA

Old Man, what do you think of the I matter

[Again they wait in vain for his response.]

AAFAA

All right, if that doesn't interest you, at least give us something between I and Z. That is still a long way to go and already I can feel my brain giving out. Not to talk of the others. Anything you like, your forgotten wishes, your deepest cravings, your pet dreams...

GOYI

S-sh !

CRIPPLE

Why do you keep making fun of him ? Leave him alone.

-58-

AAFAA

(looks genuinely surprised.)
But I...

GOVI

That's what he used to say.
You were using his very words
just to mock him.

AAFAA

Well, I didn't mean to.

[His apparent contrition
leaves the others a little
flat. They steal furtive
glances at the OLD MAN who deos
not move.]

CRIPPLE

I have a pet dream.

AAFAA

We know what that is, so shut
up !

BLINDMAN

I want to hear his pet dream.

AAFAA

Can't you guess what it is by
seeing where he scratches
himself at night ?

BLINDMAN

No, I cannot see.

[A brief pause.]

CRIPPLE

I'll tell you. Every night we
sleep in this place I have that
same dream. It's what makes me
stay on. It is what makes
me...assist...

AAFAA

Collaborate.

CRIPPLE

I don't know what the big word
means.

BLINDMAN

(gently). No. Don't bother
with it. Continue with your
dream.

-58-

5.DOC

CRIPPLE

It is what makes me continue to obey the specialist.

[Pause]

OLD MAN

(unnoticed, he has turned round to face them).

Go on, your dream.

CRIPPLE

(for a moment he, with the rest, shows confusion).

I... dream he tells me to get on that table. He says, I could not attend to you before but there were other things... one thing at a time, certain things are more important than others. So he operates on my back and in another moment he's finished, wipes his hands and says....

AAFAA

Arise, throw off they crutches and follow me.

CRIPPLE

(lowering his eyes as if in abashment). Yes, more or less the same words. But just as I want to get up, I wake up from the blasted dream !

AAFAA

(with explosive disgust). That's a permanent dream if ever I heard one. You think the specialist has time for your petty little inconvenience ? You're getting to be quite important in your mind to afford dreams like that. I wouldn't dare. Would you ?

BLINDMAN

Isn't it time for his food ?

AAFAA

Even there I didn't like him all that much. Now the specialist - that's a professional. You only need to remember it's father and son. Human beings both of them. Who is my neighbour you know - all that stuff and sentiment.

All right, we heard. Put down the tray and go back to your hole. Go on. Get going.

[They listen to the footsteps retreat out of hearing.]

(He chants at the OLD MAN.)
Lord, now lettest thou thy
servant depart in peace,
according to thy word. (To
BLINDMAN.) Are you going to
open the door ?

[BLINDMAN sighs, gets up,
followed by GOYI. He unbolts
the door and GOYI exits. He
bolts it again, AAFAA watching
every movement.]

Chop time, Old Man. Your food
is on the way.

OLD MAN

Did you take my watch ? (He
stirs and feels in his breast
pocket.)

AAFAA

It was broken. I sent it for
repairs.

OLD MAN

You have it on your wrist.

AAFAA

Mistaken identity. (Holding up
his wrist.) Take a look if you
like.

OLD MAN

You took my glasses also.

AAFAA

(dips into his pocket.) Try
these. No ? They might just
fit you never can tell. They
used to belong to him.

(Pointing to BLINDMAN.) Are
you sure you wouldn't try them?
After the blast took off his
eyes - that's how we first met
- it was my job to go round
comforting the poor fools - or
burying them. Anyway - and
that's the strange thing; the
glasses were knocked off all
right, but not a scratch on
them.

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AAFAA: Cont'd
So he says, take my glasses
from that bedside cupboard in
case someone else needs them.
I've kept them ever since. Are
you sure you won't try them ?

OLD MAN

Let me see that watch again.

AAFA

It won't tell you anything.

OLD MAN

Which of you took my glasses ?

AAFAA

What does it matter ?

OLD MAN

I want to see what's in the
food. What are you giving me
to eat ?

AAFAA

Leave that to us.

[A sudden peremptory knock on
the door. Enter BERO, followed
by GOYI bearing a tray of
food.]

BERO

I thought I would join you for
dinner.

OLD MAN

(rounding on him). Will you
tell me just what is going on ?

BERO

Nothing Old Man, nothing.

OLD MAN

I wish to write a letter.

BERO

Who to ?

OLD MAN

To your superiors.

BERO

(winces, but recovers his
poise). There isn't such a
thing.

OLD MAN

Your superiors, I said. I
demand the right to send to
them at once.

- 61 -

[Pause. Finally.]

BERO

You shall.

OLD MAN

I wish to write to them at once. Now!

BERO

(turns to AAFAA). Fetch some writing material. Go to the nearest stationers.

OLD MAN

Why all the way to look for a store? Isn't there any in the house?

BERO

None that belongs to you. Perhaps you would give him money for your requirements?

[The OLD MAN starts to take money from his pockets, slows down in suspicion and looks at BERO. Then, slowly, he dips into all his trouser pockets.]

OLD MAN

You know you took my money. Or ordered it removed.

BERO

I don't know anything of the sort.

OLD MAN

(violently). You know I have no money here!

