

Otidi

A Play

BY

ADUKU ARMSTRONG IDACHABA

ISBN 978-34558-1-8

Published BY THE Igala Academy, Lagos
Aduku Armstrong-Idachaba 1998

First published 1998

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FORWARD

It is indeed an honor for me to write this forward to a very important documentation of Igala cultural and tradition. In this play Dr. Idachaba has proven again that he is a leading literary artiste and dramatist.

The story of Otidi is one that reflects the salient existential world view of the African. The play examines the interplay of relationships between the rulers and the led. Quite significantly, it reminds those in authority that they have a responsibility to be accountable to the gods who watch over men. It is a story of love, trust and dignity. The play recommends itself especially in this period where mutual suspicion and betrayal of trust is the order of the day.

Prof Sam Kafewo
Head of Performing Arts
ABU Zaria.
ISBN 978-34558-1-8

Dedication

This play is dedicated to
Inikpi V. Idachaba (Mrs.)
Hannah Alewo Idachaba (HAI.)
Ajifa Sarah Idachaba
Daniel Atadoga Idachaba
David Ojoajogu Idachaba.
And to the greatest God of all times the Lord Jesus Christ.

First realized in 1998 in Video by cast:

Igagu: (Otidi's father a blacksmith)- Ali Odokina
Otini-(His Mother oil Miller)- Amina Idachaba
Metuwu - Ejura Abah
Alewo - Ojone Ogah
Ijetu - Amade Abdul
Inufu - Yusuf Tijani
Omabu (the Poet) - Joseph Abuh
Onu Jachi - Ali Ojodale
Idechu - Sumaila Musa
Amichi - Joy Ododo

(Set in a typical Igala Village. The totality of the custom is Igala ,religions, political etc. The Igala 'Alo' folk song is on)

IGAGU: (*Emerging from the room as he sits by his furnace*). This son of yours Otidi, how he keeps growing up. How true when our elders say a man is only born to be a man. Time and changes inter-twine to produce the man. Very soon I know quite soon, he will be occupying his threshold, willing and desiring to pilot his own activities.
And to add committantly, his own responsibilities.

Otini: [Igagu's wife] True my husband but how difficult it is for a mother to see her son grown up. I still see Otidi as a little infant you know. Think of the day I had him on my "Ate Okpokpoo". It all seems like yesterday; only yesterday. But I know like you said he is grown now and into a handsome young man. May the ancestors be praised. Remember how we suffered to have him delivered?

Igagu: The ancestors be praised. You know Otini, each time I think about how you suffered the ridicules of rivals, I mean your cohoused wives and how they shut up your womb. I really praise the ancestors for you

Otini: I thank God my husband. If we hadn't taken our own decision, my destiny would have been worse. Your father, I miss him terribly. He was such a great man. He protected both of us.

Igagu: Are you then suggesting Otini that I do not possess My own strength, my own source and might? True, my father protected us but he did so out of traditional responsibility. It runs in our blood, this gift of

diffusing the evil even from its depth evilousness I may be young but I am old. Otidi may be young but I tell you he is old. A child of the ancestral originalities of Ayegba. Once on my farm I fell unconscious for six hours. But on the count of the sixth hour I remembered my praise name. I staggered out of the sleep, lashed a gulp full of my ene and sniffed out the innocuous mess.

Otini: [fondly] Oma eja. You overblow your strength. I know you are quite a man and a man indeed. Recognize also my husband that I am a strong woman as well.

Igagu: Who talks about women when in a discussion of strength. When you couldn't even survive the cheap ordinary taunts of Achargba when she threw your water pot off your head.

Otini: My husband, you underrate my powers. I know what I have been through for you. Is it the sleepless nights I have had or the rats that keep prying through my soup pot?

Igagu: All right, a man gets the kind of wife that he deserves. Let me have the obiolo okoliko you prepared yesterday. I will soon be attending the oja in Okpachu's house [Otini goes in and soon comes in with a bowl of Obiolo. As he begins to drink, Otidi comes out from the other side of the compound]

Otini: [pointing] Here comes Otidi. Seems he is going to

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hunt.

Otidi: [Greeting his parents] Good evening Baba and Mama. I am going to hunt at the called Oko Ikpali. I won't be long.

Otini: Who, if I may ask, are you going hunting with?

Otidi: The hunting group is not your son alone. The children of Onu Omera and the son of Okai. They are my usual hunting pals.

Otini: [fondly] Alright my son, you go well and come back quick.
Don't stay too late into the night. I hear the forest is dangerous now that the rians are here. The Ikpali's are more rampant and getting more restless. Even if it's a squirrel you kill, just come back, it will be enough for your father's meal.

Otidi: Don't worry, mother. Ever since I was an infant, I played and raced and probed the dichotomies of the forest. I know the tracks well. The shape of the winds and the rhythms of the games. I won't be long but I shall not return with a mere squirrel. I shall return with an antelope so that at least a thigh is sent to Metuwu's father.

Otidi: God bless married men. Just come back in good time my son.

[another location as Otidi and his friends emerge on their way to the farm]

- Aku: Very soon it will be Ibegu and the festival will begin. The ancestral and the living in fusion of the concrete, a mixture of the desired based on the exacting demand of social continuity. How I look forward to the day when we shall come out with our masquerades.
- Otidi: Aku my brother, nothing shall complete my expectations and desire like the realization of this day. The beginning of the maturity of the shoot. When we shall even experimentally initiate and test our unconsciousness in a mixture of dance. Executing the realities of our patterns to the glory of the Ancestral.
- Aku: Yet we can't how sad?
- Otidi: Yes we can't. until we are initiated, that all important ritual. When I am told one is exposed to the impact and import of the secrets of existence, the hidden truths and the exposed unknown, only then can we exhibit our own creative expectation. Our dances and our masquerades. All expressing the waves of our lives.
- Aku: I want to be initiated. I shall be initiated. I will be an initiate. An Elephant is not an elephant by his size but by the execution and exhibition of its destructive physiognomy.
- Otidi: How true! A man is not yet a man because he dangles a penis. He must be initiated. Blood to Blood.

