

“Happening Ten,” a scene in *Majestic Revolt*, a play based on Oshue

Peter Omoko

Light falls on stage to reveal Major Walker, Mr. Lambert, and Mr. De La Mothe having a drink at a corner of a night party. They seem to be expecting a fourth party. Major Walker, at intervals looks at his wrist watch.

Walker: *(Light heartedly)*

Those native bitches are very agile and smart! They have
a heart of a lion and the agility of a cheetah. They can take you on for
hours, non-stop...

Lambert: Yes...! Yes...! You're not far from the truth, Major. You won't
believe it! One of them almost cut off my dick.

(General laughter)

Poor bitch...! I wonder if she has ever had such a satisfaction from her fellow native
niggers!

Walker: Oh no! Those niggers are too stiff in bed. All they ever care about is
to make babies of their wives.

Lambert: How I wish she'd always been there, in my bed, anytime I get
home... *(Sips some beer from his glass)*

That bitch! My wife... will always be there to skin
me alive...!

De La Mothe: That's the price of coming to the jungle with one's family –

Walker: My wife won't dare...! Why should she be a leech on my flesh?

Lambert: You know I wouldn't have allowed her to come with me on this expedition to Africa if I had the power...

De La Mothe: What do you mean, if you had the power?

Lambert: ...Men, that bitch is worth millions of pounds! She inherited a fortune from her late parents – I can't afford to let that slip off my fingers, you know it.

De La Mothe: That's the more reason you mustn't have brought her here to risk her life. We are here solely for business and her Majesty's interest. Nothing else.

Lambert: She's still my wife...!

De La Mothe: Yea...! You're damn right! But tell me. If those angry mob eventually get at us...?

Walker: (*Interrupting*)

Hey! Hey...! Don't talk like that, Mr. De La Mothe.

Everything will be under control soon.

(*To Mr. Lambert*)

Don't be upset. I have two of those bitches in my bed right now.

The best you can find among the natives. I shall give you one –

Lambert: That's if my wife didn't wring the soul out of me!

Walker: Don't tell me you didn't tell her you were coming for a security meeting...!

Lambert: I did. She only allowed me to leave the house when the madness in her head had not risen. Gentle men, my problem is bigger than the one troubling us now in this Province –

De La Mothe: (*Shakes his head*)

Whatever we have to do to quell this revolt should be done urgently. Even if it means our soliciting help from the Royal Niger Company, gentlemen, we shouldn't hesitate.

Walker: Gentlemen, be calm...

(Looks at his wrist watch, a little bit agitated)

He'll soon be here. Let's just be patient a little. The officer I sent to him said he promised to come. Besides, he's one of the most loyal chiefs we have on ground.

De La Mothe: Loyal...! Loyal did I just hear you say? Oh come on, Major!

All of them are the same. Cowards! Yes cowards... that's what they are –

Walker: That's a hasty generalization, Mr. De La Mothe. Elder Omudje is a very reliable chief. He has been on our payroll since I assumed duty here. I must tell you, he has delivered. I can vouch for him.

Lambert: Then why is he not here? Look at your wrist watch, it's almost quarter past ten, yet he's reliable.

Walker: *(Winks his eyes at Lambert)*

Lobby...! He's busy lobbying those stiff-necked, native chiefs...

Lambert: Never trust those chicken-livered, primitive – native chiefs, who can't even bring sanity into their homes with legions of wives and children let alone persuading fellow chiefs who have sworn to truncate our efforts... I mean our means of livelihood and promotion –

De La Mothe: You're very correct, Mr. Lambert. The one that used to act as a spy to me at Kokori deserted me when the mob attacked us, leaving me to the mercy of my revolver. If not for my revolver I would have been lynched to death...

Lambert: *(In great fear)*

God forbid...!

De La Mothe: (*Dramatizes*)

I held it like...

(*Holding an imaginary gun*)

“Stay back” “Don’t come closer” ...Man, I almost fainted!

(*General laughter*)

Walker: Bravery...! That’s sheer bravery you put up out there. You deserve a medal for that.

Lambert: Those primitive niggers can die for anything that comes out of the mouth of their chiefs –

De La Mothe: But the reports show that the revolt is being spearheaded by one man. A high chief. What’s this his name?

(*Thinks*) Yes... Oshue! A man from the Sobo tribe...

Walker: That’s very correct, Mr. De La Mothe. I have sent him a letter to discuss with me, alone in my office, on Friday.

Lambert: Should we arrest him there?

Walker: No. Let’s see if he’ll agree to our terms –

De La Mothe: I’m afraid, that man has the will and support of his people. We should tread carefully.

Walker: Support? For a native to infamously run us down?

De La Mothe: Whatever he’s done, fellow countrymen, he’s done for his people.

Walker: What people? ...You amaze me, Mr. De La Mothe.

The province and all therein belong to His Majesty.

(*A little comic*)

... And by extension, belong to me, you and you.

Lambert: One must be honest enough to know that he fights for a cause...

Walker: Not without motives...!

Lambert: Are we barren of one?

Walker: None that'll not benefit us...

Lambert: In vaguely spelt terms?

Walker: ... Mr. Lambert?

Lambert: Oh, come on gentlemen!

Walker: (*Goes close to him*) Confess yourself or be accused of sabotage...

De La Mothe: Easy! Easy gentlemen...!

Walker: Were they not the ones who signed the trade treaties with us?

Lambert: No, the interpreters made them to...

De La Mothe: How do we get him to agree to our terms?

Walker: Who?

De La Mothe: Who? The rebellious native, of course...!

(Enter Elder Omudje)

Walker: (*A bit relieved*)

That won't be a problem... Mr. Omudje here will answer that question.

(To Elder Omudje)

Come to me my most noble chief.

(They both embrace)

What good news have you for us, Chief Omudje

(Pronounced Omude) Our bowels thirst for one...

Omudje: Not too good I fear.

Walker: This rebellion your people have plagued us with has almost

eaten up my heart, save for a little string of an artery that's
holding it together. Oh, my heart quakes...!

Omudje: *(Tries to whisper to Major Walker)*

Can I speak with you in private?

Walker: Oh no, Elder Omudje! These gentlemen here are dying to hear from
you. Please soothe their hearts with good news – They are ready to
increase your stake in the new plantation system when it is fully operational.

Omudje: *(Salivates)* ...Give me some time! I need time...

Walker: *(Disappointed)*

Time...? These gentlemen here left their various duty posts to attend this meeting, all you
have to say is that you need time?

Omudje: Your message did not signify any meeting, Major.

Walker: On the contrary, Elder Omudje. What you're seeing now is a
meeting... in fact, a security meeting at the instance of his Majesty,
your king.

Omudje: *(Pauses)* The time I need is to persuade the others. I mean Oshue
himself. I have succeeded in convincing some of the noble elders to
sheathe their swords – They ask for land and access to trade...

Walker: ...That we shall grant them!

Omudje: I still need time to convince all of them. They need to be assured
that you people meant well for them.

Walker: *(Smiles.)* Now you're talking – If that's the time you need, you shall
have it. But remember, be swift in your plans...

Omudje: Just give me two days and you shall see results.

Walker: Gentlemen, I told you he's very reliable –

De La Mothe: Whatever we have to do to quell this revolt, I repeat, should
be done urgently.

Omudje: *(To Major Walker)*

What about those items you promised me?

Walker: *(Resting his left hand on his shoulder.)*

Elder Omudje, come to my apartment and let's enjoy together.

(Light fades out as they all leave.)