BERO

I don't know anything. You on the contrary appear to know everything. Isn't that right? You know everything. (To AAFAA) The Old Man appears to have no money. Obviously he can have no writing paper. Perhaps you would like to send a verbal message?

OLD MAN

You can take your verbal message to - (He looks at him scornfully, then sits down.)

BERO

I tried to help. You will, of course, be given the best of everything you need. Need. (Pause.) Your food will get cold.

OLD MAN

I need my pipe.

BERO

(appears to consider it.) Why not ? In this case I raise my idea of your need to coincide with your want.

[He open a cabinet, give him his pipe and tobacco]

That gentlemen there will offer you a light whenever you - need it.

[OLD MAN begins to stuff his pipe, normally at first, then slower and slower. When the pipe is filled he hold it by the bowl, waiting. AAFAA dips his hand in his pocket as if about to pull out matches, pauses, slowly holds out a closed fist then opens it suddenly to reveal the hand empty. He breaks into silent laughter.]

OLD MAN.

I need a light.

BERO

And your watch. And glasses. And money. And paper. But do you really ? I promised you the best of everything and this will prove to you I mean it.

- 64 -

(He takes a packet of cigarettes from his pocket and offers it.)

They are the best cigarettes on the market.

[He takes out a packet of matches, holds out both matches and cigarettes in one hand, holds out the other hand, inviting him to return the pipe and tobacco.]

OLD MAN

I prefer.... my pipe.

[BERO does not move. A long pause. The OLD MAN looks round at the MENDICANTS avidly watching. Finally he returns the pipe and pouch, accepts the cigarettes and matches, but moves the packet against his face to read the brand name.]

BERO

You can't see to read.

[The OLD MAN snatches the box away from his face, opens the box and takes out a cigarette, lights it, then breaks into a slow smile.]

OLD MAN

You would, wouldn't you ? You would try that on me. Me! Shall I teach you what to say ? Choice! Particularity! What redundant self-deceptive notions ! More ? More ? Insistence on a floppy old coat, a rickety old chair, a moth-eaten hat which no certified lunatic would ever consider wearing, a car wich breaks down twenty times in twenty minutes, an old idea riddled with the pellets of incidence. Enough ? More ?

- 64 -

OLD MAN: Cont'd

Are you cramming it up fast for the next victim ? A perfect waterproof coat is rejected for a patched-up heirloom that gives the silly wearer rheumatism. Is this an argument for freedom of choice? Is it sensible to cling so desperately to bits of the bitter end of a run-down personality ? To the creak in an old chair, the crack in a cup, a crock of an old servant, the crick in the bottleneck of a man's declining years...(Pause. His voice changes.) But it did come to the test and I asked you all, what is one meat from another ? Oh, your faces then, your faces....

BERO

You still boast of that ? You go too far, Old Man.

OLD MAN

After all, what's meat for the ranks should be meat for the officers....(Chuckles.) It could happen I said, it will happen. But I never really believed it.

BERO

They would have killed you, you know that ? If I hadn't had you hidden away they would have killed you slowly.

OLD MAN

(still on his own.) No. I've asked myself over and over again. I said it would happen, I knew it would happen, but I never really believed it.

BERO

They wanted to kill you, mutilate you, hang you upside down then stuff your mouth with your own genitals. Did you know that ? (His explosiveness breaks in on the OLD MAN.)

- 66 -

OLD MAN

Why do you hesitate ?

BERO

To do what ?

OLD MAN

I said, why do you hesitate ?
(PAUSE.) Once you begin there is no stopping. You say, ah, this is the last step, the highest step, but there is always one more step. For those who want to step beyond, there is always one further step.

BERO

Nothing more is needed.

OLD MAN

Oh, yes, there is. I am the last proof of the human in you. The last shadow. shadows are tough things to be rid of. (He chuckles.) How does one prove he was never born of man ? Of course you could kill me....

BERO

Or you might just die....

OLD MAN

Quite possible, quite possible.

BERO

You're lucky you've lasted this far.

OLD MAN

I have lasted, but the question of being lucky...?

BERO

There is a search for you everywhere.

OLD MAN

I thought that was over. Tenacious gods they worship, don't they ?

BERO

And you ?

OLD MAN

Or maybe they are the tenacious gods.

BERO

And the god you worship ?

- 66 -

OLD MAN

Abominates humanity - the
fleshy part, that is.

BERO

Why As ?

OLD MAN

Because Was - Is - Now.....

BERO

Don't !

OLD MAN

So you see, I put you all
beyond salvation.

BERO

Why As ?

OLD MAN

A code. A word.

BERO

Why As ?

OLD MAN

It had to be something.

BERO

Why As ?

OLD MAN

If millions follow... that
frightened you all.

BERO

Why As ?

OLD MAN

Are you going to reopen the
files ? The case is closed.
Insane, the verdict, thanks to
you.

BERO

Why As ?

OLD MAN

Why not ?

BERO

Why As ?

OLD MAN

Who wants to know ?

BERO

I. Why As ?

OLD MAN

What's in it for you ?

BERO

I am asking questions !

Why As ?

OLD MAN

We went through this before.

BERO

I took a chance saving you.

OLD MAN

Risked your neck, yes.

Compromised your position.

BERO

I didn't do that for nothing.

OLD MAN

It won't be for nothing. As my next-in-line you are my beneficiary. Legal. These of course are my natural heirs.

BERO

To what ?

OLD MAN

As. What else ?