Grove to grove. Secret to truth.

Aku: But they say the process is excruciating plenty of pain and suffering. I sought to know, I sought to dig. But it confused even more. My father said it's pain to be a man.

Otidi: But I am ready for pain. I am ready to be a man. I shall and will conquer pain. It's more painful I suppose, not to be a man. [as they talk on, they enter a forest as they exhibit hunting, the lights fade. Action is back to the village. Two girls are making their hair out side in a compound. They are doing some traditional chores] [folk song].

Metuwu: Every one has the tendencies of his or her own choice. And I tell you, the conscious person in the one who sticks to what she believes in. I like only one man in the whole of this town. Such a great man, reminds one of only steel protection-huge, handsome, positive constructive. Reminds me of the metaphor of the hawk strong, devouring and yet protecting its own. "Ugunuma dajuwen ohigo higown a bajuwe allo".

Alweo: Are you then, Metuwu, suggesting that you intend out of your own volition to dispute and disregard the will of your community.

Metuwu: The will of the community should be borne out of the collective will of individuals: My own wish should inform the will of community. I have resolved within me to marry Otidi.

Alewo: But the wish of the people, like in this case, should Prevail. Seems you are not looking beyond emotions. Think about the greatness you shall be exposed to. You shall live in Idah and your parents will break the poverty line and transpose into health and riches.

Metuwu: I do not and cannot see greatness outside passion and love.

Greatness to me Alewo is to be with Otidi to live life all the seasons with him. My desire as it were is to carry his children, make his meals and make his bed. I prefer to toil and sweat under him.

Alewo: Think about Idah, that centre of your history. My Mother tells me it is a great twon. Idah logo oji Abutu Ejeh. Power flows in Idah, power reigns. "Itekwi Igbele enwuu ka yegba ji iche". The king of the land, he lives there. The biggest court is there so are the richest and the most brilliant. I wish I was going to Idah.

[as the ladies are talking, Ijetu the drunk appears. Children are following him]

Ijetu: "Ebie owun me mno de". Do you little ants expect me to stoop so low as to open my mouth in greeting to you?

I am a great elephant, I could simply trample on you. If I had married before now, I would probably have been your father.

Metuwu/Alewo: Ijetu, please come for a drink. I have some bush meat. I think you will like to have some.

Ijetu: I don't drink with little girls-if it were your mothers alright. Moreover I am going for a fight. I need to keep my brains alive and sober. I need to teach Agwalor a lesson. He is an idiot.
Because he lent me money, he keeps telling everyone that I am a notorious debtor.

Alewo: But why on your own have you not paid?

Ijetu: He loaned me money at the drinking shack only for both of us to drink up the money. Now he sends his son so early in the morning to collect his money. Then I, Ijetu says "return my drinks" yes, purge it out. Since then he keeps telling everyone I am a debtor, I will teach him a lesson. [he staggers off. Somewhere he meets a gathering of elder].

Ijetu: [attempting to greet them, he slumps down-the elders hail him Ijetu]. There is nothing so tight in this world that cannot be untightened. No heart so strong it is not made by God. No secret that did not emerge from activity or event. I am an elder of repute.

Agahiu: Ijetu, we are holding a meeting here. We know how great you are, you may be quite old but you couldn't be older than the sperm that gave you existence. Like the river in its widest exuberance cannot over-run its banks.

Ijetu: My nose to the ground and my anus up. The smell of okpehe cannot be hidden from the nose. Let me simply tell you, the new Onu it must be Oteke. If you think you can stop the wheel of fortune, you then mislead yourself. Every time you meet, you never build, all you do is break the ends. Yes, unfold the chord of Ayegba. Where should honesty have been, that innocent child of weeping purity? Idechu is the next Onu eh? By fraud. I see all of you, as I see my future. I am an elder myself [he straightens himself as he talks on, staggered towards Igagu' house. It is morning and Igagu is at his furnace. Metuwu arrives with a large pot of water]

Otini: Metuwu welcome. It is just great to see you. It is considerate of you. So you brought me this bowl of water. How is your mother and your father? I do hope the currents of life remain ever fair to them.

Metuwu: Thank you mother. I am doing well and my parents are in fine shape. They both left for the farm and my mother asked me to fetch water for you. She also said I could assist you on any other outstanding chores you have since they say you are not feeling well.

Otini: That is nice of her. I wish I had a daughter of my own so that you could rest a while. May the ancestors continue to crown your kindness and generosity to me with great success.

Metuwu: No problems mother, I enjoy helping you.

Otoni: Come my daughter, we have to talk. It is quite important but I will talk some more at the mill. I want to extract some oil from these fronds. My grandfather's second burial rites come up in a few weeks and I will need to prepare my foodstuff.

Come, I will tell you more as we work. [they pick up utensils and move to the mill.] [Action moves to Atabaka's house in council with elders of the village inside an Anukwu].

Atabaka: Well, great elders of Ogodu Village, I welcome you all to this unique and August gathering. The sound of thunder and lightening is an indication of the existence of the terrestrial gods. When there is a rainstorm, know that the heavens grumble. I suppose you can imagine the rationale for this meeting. When an infant repeatedly points fingers somewhere, know that something is abnormal or enticing there.

Ataguba: Megba. Elders, there is no point for rhetoric's here. We all have our individual matters to deal with here. Lets trash out the subject matter of this discussion and go to our various responsibilities. The fact that the child waits upon his father all day does not mean he cannot steal a play or two.

Atabaka: In that case, elders, I great you very well again. There is a great man in our midst today and I give him all the great recognition he deserves. He is here on good terms and for good purpose. He is not spitting fire, though he can spit. He is not

here to trample and curse, though he would if occasion permits. He has come to remind us that he put some piece of yam on fire here and will like to know, as it pleases his High royal highness, if the yam is being well tended.

Ataguba: There is no point dancing Ichabada when the music allows you to dance olele. If my eyes and brains are still alive. And like my great grandfather always told me. One carries the richness of his poetic dissection in his hands anywhere he goes. The biological owner of that yam is here, Inufu. Let him tell the man from His Royal Highness how his yam is doing.