BERO

I could turn you out and let them find you.

OLD MAN

The file is closed.

BERO

Is it ? They are still looking for you.

OLD MAN

They should be looking for themselves. I robbed them of salvation.

BERO

Oh, yes, you are good at quibbling.

OLD MAN

Oh, their faces ! That was a picture. All those faces round the table.

BERO

IF they hadn't been too surprised they would have shot you on the spot.

OLD MAN

Your faces, gentlemen, your faces. You should see your faces. And your mouths are hanging open. You're drooling but I am not exactly sure why. Is there really much difference? All intelligent animals kill only for food, you know, and you are intelligent animals.

EAt-eat-eat-eat-eat-EAt !

BERO

(raises his arm). Stop it !

OLD MAN

(turns and holds him with his eyes). Oh yes, you rushed out and vomited. You and the others. But afterwards you said I had done you a favour. Remember ? (BERO slowly lowers his arm.) I'm glad you remember. Never admit you are a recidivist once you've tasted the favourite food of As.

[Pause]

BERO

That's your last meal. Eat.

[Going out.]

OLD MAN

Because it's your last chance ? (BERO stops but doesn't turn round.) I guessed it. You have to prove you have not yourself been contaminated. But suppose you find no answer to take back, what then ? (Pause, smiling.) The - choice - is simple. Be contaminated !

[BERO exits, slamming the door]

AAFAA

(dashes toward the food tray, opens the lid and sniffs) Inspiration ! C, Contentment. A full belly. (He starts to pick at the OLD MAN's food. The others join him, wolfing down huge chunks of meat. AAFAA gnaws at a huge bone.) A full belly comes and goes; for half the people I know it never comes H - Humanity! Humanity the Ultimate Sacrifice to As.

-70-

BERO

What is it ? Are you spying on me ?

SI BERO

What are you doing to him ?

BERO

Keeping him safe. What do you imagine ?

SI BERO

I wish to see him

BERO

I've told you already....

SI BERO

I wish to see him.

BERO

You had your chance. NO one can see him now.

SI BERO

Why not ?

BERO

He's dangerous.

SI BERO

I'll risk it.

BERO

Infectious diseases are isolated. Nothing unusual about it, so stop making a fuss. I need to work in peace.

SI BERO

What am I to do ? I have time on my hands. What can I do but think !

BERO

I've told you, leave the thinking to me. Stay in your little world and continue the work I set you.

SI BERO

That's over. And the old women no longer help. They sit and fold their arms.

BERO

I have no need of them. And you should never have brought them here. Throw them out.

SI BERO

They demand payment.

-70-

BERO

Then pay them off.

SI BERO

They won't take money.

BERO

So what do they want ?

SI BERO

Nothing. But they refuse to leave until they are paid.

BERO

(looking in that direction).
They are asking for death.

SI BERO

They don't seem to be afraid of you, Bero.

BERO

We shall see.

[He turns to go towards the hut]

SI BERO

Wait, Bero, wait !

BERO

Well ?

SI BERO

Don't harm them, Bero.

BERO

Either you throw them out or I will. Whose home is it ?
Theirs ? Do they now lay claim to the land ?

SI BERO

It belongs to Father.

BERO

Forfeited. Legally, he does not exist. (He goes into the house.).

-72-

[The surgery. The MENDICANTS are picking at the last crumbs of food licking the last bone of its meat. One or two are humming the 'Ballad of the Disabled'. The OLD MAN reacts to the sound of singing, listens, then turns away in disgust.]

OLD MAN

I should have known better.

AAFAA

(stops) What, Old Man ?

OLD MAN

For a moment I would have sworn I heard singing.

AAFAA

You heard us.

OLD MAN

I said singing, not cursing.

AAFAA

Perhaps you heard my spasms tuning up. It's like a set of wires Old Man. Something touches them, they hum, and off I go.

OLD MAN

It doesn't bother you much these days, I notice.

AAFAA

That's true. They told me up there when it began, that it was something psy-cho-lo-gi-cal. Something to do with all the things happening around me, and the narrow escape I had. It's not so bad now. I still remember the first time. I was standing there just like this, blessing a group of six just about to go off. They were kneeling before me.

-72-

Then - well, I can't say I heard the noise at all, because I was deaf for the next hour. So, this thing happened, no signal, no nothing. Six men kneeling in front of me, the next moment they were gone. Disappeared, just like that. That was when I began to shake. Nothing I could do to stop it. My back just went on bending over and snapping back again, like the spirit had taken me. God ! What a way for the spirit to mount a man.

-74-

OLD MAN

But no revelations ? No
inspired pronouncments ?

AAFAA

(angrily) What of you ! I
don't see you saving yourself
in the situation you're in.
(More to himself) Or us.

OLD MAN

There is nothing you can do, of
course.

GOYI

Be fair Old Man, how does a man
cope with a situation like
this? It was all right in the
other place.

OLD MAN

So you find it different from
the other places ?

GOYI

It's not the same.

OLD MAN

There was no madness - then ?
(They react, silently.) You
were not maimed then ? (He
holds up his hand to stop
them.) And I mean, not merely
in body. You were maimed then
as now. You have lost the gift
of self-disgust.

AAFAA

So have you, Old Man.

OLD MAN

Meaning ?

CRIPPLE

I know what he means. I agree
with him.