Inifu: May our ancestors forbid that I, Inufu, son of Ocheje should stand on the path of growth of this society. Whatever I own belongs to the land and its custodian. The man who arms the tree owns its fruit. The gardener is only a care taker of the garden. The king's yam, it won't be burnt and won't be too raw to be eaten. Tell him his oil and oiling have helped matters greatly and we expect him anytime he decides to take what is properly his.

Idechu: Good and uplifting words I must confess. The king is no doubt happy even as we talk here. He has asked me to inform you, kind elders, that in two markets he will be here to take what is rightly his.

Ataguba: "Ule ki ma ne ekpachin che le ownwu ma len". I like to be straight-forward, everyone knows. But the yam of His royal

Highness, I want all of us to know, is being eyed by that little boy called otidi. The whole town knows this and I cannot in my old age be ridiculed by the ungracious courage of a little boy.
Quite embarrassing.

Atabaka: Revelation! A little ant eyeing the meal of the gods
Abomination! Inifu how true?

Inufu: Let me assure you elders that nobody in his right form of sense can attempt such a thing, it cannot be tolerated. My daughter is all for His royal Highness and so shall it be.

Idechu: Good people of Ogodu, I have heard all you said and I am glad.
Let me quickly say that the blind man who does not see an aggressive waterfall can hear its crushing sound. The King jachi is not the kind that will tolerate the exhibitions of youth or infant brazen ignorance. Note that he has no rival and cannot tolerate any rivalry. You make sure there is no impediment on our way to consummating this very unique relationship with you. No matter how large the earth is, it operates under the heavens. The king is our heaven; we are little mounds on earth.
No one dabbles into the ancestral clout.

Atabaka: God forbid. There is no way this village can allow itself to be reduced and embarrassed by the romantic ambitions of a mere infant. [the elders concur and show disgust as the occasion

require. Ijetu is seen from opposite direction, drunk as usual.]

Ijetu: How ridiculous this world looks. A child seeking to challenges the glory of the father or is the father peeping into the stew pot of the child? Eche Kocho [*He begin's a song children sing following him*]. [*Action is back to the mill, Otini and Metuwu*].

Otini: Careful, Metuwu, watch your feet. I would not want any damage to those beautiful toes of yours.

Metuwu: Don't bother mama; not to worry. I am used to Milling, you know. The child of the toad is not taught to croak. Like it mother, it comes naturally. I am born you know into the mill. I make oil for mother you know. Lots of liters of oil which I sell at Ejule market. Otini: [all the while stealing glances at her]. You must be quite industrious. . I was like you when I was younger.

I bought all the things I needed myself from my own hard work.

Otidi: [emerging from the back of the house. His father is working at the furnace]. Baba, who is working over there with my mother?

Igagu: Your beautiful bride of course. She has been here all day. She impresses me a lot. You know how she worked herself into being a family so close to all of us. Her senses, her spirituality. She epitomizes womanhood.

Otidi: My mind is with her. She is my hearts soul. Father I want to marry her. I will not allow myself suffer the slip of her matrimonial worth. I want to marry her as my wife, father. Only I must be man first. I must be initiated. Father, I am ready to be initiated. Father, I want to marry Metuwu.

Igagu: Very well, my son. Out of the rock comes water, out of palm tree my son comes palm wine. Out of the abundance of the palm of the soothsayer does he reveal the future. Nothing good that is created that does not have its crisis of evolution. You must really be initiated. You must go through the drill and mill.

Otidi: I am willing and able but tell me how;

Igagu: You must know the sources of your progenitors, then you know your root. If you know your root son, you have culture, you have ancestry then you are great fellow. And when you grow, remember, pass it on to your own off spring. By tomorrow you will embark upon the first breaking task. You will begin the crucial journey to manhood . In Alade you will meet your uncle tough my nephew called Otigba. He will cook you up. He will have you prepared, cooked for the process of manhood. *[during this speech Otidi listens attentively]*.

Otidi: Father, I am ready. I shall be a man. I am quite prepared. My spirit joys, my body gladdens. Tell me father, how long shall it take?

Igagu: Only a week, seven days after which you know what responsibility and decorum is. Now my son, you need tolerance and patience; Ibe, Ibe. Onu

Otidi: Now I am going but father, please, remember as soon as I return I shall marry Metuwu. First, let me tell her I will be away for initiation. Gur
Onu

Igagu: My son, you don't tell women such things, I mean such details just tell her Otidi, you are traveling and won't be back till after a week. Ide

Otidi: Yes father, I understand [as he moves light fades].
[Action moves to idah. The Onu in council with his confidants. The scenario is kind of brutal. He enters among beats of the Odachi. As he seats down].

Adede: Jachi! The people of Achaba have said they will not relinquish that farmland. They have claimed spitefully and without signs of humility that their great grand fathers have toiled the land since creation and that they can't watch it annexed by your totalitarian inconsiderateness On

Onu: Impudence! Calculate insult. Where are the guards? I ask you to go Achaba Immediately and ensure that all their chiefs are brought here. If they refuse, burn down the village. Raze down all their cattle. Now go! Ide

Guards: Jachi!

Onu: Be quick and aggressive. You must be here before sunset. I must see you in the palace right here.

Gurads: Jachi! Jachi! [they sing war songs as they disperse]

Onu: Now, Inufu, you are back from Ogodu? What do you say is the situation as regards the issue of my yam in the furnace?

Idechu: Jachi, Gabaidu, situation is normal. They are all fine and doing well. Great homage and tremendous ululations do they pay to his Eminence, distinguished Onu among his inferiors. They realize, your Eminence that a roving fire knows no limit. The council of elders, jachi, after brief exchange of ideas and pragmatic consultation, have agreed to give to us the object of our interest.