GOYI

So do I.

OLD MAN

(smiling) Explain. I do not
understand.

CRIPPLE

You took the cigarette.

-74-

-75-

AAFAA

A man like me is letting himself down to say he is surprised by anything, but...

..I was surprised at you, Old Man. You may say I was a bit let down. We may be on opposite sides of the camp, but I like to see a man stand up for himself.

OLD MAN

Why ?

AAFAA

So I can beat him down.

[He guffaws but no one joins him. He sibsides.]

OLD MAN

You were disgusted ?

AAFAA

(soberly.) More than.

[The OLD MAN turns silently to each of them in turn.]

CRIPPLE

Diappointed.

GOVI

Crucified.

OLD MAN

Disgust is cheap. I asked for self-disgust.

AAFAA

Yeah ? You took the cigarette - what about that ?

OLD MAN

Of course I did. Because I saw your faces.

[He reaches in his pocket and throws towards them what turns out to be the barely smoked cigarette. All three pounce on it; the CRIPPLE comes out the winner.]

AAFAA

Only one puff, only one and then you pass it round.

-75-

OLD MAN

(watches them with contempt).
We'll go on that world tour
yet. I'll take your circus
round the world, so help me.

CRIPPLE

(slowly releasing a puff of
smoke). Oh, that feels good.
Haven't had such a good puff
since that corpulent First Lady
visited us and passed round
imported cigarettes.

GOYI

The Old Man was mad for days.
Suckers, he called us. Quite
right too. Good smoke is a
good suck. I wasn't going to
throw away that superior brand
just to please a crackpot.

AAFAA

Hey, remember the song the Old
Man wrote to celebrate the
occasion? Visit of the First
Lady to Home for the de-balled.

BLINDMAN

...for the Disabled.

AAFAA

Bloody pendant.

BLINDMAN

Pe-dant.

AAFAA

(gives up). Oh Christ !

CRIPPLE

(singing) He came smelling of
wine and rose, wine and roses.

MENDICANTS

....wine and roses.

AYAAGBA

Did I scrae you ?

BERO

(recovering, looks her over
carefully). What is a thing
like you still doing alive ?

IYA AGBA

Can we help you ?

BERO

Do what ? Just pack up and get
out of here before morning.

IYA AGBA

We can help you cure him.

BERO

Who ?

IYA AGBA

He's sick, that is what we
heard.

BERO

You heard wrong. I am giving you warning to clear out of here. Pick up your lice and rags and get out.

IYA AGBA

Is anyone else sick that we know of ?

BERO

By tomorrow I want you out.

IYA AGBA

We want to help him.

BERO

No one needs help from you.

Now get out of my way.

IYA AGBA

MAYbe you do.

BERO

Do I have to fling you aside !

IYA AGBA

(stands aside) Pass, then.

[She lets him take a few steps, then]

Your sister owes us a debt.

BERO

(stops, turns slowly) If you know what is good for you, you will never let me hear that again.

IYA AGBA

We took her into the fold - did she tell you that ? To teach what we know, a pupil must come into the fold.

BERO

What fold ? Some filthy thieving cult ?

IYA AGBA

It's no light step for man or woman.

BERO

And what... cult is this ?

IYA AGBA

Not any cult you can destroy.

WE move as the Earth moves, nothing more. We age as Earth ages.

-78-

BERO

But you're afraid to tell me the name.

IYA AGBA

I try to keep fools from temptation.

BERO

(instantly angry) Watch it, old woman, your age earns no privileges with me.

IYA AGBA

Nothing does from what we hear. So you want to know what cult, do you ?

BERO

I can ask your - pupil.

[He turns round to go back to his house]

IYA AGBA

She won't tell you. Take it from me. She won't.

[BERO stops without turning, waits]

Your mind has run farther than the truth. I see it searching, going round and round in darkness. Truth is always too simple for a desperate mind.

BERO

(going) I shall find out.

IYA AGBA

Don't look for the sign of broken bodies or wandering souls. Don't look for the sound of fear or the smell of hate. Don't take a bloodhound with you; we don't mutilate bodies.

BERO

Don't teach me my business,

-78-

IYA AGBA

We put back what we
take, in one form or another.
Or more than we take. It's the
only law. What laws do you
obey ?

BERO

You are proscribed, whatever
you are, you are banned.

IYA AGBA

What can that mean ? You'll
prescribe Earth itself ? How
does one do that ?

BERO

I offer you a last chance.

IYA AGBA

The fool is still looking for
names. How much would it tell
you ?

BERO

You'll find out when they come
for you.

IYA AGBA

What will you step on young
fool ? Even on the road to
damnation a man must rest his
foot somewhere.

[BERO marches furiously back
to the surgery. He is stopped
at the door by the sound coming
from the surgery. He listens.]

MENDICANTS

....smiled them dirty...

CRIPPLE

And her mouth formed silent
words I may be gross but dears,
I'm not beyond it, not beyond
it.....

MENDICANTS

....not beyond it...

CRIPPLE

I may be old but not beyond it.
While you according to
diagnosis, diagnosis...

MENDICANTS

.... diagnosis....

CRIPPLE

Will ne...ver....

[He pauses, splutters as if
trying to control his mirth,
which finally breaks out fully.
The MENDICANTS join in, then at
a rallying signal from AAFAA,
control themselves long enough
to end -]

ALL

..hm-hm-hm..... no more.