Onu: Nice words, I must say tomorrow as the day breaks, I cause my passion to emerge to fruition. Announce to them the decision of the great Jachi to take his wife two markets from today. Tell the villagers and the chiefs to sanctify themselves. Take along with you from the royal storehouse a cow among those seized from Fulanis, some three hundred tubers of yam, etc. to my inlaws.

Idechu: Your reign lives and lasts forever. Whoever does not respect the wisdom of Aju Acho must respect the enormity of his age.
No matter how young Jachi, the blood of the lion shall always

flow with steam. Hot and aggressive is the fluidity of the stallion. Quick and fast does a hungry thief eat the steaming roasted liver of the dog. As you talk, the gods support. No mortal, jachi, can question the roar of the great grandchild of Ayegba. Progenitor of the all great. We will prepare right for Ogodu.

[Action returns to the mill. Otini and Metuwu]

Otini: My daughter, when an odd air blows the ear of an expectant listener, doubting what she hears she'd first clean her ear and listen again. I have listened and listened and I should say, this rumour certainly has a source.

[Bringing her voice low]. Is it true what I hear that the Onu intends to marry you?

Metuwu: May God forbid [shaking head and fist in a characteristic feminine style]. coming from Idah to seek my hand in marriage, how piteous I don't even know the man they say he represents but I don't even like him, mother I love only your son and it is him alone I can marry.

Otini: How strange the evolution of the chasm of existence look. How knotty should life have even to the innocent and the young. God bless you, Metuwu for loving my son. And by God I know my son loves you too. How sad my son suddenly wants to aggravate the wheels of tradition the king throws an obstacle. Now, let us stop this discussion. Seems Otidi does not know yet what we talk about.

Otidi: Good evening mother, Metuwu, how are you?

Metuwu: Fine Oti, I have been here for hours now.

Otidi: please, can I talk to you for a little while?

Metuwu: All right, I was going home myself. It's getting late now and I need to go back home.

Otidi: In that case, let me see you off to a distance. I have serious things to talk with you.

Metuwu: Mama, goodnight.

Otini: Metuwu, I need to talk to you on an urgent and important matter. It has been years now you know that I watched and bore my passions publicly. I want to marry you. It is the tradition of my genealogy to be married upon attainment of age. I want to begin to prepare myself for our wedding. I am becoming a man you know? And to be a full man, I need to marry you.

Metuwu: True Otidi. Ever since I was a child I know my future was with you. Whatever has been yours has equally been mine. You give me hope, you give me happiness. You give me a cause to continue to wait for you. I am your wife and you should make me a woman.

Otidi: I shall, I can and I must make you my woman. But first swear you will be my wife.

Metuwu: I swear by our ancestral might that I shall be your

wife. I would always be yours. Loyal, faithful, dutiful and supportive.

Otidi: If you truly love me, Metuwu, like I love you, then let us in the quite of this forest, with shrubs and leaves and trunks as witnesses take this oath. [He brings out a knife, splits his hand, puts the blood on his palm. She does same thought with obvious difficulty and they both lick. They stare at each other for a moment. Then Otidi speaks:] Metuwu, I shall present wine to your parents in a market from today. Only I must first visit my uncle at Alade. I will be with him for 3 days only. Now go, it is getting too late, let us go.

Metuwu: But! But!

Otidi: But what? What is the matter? Are you going to change your mind?

Metuwu: Not on my life, not even when I just concretized the attachment of my heart to you. Even now that I made a confession. I love you but. Okay, I need to talk to you. May be, tell you something when you return in the three days.

Otidi: Alright, three days from today is no long time. I will see you then. Goodnight. [Ijetu in a drinking place]

Ijetu: [Foaming from both sides of the mouth]. This stupid village of mine. How the old tramples upon the young.

Heartlessness and gross inconsiderateness. An Iroko tree which decides to try its weight on a tomato plant only berates his own idiosyncrasies and yet underrate its own energies. And this society [still staggering] you will always see them. Swollen, robust, old men, hags struggling to marry their own daughters. "Enwu Kayegba ji". And this king at Idah ha! [as he is talking he sees a man walking by. He checks himself, attempting to kneel and greet again, he slumps]. You see those ones? They are sycophants, always bowing for favours-stupid senseless favours.

What is in the world that the world has not seen. The child thinks it is only a child. Yet the future was he not a child. Everything grows, everything decays. Build and destroy. But I, Ijetu, I create, I always create I will rather drink myself up. "Apochinoji Ochi". Before I forget, everything has a concordant. For drinks, it is food [he belches] Responsibility is a burden. The problems with it is that there are morals [action goes back to Inufu's family house with Metuwu]

Inufu: Well, Metuwum, the man who shed tears retains the Ability for his vision. In spite of your youth and vision you can still understand the views of your father. I have been told that the man intends to oil the crucial aspects of tradition in only two markets from today. If you must be told clearly, the Kola will be here in two markets, your mother has been adequately briefed and I can only congratulate ourselves for being such a wonderful lucky family.

Asmawo: Yes my daughter. Big luck, great privilege you bring unto us . I shall be the mother of the Queen and your father, the king's inlaw.
How great! Then within a brief predicated moment your father also is bequeathed royalty.

Metuwu: [kneeling down] stop mother! Please. I can't marry the king.

Inufu: [showing sarcastic understanding] it is natural my Daughter. Imagine you being the king's queen. I know you will find it initially stranger than fiction, but you see, it is true. It is real my daughter. You are no doubt the star of ultimate attractions.

Metuwu: Even then father, I don't want to marry him.
Royalty does not make sense to me. I only love one man. He is Otidi.

Inufu: Quite. Idiot, who is Otidi? I am convinced, he is not equipped with the necessary blueness that you require. You see, this is an opportunity that the gods have offered. It must not slip us by. Think about the overall changes-class, materials etc. that this singular leap shall bring to our family. Think, Metuwu think.

Metuwu: Father, a father who loves his daughter dearly does not push her into fire, no matter how attractive and beautiful such an opportunity looks. I respect your wisdom greatly, but wish you were considerate of my passions. I have virtually speaking , been married to Otidi.

Inufu: Silent, you ignorant child! Otidi cannot marry you without my acceptance. It is me who accepts or rejects your kola. So far, I have not and I am not willing to use my old tooth on Otidi's offer. Remember, as long as I am your father, I shall rule in this house. You think you can disgrace me. Iye Metuwu see the shame you have turned your daughter into. May be you two thought it out but I will have my way. Metuwu must marry the Onu [He stumbles out]. [Omabus song on the essence and intricate nature of love is sung-note also that song be played be played at regular intervals. Her uncle, Ogijo, come in and begins to talk to her. (Later, we see Metuwu in Otidi's house sobbing and discussing with Otini and Igagu)

Otini: Take heart, my daughter. Otidi my son, he will certainly not take it with ease. The man who eats eggs certainly does not know the amount of pain the anus of the hen is exposed to.

Metuwu: It is so painful they want to drag me to Idah. I hate Idah. I Hate the Onu. I even hate my parents.

Otini: Please, don't hate your parents. May our ancestors make them realize what it feels to drag and fool an innocent soul to pain and despair.

Igagu: My daughter, I have thought about going to talk to your father. But knowing how he committed himself, I know it would be of no purpose.

Metuwu: Then I will stay here all my life. I will wait

for Oti here. I won't return to my trap anymore. I won't.

Otidi: No matter how the monkey looks and behaves, it is still the parent of the baby monkey. You will go home, Metuwu, else they will say we instigate you negatively. We would be tortured and humiliated. Just go back. May our ancestors continue to bless you [showing close emotion]

God bless you my daughter, you go. Just go.
[action moves back to the palace. Onu in council]

Onu: Let by my own authority all the communicators of the kingdom appear. Let Omabu the greatest poet in the land perform to my delight. Let also all my wives be in attendance [Omabu comes in and sings about life generally, about the destructive influence of authority and its lethal influence if abused.] [after a while] a successful market day begins with a bright ray of fortune even as the day breaks. My dear chiefs and people. Those of you who can discern the innermost pretensions of my heart know that today is a day of smiles. And I want to make an announcement. I have decided to add just one more queen to the list of queens.

[Everyone shouts except Omabu who sings a discordant tune indicating and prophesying trouble].

Itodo: Omabu, the wisdom of a mosquito is like the idiocy

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of the cock. If you think you can puzzle we old men, let me tell you straight away, you only confuse yourself. It is unwise, Omabu, for you to bring us egg-heads to ridicule. Your words are proverbs and could be idioms, but those of us who have lived long enough with these words recognize them. Tell us young man, in plain terms, where do you belong?

Omabu: The will of the ancestors. Jachi, may you live long but this fruit of yours it is so smooth, so soft, your teeth it might crack in its desire to grind the succulent fruit.

Onu: Nonsense You! You little rat ridicule my teeth? Teach him a lesson [immediately they begin to beat him] [as he is taken out] because the lizard lived in the forest for so long, a time, he sees himself as a crocodile. Omabu thinks he could just as well ridicule me claiming that he has the exclusive will of the ancestral. Now, tell me. Ubifa, what did you see the other day?

Priest: The ancestors praise you, Jachi Yours they say is a fair dispensation. What is of the gods you shall give, What is of man you shall give. Holding only that which is yours.

Onu: simple, what makes Omabu think he can challenge the gods? Get five men,, [Onoji] get you straight away to Ogodu, I shall pay the dowry tomorrow.

[action moves to Alade. Otidi is with his uncle learning the culture and traditions of his genealogy]

Edime: In this sacred institution of tradition, you learn the details of the gynecology of the Igala race. From Ayegba Oma Idoko to Atiele, etc. the sacred grove of manhood. You shall enter tomorrow. The masquerade cult is the cult of the ancestral.

It epitomizes your spiritual maturation as an adult. Remember we live in permanent cycle with the spirits. They like the living, have the good and the bad. To ward off the evil, you need to make yourself permanent at sight. You will need to make sacrifices, in illness di\vine the cause, in good celebrate. Truth and your conscience shall be your guide.

Nobody under any circumstances shall take what is truly yours. [Otidi's physical appearance should reflect initiation. All narrations, expressions need to be detailed].

Edime: [inside a cave with Otidi]. Here is the point of courage. You shall be here for a market period. Inside here are scorpions and dangerous ants. You shall realize that you too can conquer your environment. After here, in two markets, you shall return to your family.

Otidi: I understand, but isn't two markets too far? I promised I would be back in three days

Edime: In the activities of the sacred you don't hurry. [Action goes back to the village. The wedding of Metuwu is in full preparatory stage].

Ijetu: [in his usual state] There is going to be a festival in the

Village such as wedding ceremony. ' Araku Agenen'.
So much trouble in this world the hunter strikes
simply in his pronouncement and his prey collapse.
Who ever created power? Serious things are
happening in this society. I am surely an active
participant [he staggerees on] [the traditional wedding
ceremony is on.

Metwuw's attitude is that of non-commitment. Some
girls are returning from the river with water pots on
their heads, in a Gossip].

Alewo: Sincerely, I never saw a thing like that sort of love. She
refused to eat even a meal, she sobbed all night but her
father will not hear of it.

Inikpi: It beats my imaginations how things are done by our
parents.
They say it is the tradition. In those days, a bride had
no say of her own. All she does is the wish of her
parents. Parent's desire.

Alewo: Do you know that my mother married my father even
when she thought the man was her uncle. she had
lived with the man all her young life. Farmed for them
since as long as she knew him. And never for once
knew it was all for her.

Inikpi: But come to think of it. It indicates the placement of
value to marriage and is an index of the value of the
woman.

Alewo: Certainly, though I don't really think women need to

be tied to men

Inikpi: Of course. There are those of us who revolt. Those who can't stand the concept of tie the stick to the horse. Like my mother, she ran away from home thrice. I tell you she was rebound back home until she learnt to live with my father.

Iyeh: But it is a pity. It is quite obvious that Metuwu is in love with Otidi.