AAFAA

That was the best song you
every wrote for us, Old Man.
Ballad of the State Visit to
the House of the De-balled.

CRIPPLE

I prefer the second one.

GOYI

Which one ?

CRIPPLE

Pro patria mourir.

MENDICANTS

...mourir mourir mourir...

CRIPPLE

Dulce et decorum...

MENDICANTS

...quorum quorum quorum...

-81-

OLD MAN

Corum, stupes, not quorum.

MENDICANTS

Corum corum corum, not quorum.

OLD MAN

Decorum. Dulce et decorum.

MENDICANTS

...quorum quorum quorum...

OLD MAN

God damn you. Can you learn
nothing? - corum, not quorum.

GOYI

No quorum, no quorum, that's
the damned trouble.

CRIPPLE

Yers sir, you've banged the
hammer on the nail.

OLD MAN

(turning to AAFAA). Will you
tell me what these idiots are
talking about?

AAFAA

They've lost me.

CRIPPLE

You've gone dense. (Quoting the
OLD MAN again.) In ancient
Athens....

AAFAA

Damn it, you're right. No
damned quorum!

BLINDMAN

In ancient Athens they didn't
just have a quorum. Everybody
was there! That, children,
was democracy.

CRIPPLE

(singing, to the tune of "When
the Saints")

Before I join

The saints above

Before I join

The saints above

I want to sit on the damned
quorum

Before I join the saints above

Before I bed

This earth adieu

Before I bid

This earth adieu

I want my dues from that damned

-81-

quorum
Before I bid this earth adieu

[The others join in, drumming on the floor, table etc. with their crutches, knuckles, etc. repeating the chorus. 'I want my dues... Before adies' in place of 'Oh when the Saints... Go marching in'.]

[As the tempo warms up BERO enters]

BERO
(entering) So you haven't given up your little tricks.

OLD MAN
Does it bother you ?

BERO
No. It is bad for you, though.

OLD MAN
It seems to interest you.
Spend more time with us.

BERO
What gives you that idea ?

OLD MAN
I could hear you listening outside. You were fascinated.

BERO
My interest in you is strictly...

OLD MAN
That of a specialist. Proceed.

BERO
How did you do it ?

OLD MAN
Do what ?

BERO
No more evasions. How did you do it ? What made you do it ?

OLD MAN
Prod. Prod, Probe. Probe.
Don't you know yet what I am ?
(Dramatic whisper.) Octopus.
Plenty of reach but nothing to seize on. I re-create my tentacles, so cut away.

BERO

To me you are simply another organism, another mould or strain under the lens. Sometimes a strain proves malignant and it becomes dangerous to continue with it. In such a case there is only one thing to do.

OLD MAN

Are you equipped for that here?

BERO

Even I have no control over accidents. Just now I came through that room of herbs, I saw something I recognised.

OLD MAN

Something to sap the mind ? Or destroy it altogether ?

-84-

BERO

It depends on the dose. I brought you some. (He brings some berries from his pockets and drops them gently over the OLD MAN's head.) If you ever get tired and you feel you need a nightcap like a certain ancient Greek you were so fond of quoting, just soak a handful of them in water.

OLD MAN

You've used it before, haven't you? Or something similar. I saw your victims, afterwards.

BERO

They were provided a Creed but they taked hersy. Same as you.

OLD MAN

Creed? Heresy? Bread, pleurisy and what next? Will you try and speak some intelligible language.

BERO

They corrupted unformed minds. That was ba-a-ad.

OLD MAN

Unformed minds in deformed bodies.

BERO

Again you are being evasive.

OLD MAN

I asked to be sent where I would do the most good. I was and I did.

BERO

(smiling) I also was sent where I would do the most good. I was and I did. (Pause.) It would appear that we were both efficient volunteers. (Again, pause.) What exactly is As, Old Man?

OLD MAN

As?

-84-

BERO

You know As, the playword of your convalescents, the pivot of whatever doctrine you used to confuse their minds, your piffling battering ram at the idealism and purpose of this time and history. What is As, Old Man ?

OLD MAN

You seem to have described it to your satisfaction.

BERO

(thundering. Moving suddenly, he passes his swagger-stick across the OLD MAN's throat, holding it from behind and pressing.) I'm asking you ! What is As ? Why As !

OLD MAN

(gasps but tries to smile. He cranes up to look him in the face). In a way I should be flattered. You want to borrow my magic key. Yours open only one door at a time.

BERO

WHY AS !

OLD MAN

And rusty ? Bent ? Worn ? Poisonous ? When you're through the lock is broken ? The room empty ?

BERO

What is As ?

OLD MAN

But why ? Do you want to set up shop against me ? Or against.... others ? (He rolls his eyes towards the MENDICANTS.) I think we have a conspiracy.

-86-

BERO

What is As ?

OLD MAN

As Was, Is, Now, As Ever Shall
be.....

BERO

(quiet menace). Don't play
with me, Old Man.

OLD MAN

As doesn't change.

BERO

(increases pressure). From
what ? To what ?

OLD MAN

(choking, tugs at the
swagger-stick. BERO lets go.
The OLD MAN gets up, chafing
his neck).

Do you know what one of those
men once said ? Let's send our
gangrenous dressings by post to
those sweet-smelling As
agencies and homes. He sat
down to compile a mailing list.