Alewo: Ha! Would you praise her for it? Who would not? Any woman would love Otidi. He is an man full of strength. Do you know that till now, nobody has been able to touch his back to the ground? I will always remember his fight with Ochayi [probable flash back indicating his might the deep appreciation for him by the girls.]

Iyeh: But metuwu, how will she behave herself today? Pretty, cumbersome, decorous etc. just bow. Look, Ako and Etubi. Alewo, I know they are waiting for you. Let us just pass them straight without the courtesy of greeting.

Ako: [as the girl pass them]. Imagine their ambition. Such Vaulting self-consideration. Can't you for reasons of tradition say the normal greetings to men like us? Let me even slap your buttocks. [they play fondly romantic plays, breast touching, etc])

Iyeh:

Are you crazy? Don't attempt to lay your stupid hands on us [as they are playing, an old man approach, the boys run away] Amen ibete. Idiots, let us go and see how Metuwu will marry the man from Idah. [a typical Igala traditional ceremony is being held. The parents of the girl are present, but Metuwu continues to be nonchalant, though present.

Note that this aspect of the Igala tradition needs to be enacted us standardly as possible. All terminologies and characters must be established in line with tradition].

Idech:

[the leader of the Idah team] His Royal Highness sends his very warm regards to the people of this village. He commends you for your great bravery and passionate generosity. He is pleased that the Inufu family has agreed to merge with royal blood. We hope with all conviction that our consummation is only the beginning of an extensive relationship [during this speech, Metuwu faces the ground.]. I want the Atogba Oya to call in the bride. [back stage, Metuwu is refusing to appear. There is so much begging and pleading etc. as lights fade, action moves to the palace. The wives of the Onu]

Amichi:

our lord says we will be receiving our visitor today. Reminds me of the beginning of the queen. On my own day, I was so glad, I could not sleep. God, his highness, he spoilt me so much with those gifts. Coral beads, woven achi materials, etc. And my friends looked at me with great envy.

Kaka: But this girl that is coming, I hear she is so young, too young for our lord.

Amichi: Hear who is talking. Too young indeed! As if a lady can ever be too young for a man. I am happy at least, that we will have someone to send around, this is an adjustment of the hierarchy.

Kaka: That Omabu, what did he say that earned him the aggressive scorn of Jachi?

Amichi: That the Onu's fruit will be too succulent, he will break his teeth.

Kaka: Words of the elders. But the way he was so humiliated in spite of his voice, pity. Wait, I hear drumming from a distance. Seems the chief's bride is on her way.
[action goes back to Ogodu. Otidi has completed his training and he is preparing to return home.]

Uncle: The child of the hunter learns the art of the father by watching and trying. Remember Oti, the issues of manhood. The centrality of courage and guts; of honesty and preservation. Never allow yours to be coveted.

Otidi: As the ancestors watch, I shall continue to respect and adore you. I am grateful to you, I am now a man. I shall marry and keep my own household. Straight shall I ask the parents of Metuwu to release her then I shall be a happy man.

Ucle: [giving him a goatskin bag] this contains all the liquids and the creams. Extend my warm regard to my brother. May the ancestors protect you. [as he moves lights fade, to show him approach home].

Igagu: [Meeting his father at his furnace] 'Oti Enekele meji,' welcome Otidi, the man with the strength of two men. How great is it to see you back. How is my brother and your journey? May the ancestors be glorified

Otidi: I thank God. It was quite fulfilling. Where is mother?

Igagu: your mother is fine. She went to get some vegetables from the farm. She'd soon be here. Drop your bag, my son, and have a drink. There is some obiolo in the calabash.

Otidi: [after the drink] Baba, what about my wife, Metuwu? Has she been visiting mother? You see, you get to a destination you cannot predict your day of return. I thought I will be doing only three days; I had to stay those three markets

Igagu: Otidi, we have to talk now. Man to man now that your mother is not here. The purpose of manhood, the purpose of initiation is for the man to be a man, the initiate must think and act as a man. Metuwu is married and she is married to Onu.

Otidi: [Surprise all over him] But it can't be. How and when Did this happen? Do you mean I suffered and hurried in vain?

Certainly, not my own Metuwu. But she swore father and I swore. She should have waited.

Igagu: Well you are a man now. A man gets what his destiny offers. Others go for their destination. Yet when it evades you, what do you do? Run to grab at it? You get hurt or injured, placing your destiny at one point. Turn around my son, be a man look out for another wife.

Otidi: But the Onu, did he follow tradition? Did he farm? Did he visit? Did she swear to him? Father, I must reclaim what is mine. I man a man. I am initiated, I must protect what is mine. [he begins to run towards Idah-the Omabu song comes on as he keeps running]. [Action is back to the palace, the Onu's wives]

Amichi: You say your name is Metuwu. It is my pleasure to welcome to the palace. For as long as you live here, you will be okay. For six months you will be learning the art of living in the palace from us. We will tell you the nature of your responsibilities. At the end of the seven months his highness will see you. Before then, we would have taught you how to make his bed and prepare meals. We shall also teach you how to worship and conduct yourself spiritually with dignity and respect. [all the while, metuwu Listens distractedly. Soon she sobs quietly].

Kaka: Now, let me show you the innermost chambers of the Palace. The kitchen, and the other points [light fades as they leave].

[action is back to Otidi as he is running. He runs into his friends coming back from the farm]

Aku: You wait. When did you come? Where are you going?

Otidi: You disappoint me, Aku. You betray me. To think that you waited and looked while mine was taken and abducted by another. You my bondsman you couldn't help, could not do a thing.

Aku: Not true, Oti. It came as a rude surprise to all of us. None of us knew it. We could not stop the onslaught. Like lightning it struck us, then unlike a rummour, it was real. Metuwu herself refused. She cried, yelled and cursed. She not for once liked it.

Otidi: oor girl, I need to go and see her. Just to set my eyes on her.

Aku: The cricket cannot exercise his guts in the presence of the hunters child. Neither can the ant attempt a brazen display of confidence in the presence of a frog. Onu Jachi, you must have heard of him, a great conqueror and enigmatic oppressor. He will only brutalize you. Don't go there.

Otidi: Tell no one where I go. But I go to Idah to see Metuwu. [The tune of Omabu's song comes up-this time, Ijetu's version]

Ijetu: I have been struggling to keep sober from all games in this life. Only I need to drink enough. Tell you one thing, only a fool

puts himself in a lion's mouth. The midget that punches the elephant only kills his own strength and energies that son Otidi, small boy with heart of a lion. Onu Jachi ha. Not a toy for kids.
Let me speed up to Idah. I must watch how the wrestle goes. [meanwhile, Otidi is shown crossing paths on his way to Idah. Action is back to palace]

Amichi: Metuwu, every first day of the week is our farming day, when we go to fetch firewood. You will not visit the farms today, but hopefully in the future you shall enjoy the privilege.
[as they move out to the farm]

Amichi: That Metuwu, she looks like she will be a nice girl. She is quite, humble.

Kaka: she does not look happy though, her mind seems to be Elsewhere.

Amichi: I was behaving same when I first came, but quickly got over the phobia. In only two weeks I was alright.

Kaka: She seems not to know she is a queen now and privileged. She will pick up pretty soon, you will see. [they talk over many things as they meet Otidi along the way. He is coming from opposite direction]. Amichi! Look, this is quite a handsome man over there. Where by the gods is he coming from? Imagine his shoulder and great steps.

Amichi: Wait. He is coming this way. He is surely a stranger on

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this path.

Otidi: Good afternoon, great mothers.

Amichi: [pretending to require help] please, do help lift this wood [Otidi goes over there and helps them to pick up the wood] where are you from young man and where, if I may ask, are you going?

Otidi: My name is Otidi of the Akumabi caln. I am on a visit to Idah. I will like to see a certain man called Agada in Okete-Ocheje.

Amichi: I see is he your uncle or something? Why are you seeing him and how long will you be there?

Otidi: I shall be with him for two markets and to answer your question, he is my uncle. [The song Okete-Ocheje Omonalo is sung]. [both of them concurrently Otidi! And at continued intervals they mention Otidi!]

Amichi: What a man! I wish I married a man like him. Young, energetic, good looking. With a man like that you can't starve [*starve is sarcastically used to indicate sex*]

Kaka: Otidi

Amichi: Imagine the imagery of the name. well, I will make sure I take proper care of him tonight. Tonight, I will send him a good meal.

Kaka: Amichi, you are a queen, you know. You need to

conduct yourself, even your appetites. Moreover, you shall not be seen at Okete Ocheje or any other place.

Amichi: In that case, I shall send Metuwu. She is new in this palace, no one really knows her. [back in the palace]

Amichi: Metuwu, come over here. You are taking this meals to Okete Ocheje. Ask of the house of one Agada and tell him this meal is for his guest. Tell the visitor that I, Amichi, send this gift and that I desire to see him again same place as yesterday.

Metuwu: I understand Oja. But what if I may ask, is the name of this visitor?

Amichi: There is no other in that house than him. Just tell him the visitor. And tell the visitor I am the same as he helped to pick a log of wood today. [metuwu picks up the bowl, puts it on her head as she heads for Okete-Ocheje. Omabu's song comes up again]
[Now at Okete-Ocheje]

Metuwu: Mejibo. I greet the occupants of this household.

Agada: Welcome, beautiful lady, so nice to see you. Where are you from and what brings you here?

Metuwu: I am sent to your visitor. I am to offer him this present.

Agada: Okay, take it in, right there. [as she enters she sets her Eyes on Otidi. She can't believe her eyes. She is shocked. They stare at each other for a long time]

Otidi: You, Metuwu! How on earth?

Metuwu: Are you the visitors she sends me to? How are you related to her?

Otidi: How great things happen! How do I talk? You were gone. You left me desolate. Heart broken. You left for me a void, an emptiness. I had to gasp for breath. I needed to live again. I came to look for you. Now that I have found you, we need to go right away. Metuwu, now let us go.

Metuwu: Oti, not now. The chief, the Onu, is not the kind type. He is a terror. His voice is a roar. His eyes rolling fire balls. I hear he kills. He is not the kind to play with and our families. We will [she stops halfway].

Otidi: Now that I am a man, I fear no man. Mine is mine. You are my wife. I am not scared of the consuming fire, neither an I unspiteful of the rolling roar. How did you know I was here?

Metuwu: I did not know. I only came to deliver the queens message to you. She doesn't even know that I know you. She says she'd like you to meet with her tomorrow by the firewood forest.

Otidi: The firewood forest. Who are you talking about?

Metuwu: Two ladies you met on your way to town today. They are the queens.

Otidi: [He narrates how he met them, the scene is recaptured

with the Otidu songs of Omabu] listen my Metuwu, I shall be here for a week. If I don't meet the queen you can't visit me. I will visit her so that you can visit me. How pretty you look, Metuwu! Come, let me hold you. [he tries to be romantic].

Metuwu: No. Otidu. I am not your wife. I am married by tradition to the Chief.

Otidu: [still holding] But I married you first. Remember we confessed, we swore our love. You are first my wife. We are married. [Still trying to be romantic, she refusing] [flashing scenes, Oti at the farm with queen, flash of Oti with Metuwu with meal. [The court in council. The diviner speaking].

Atebo: This one is really funny. [tries to hide his surprise, but still bursts out laughing]. A man buys a horse, he keeps it for a crucial festivals a grand ride but finds the horse weary and tired even when unriden.

Onu: Great diviner, custodian of the traditions of the living and the unborn. I respect your words and pronouncements but I may not hesitate to treat you like that poet. You either speak coherently or hold your oracle. Let me hear what your oracle says.

Atebo: Another man's fountains, another man's spring does Not satisfy the other person. You palace is sick and the sickness is right here. I mean inside this very place. To be more direct Jachi, from among your wives. Let them tell you what the matter is, but I tell you this

thing, it smells. [covering his nose].

ONU: Don't attempt to impugn my dignity. Smell! What has smell got to do in my palace? If you don't speak correctly, I will put you in the smell of your life. Let my wives all come here right away.