BERO

Yes ?

OLD MAN

I understood.

BERO

What did you understand ?

OLD MAN

As.

BERO

(violent reaction. Controls
himself). You are certified
insane. Your fate creates no
anxiety in anyone. Take a look
at your companions - your
humanity.

OLD MAN

I recognised it. A part of me
identifies with every human
being.

BERO

You'll be disillusioned soon
enough.

OLD MAN

I do not harbour illusions.
You do.

-86-

BERO

(genuinely astonished). I ?
You say that of me. I, of all
people ?

OLD MAN

Oh, you are in good company.
Even the cripple who is
down-to-earth harbours
illusions. Now, that's
strange. I would have thought
you would find that funny.

BERO

I do not need illusions. I
control lives.

OLD MAN

Control - lives ? What does
that mean ? Tell me what is
the experience of it. Is it a
taste ? A smell ? A feel ?
Do you have a testament that
vindicates ?

BERO

We have nothing that a pretty
mind can grasp. (Pause.) Try
if you can, Old Man, to avoid
twitching. Control belongs
only to a few with aptitude.

OLD MAN

One should always expect
something from the specialist.
(Contemptuously.) Control !

BERO

Your old games won't help you.
Forget that line.

OLD MAN

Throw me a new line then. Feed
the drowning man a line.

BERO

You can swim.

OLD MAN

(turning to the others). See ?
He's getting good. Swim ? How

BERO

(viciously). We'll flood the
place for you.

-88-

OLD MAN

(pleased). You're getting very good, very good. It catches, you see. How do I swim? We'll flood the place. Or... is it merely in character? Is that it? Your peculiar little specialisation. Perhaps that's it. So. When do you start?

BERO

Perhaps not at all. It would take too long.

OLD MAN

(nodding) Y-e-s. And the place is not waterproof. I noticed rats. That means holes. You should see the rats.

BERO

They'll desert.

OLD MAN

(gazing round at the MENDICANTS). I suppose so.

BERO

Or smoke you out. You will suffocate, slowly.

OLD MAN

Smoke. Smoke-screen. That's what it all is.

BERO

What?

OLD MAN

The pious pronouncements. Manifestos. Charades. At the bottom of it all humanity choking in silence.

BERO

You think a lot of yourself, don't you?

OLD MAN

Who else shall I think of? You?

BERO

I control.....

OLD MAN

(waves it aside). Tell me something new. Or if you won't, these ones will. Aafaa!

-88

AAFAA

What now ?

OLD MAN

We are done with the flood. It never came. These midgets try to re-create the Flood but they lack the power. At least God had a reason. A damnable reason but at least he had a reason. And a good pump to clean up the mess.

Not like these. What do you offer in place of the Flood ?

AAFAA

(challenging). Running water.

OLD MAN

(disgusted tone). Nothing better ?

AAFAA

You're dodging.

OLD MAN

Running water ! (He turns to the CRIPPLE.) You deal with that. It's beneath my intellect.

CRIPPLE

Muddy. How do I get across it

OLD MAN

God, they're all so self-centred. He means running progress. Faucets, pipes.

CRIPPLE

Can't reach the tap. Too high.

AAFAA

And who cares about you ? Just who the hell do you think you are ?

CRIPPLE

(stubbornly) Too high.

OLD MAN

(smiles) Like the price. See? Blindman ?

- 90 -

BLINDMAN

Running water ? Running
mouths. Election promises.

OLD MAN

(to BERO). See ? Let's have a
new one.

AAFAA

Electricity.

AAFAA

So, electricity.

GOYI

Bleeah ! Election promises.

CRIPPLE

What we ant is individual
manifestos.

AAFAA

Manifesto for every freak ?
General Electric !

OLD MAN

Electrocutes. Electric chair.
Electrodes on the nerve-centres
- your favourite pastime, I
believe ? Tell me something
new. What hasn't been abused ?

BERO

(has taken out his gun, weighs
it significantly). And
lightning strikes. What about
it ?

OLD MAN

The boy learns. The boy
learns.

- 90 -

BERO

Don't you dare patronize me.
Answer me, what about it ?

OLD MAN

That lightning strikes ? It
could strike you, no ?

BERO

Yes.

OLD MAN

(quiet triumphant smile). Then
you're not omnipotent. You
can't do a flood and you -
(Pause) - can't always dodge
lightning. Why you ape the
non-existence one who can ?
Why do you ape nothing ?

BERO

You tax my patience. Better
watch out in future.

OLD MAN

(quietly). The future ?

BERO

The future, yes. The End...

OLD MAN

Justifies the meanness.

BERO

(again, angry reaction. He
controls himself.) Just think
of this - you have none.

OLD MAN

(calls after him)

Tell me something new. Tell me
what is happening in the
future. (They all listen to
BERO'S footsteps receding.) If
he'd waited, I would have told
him what's happening in the
future. A faithful woman
picking herbs for a
smoke-screen on abuse.

[Lights up sharply in the OLD
WOMEN'S hut. No break in
action.]

IYA AGBA

(screaming) Abuse ! Abuse !
What do we do ? Close our eyes
and see nothing ?

IYA MATE

Patience now. Patience.

IYA AGBA

What is it then ! I see
abominations. What do you see?

IYA MATE

The same, but....

IYA AGBA

Then what are we waiting for ?
Get ready the pot of fire.

IYA MATE

Do you think a little more
time....?

IYA AGBA

To do worse ? To do more ?

They spat on my hands when I
held them out bearing gifts.
Have you ever known it
different ?

IYA MATE

We hoped this might be.

IYA AGBA

Hope is dead, I must defend
what is mine. Or let it die
also. Let it be destroyed.

IYA MATE

Everything ?

IYA AGBA

EVERYTHING. Everything they
took from me.

IYA MATE

I think only of her.

IYA AGBA

She's a good woman and her
heart is strong. And it is
that kind who tire suddenly in
their sleep and pass on to join
their ancestors.

IYA MATE

You leave me nothing to say.

IYA AGBA

There is nothing more to say.
We pay our dues to earth in
time, I also take back what is
mine.

[The clinic as last seen.

Instant transition as before]

CRIPPLE

(singing)

I want my dues
Not promises
I want my dues
Not promises...

AAFAA

(singing)

I want my dues. (Stops.)
How about it, Old Man ? I want
my world tour. Old Man,

you shouldn't have promised the
travelling show. (Changing
voice.) Beat all know circuses
hollow. I'll take the
wrappings off you and leave the
world gasping. What else....?

CRIPPLE

You've been pushed in the
background too often.

GOYI

Always hidden away.

CRIPPLE

(coyly). Not that we're shy.

GOYI

Always hidden away.

CRIPPLE

We're more decent than most.
Hn-hn, than most.

AAFAA

Hidden under pension schemes
you are.

GOYI

Tail-of-the-parade outings.

AAFAA

Behind the big drum.

CRIPPLE

Under royalty visits.

AAFAA

(graciously proffering his
hand). You may.

- 94 -

[GOYI kisses his hand.]

CRIPPLE

Imperial commendations.

[AAFAA unfurls the scrolls,
slaps his tongue up and down]

CRIPPLE

Unveiling of the plaque....

GOYI

Commemoration occasion...

AAFAA

Certifies of merit....

GOYI

Long-service medals...

[The CRIPPLE dashed forward to the feet of AAFAA who takes medals from an invisible aide. His eyes roll from side to side, seeing no one. GOYI goes to him, taps him and points to the CRIPPLE. AAFAA tries but cannot make it. Finally he kisses GOYI on both cheeks, who then kisses the CRIPPLE on both cheeks. He pins the medal on GOYI's left shoulder, who then pins medal on the CRIPPLE'S chest. All three cry: 'Speech' 'Speech' 'We want Him' 'We want him' rising to a crescendo. Finally BLINDMAN gets up, walks slowly downstage.

BLINDMAN

It was our duty and a historical necessity. It is our duty and a historical beauty. It shall always be. What we have, we hold. What though the wind of change is blowing over this entire continent, our principles and traditions - yes, must be maintained.
All it boils down to is - would you want your daughter married to one of them?It may happen, believe me, it may happen - if we're lucky. Rape is more natural to them than marriage.

- 94 -

The black menace is no figment of my father's imagination. Look here... have you had the experience of watching them - breed? No no, I mean....I don't mean being actually **there**... please please please, I was referring to statistics, statistics. We feed those statistics into a computer and here is what they say... What we have, we hold. What though the wind of change is blowing over this entire continent, our principles and traditions - yes, must be maintained. For we are threatened. Yes, we are indeed threatened. Excuse me, but we are entitled to match you history for history to the nearest half-million souls. Look at the hordes, I implore you. They stink. They eat garlic....

[As BLINDMAN begins the re-run, the other MENDICABNTS commence their chant, AAFAA taking the lead. The song goes faster and faster and louder and they clap him down until BLINDMAN gives up and bows.]

As Is Was Now
As Ever Shall Be

Bi o ti wa etc. etc.
Ni yi o se wa
Bi o ti wa
Ni yi o se wa

[They give BLINDMAN a round of applause while he feels his way towards the OLD MAN]

BLINDMAN

I hope I didn't do too badly.

OLD MAN

(sighs, turns to face him).

No. It was quite a good effort.

BLINDMAN

It was rather like old times.

OLD MAN

Very much like old times.

CRIPPLE

Hey, listen. The Old Man was pleased.

AAFAA

I should bloody well hope so.

It was just like old times.

CRIPPLE

My feelings exactly. Just like old times.

GOYI

It...was....just...like old times.

AAFAA

Yes. So why risk putting us here together.

OLD MAN

Because... we are together in As. (He rises slowly). As Is, and the System is its mainstay though it wear a hundred masks and a thousand outward forms.

And because you are within the System, the cyst in the System that irritates, the foul gurgle of the cistern, the expiring function of a faulty cistern and are part of the material for re-formulating the mind of a man into the necessity of the moment's political As, the moment's scientific As, metaphysic As, sociologic As, economic, recreative ethical As, you-cannot-es-cape ! There is but one constant in the life of the System and that constant is AS. And what can you pit against the priesthood of that constant deity, its gossellers, its enforcement agency. And even if you say unto them, do I not know you, did I know you in rompers, with leaky nose and smutty face ?