This smelly sickness, it needs to be diagnosed in public. [The wives are called in.] Now, which of you desecrates the sacred grove of the ancestral? [the wives keeps quite. No one talks] now, Atebo, tell us here which one.

Atembo: [after consultants] one of your wives, Jachi, right here is swollen.

Onu: Fool, you idiot, when has wisdom become so plastic or your imagination so poor? You say healthy people like are before our eyes are swollen.

Atebo: Jachi, I mean to say pregnant for someone other than you. [there is shock and dead quiet everywhere, all over the palace. The people stare at each other]

Onu: Eche! Which of you is pregnant? Which? I know it's no other than Amichi. She has always been a witch, a prostitute. Always running after men. Now, I will deal with you

Atebo: Not her, Jachi. The oracle says it is not her

Onu: Then who? I say who?

- Atebo: The oracles says the youngest of them all, the juiciest.
- Onu: Now I confirm my doubt. Impossible! Quite incredible. But I have not slept with her since she came in here. It can't possibly be her.
- Atebo: I see it clearly. It's her Your Highness. She is six months pregnant.
- Onu: Now, I see. Guards tie up all the Chiefs here. All of you steal behind me to touch my wives, I shall deal with you. I say tie them up!
- Atebo: Jachi, not them. The one who created all this is not here; he is in another village. Metuwu, call his name or you shall die:
[metuwu is shaking and feverish] the oracle is angry; so are the ancestors. Call his name, confess or die.
- Metuwu: [after a sporadic spell] Otidi
- Onu: Very well. I hereby order the arrest of the boy Otidi. I want him here before sun-set. You, Metuwu and your family shall suffer this. I shall kill you and that Otidi of yours. I shall kill anyone that is connected with this. [he staggers out.] [Action moves to Otidi's village with the Onu's agent on the prowl.]
- Ijetu: [Drunk as usual] Come rain, come sun, the rock remains. I am the rock [he hits his chest in mock admiration] and I am a prophet. Stupid boy.

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Ever since he came back he has not been himself. I told his father to advise him to marry another wife but the young man will not hear it. He keeps to himself; a recluse. No woman, I tell you, can disappoint me. I disappoint them. I tell you, I disgrace them. [as he talks, the Guards from Idah arrive, fierce looking] who are these agents of oppression? Get out of here or I shall deal with you. [he tries to kick but misses and crashes to the ground. He tries to get up. He staggers and is given a terrible kick which spins him to the ground.

Guards: [picking him up] where is that boy, Otidi?

Ijetu: I don't look like Otidi. How does a simple name like Otidi rhyme with Ijetu?

Guards: Speak, friend or you get another kick.

Ijetu: alright, that is his house over there. I say over there.
[Pointing to the house. Igagu and Oti at his furnace]

Igagu: Son, you are an initiate. You are a man, you most never get down. You must marry a wife.

Otidi: Father, as it is God's wish, but since I could not marry Metuwu, I guess I do not need to marry anyone. I won't marry

Igagu: You lie my son. I need a grandchild. I tell you, matter Of fact, I need a grand child. I am ageing and the tides of age are not

in my favour. Shall I die without a grandchild? [as they are speaking, the guards approach, storm the house, punching up both Otidi and his father: they harass them as they move them to Idah] [villagers gossip or exchange opinions one after the other. They even confuse the main subject. Ijetu is part of the crowd raining abuses] [action is back to the palace. There is quite everywhere. No one seems to be talking by the time Otidi and parents are dragged in. They are weak and tired. Suddenly, Omabu enters with his song on judgment. The guilty is not convicted until proven guilty]

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Onu: Omabu, you have come again. What by our ancestors are you saying again? True, what you said. The succulent fruit, too succulent my teeth may be hurt. But do you think you can ridicule me?

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Poet: Justice, Justice. Only to emphasize my imaginative vision. That the truth of nature is the nature of truth. The god, the oracle of truth. The gods, the oracle of our nature and lives. They rule our worlds irrespective of our class expressions. The sense of reasoning is a listening voice. Hear first the suspect before his execution.

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Onu: Okay, modest talks. But listen everyone, the issue in this case is clear as the morning sky. What impudence a man peruses my own and he dares to talk in my presence? Am I not a representative of my ancestors? Must I refuse to defend their virtue and ideals? Guards, stand by in a moment from now, I

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want this man [pointing at Otidi] thrown at Arokpa.
First castrate him.

Diviner: Jachi, but Metuwu is not your wife. [Everywhere,
people are surprised]

Onu: You, so you too are part of the conspiracy?

Diviner: Metuwu and Otidi were on blood oath when you
suddenly interrupted their relationship.

Onu: Metuwu, is that true?

Metuwu: [Kneeling down] Jachi, yes. Before your spokesman
met my parents, I had sworn to Otidi I would marry
him. He in turn traveled to make preparations to be
back in three days before he came you had taken me.
My parents compelled me.

Onu: Inufu, you mean your daughter was engaged and you
gave her to me?

Inufu: Jachi, it is the Village Council. I told them and they
knew that Otidi and Metuwu were intending to
marry. It was a general village secret. But Jachi, our
Chief, he said Otidi was just an ant when compared
and placed against the desires and wishes of your
Excellency.

Onu: Elders of Ogodu, you annoy me greatly. Without
Investigating properly, you bequeath to me the wife of
another man. The poet saw it clearly, a juicy fruit, too

soft to be crushed. You wanted me to break my teeth. You want the gods to be angry with me for possessing another man's gain. Simply because I seat on the throne of the ancestors?

Elders: Jachi, but we thought a mere.....

Onu: Quite! I say quite! So, poor people don't marry in your village? Otidi, I have not met this woman since she came to this palace. My thigh has not been near her at all. Take her away, she is your wife. May our ancestors bless your relationship. The sky surely overlooks the trees but the tress provides shade for those plants that thrive under them. Responsibilities and morality should override selfishness.

Everyone: Jachi, *[the king moves out and there is celebration. Light fades gradually]*