Did I not know you thereafter,
know you in the haunt of
cat-houses, did I not know you
rifling the poor-boxes in the
local church, did I not know
you dissolving the night in
fumes of human self-indulgence
simply simply simply did I not
know you, do you not defecate,
fornicate, prevaricate when
heaven and earth implore you to
abdicate and are you not prey
to headaches, indigestin,
colds, disc displacement,
ingrowing toe-nail, dysentery,
malaria, flat-foot, corns and
chilblains. Simply simply do I
not know you Man like me ?
Then shall they say unto you, I
am chosen, restored,
re-designated and re-destined
and further further shall they
say unto you, you heresiarchs
of the System arguing
questioning querying weighing
puzzling insisting rejecting
upon you all shall we practise,
without passion -

MENDICANTS

Practise.....

OLD MAN

With no ill-will.....

MENDICANTS

Practise.....

OLD MAN

With good conscience...

MENDICANTS

Practise.....

OLD MAN

That the end shall.....

MENDICANTS

Practise.....

OLD MAN

Justify the meanness...

MENDICANTS

Practise.....

OLD MAN

Without emotion....

MENDICANTS

Practise.....

OLD MAN

Without human ties...

MENDICANTS

Practise.....

-98-

SI BERO

Let it wait my mothers, let it wait.

IYA AGBA

(angrily). Rain falls and seasons turn. Night comes and goes - do you think they wait for the likes of you ? I warned you when we took you in the fold.....

SI BERO

I'll repay it all I promise...

IYA AGBA

I said this gift is not one you gather in one hand. If your other hand is fouled the first withers also.

IYA MATE

That is how we met it. No one can change that.

SI BERO

(clutching IYA MATE around the knees).. Not you too. You were never as hard as she.

IYA MATE

Nothing we can do, daughter, nothing but follow the way as we met it.

SI BERO

And the good that is here ? Does that count for nothing ?

IYA AGBA

We'll put that into the test. Let us see how it takes to fire.

SI BERO

Fire ?

OLD MAN

(his voice has risen to a frenzy) Practise, Practise, Practise.... on the cyst in the system....

[BERO is checked in stride by the voice. He now hesitates between the two distractions.]

-98-

OLD MAN - Cont'd

....you cyst, you cyst, you
splint in the arrow of
arrogance, the dog in doma,
tick of heretic, the tick in
politics, the mock of
democracy, the mar of marxism,
a tic of the fanatic, the boo
in buddhism, the ham in
Mohammed, the dash in the
criss-cross of Christ, a dot on
the i of ego an ass in the
mass, the ash in ashram, a boot
in kibbutz, the pee of
priesthood, peepee of perfect
priesthood, oh how dare you
raise your hindquarters you dog
of dogma and cast the scent of
your existence on the lamp-post
of Destiny you HOLE IN THE ZERO
of NOTHING !

CRIPPLE

I have a question.

OLD MAN

(turns slowly towards the
interruption). It's the
dreamer.

CRIPPLE

I have a question.

OLD MAN

Black that Zero ! (AAFAA, GOYI
and BLINDMAN begin to converge
on the CRIPPLE)

CRIPPLE

I have a question.

OLD MAN

Shut that gaping hole or we
fall through it.

CRIPPLE

I have a question.

[The MENDICANTS' chorus
'Practise' as they beat him]

OLD MAN

Stop him cold, stop him dead !
Let me hear the expiring
suction of an imperfect system.

CRIPPLE

My question is.....

[AAFAA snatches one of GOYI's crutches. In the background the sound of BERO breaking down the door. AAFAA brings down crutch on the CRIPPLE's head.]

OLD MAN

Stop him ! Fire ! Fire !
Riot ! Hot line ! Armageddon!

[As he shouts, the OLD MAN snatches the SURGEON'S coat from where it is hanging, puts it on, dons cap, pulls on the gloves and picks up a scarpel.]

OLD MAN

(at the top of his voice)
Bring him over here. (He dons mask.) Bring him over here.
Lay him out. Stretch him flat.
STrip him bare. Bare ! Bare!
Bare his soul! Light the stove!

[They heave him onto the table and hold him down while the OLD MAN rips the shirt open to bare the CRIPPLE's chest. BERO rushes in and takes in the scene, raises his pistol and aims at the OLD MAN]

OLD MAN

Let us taste just what makes a heretic tick.

[He raises the scarpel in a motion for incision. BERO fires. The OLD MAN spins, falls face upwards on the table as the CRIPPLE slides to the ground from under him. A momentary freeze on stage. Then SI BERO rushes from the OLD WOMEM towards the surgery. Instantly IYA AGBA hurls the embers towards the store and thick smoke belches out from

the doorway gradually filling
out the stage.

Both women walk calmly away as
SI BERO reappears in the
doorway of the surgery. The
MENDICANTS turn to look at her,
break gleefully into their
favourite song. The OLD WOMEN
walk past their hut, stop at
the spot where the MENDICANTS
were first seen and look back
towards the surgery. The song
stops in mid-word and the
lights snap out simultaneously.

Bi o ti was
Ni yio se wa

Bi o ti wa

Ni yio se wa
Bi o ti wa l'atete ko

Madmen and Specialists
by Wole Soyinka

AAFAA
Jude Akuwudike

CRIPPLE
Leo Wringer

GOYI
Graig Charles

BLINDMAN
Winston Crooke

SI BERO
Joy Elias Rilwan

IYA AGBA
Pamela Nomvete

IYA MATE
Ella Wilder

DR. BERO
Hepburn Graham

OLD MAN
Joseph Marcell

PRIEST
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