

The Meat Festivals

A play

Yusuf Serunkuma

FOUNTAIN PUBLISHERS
www.fountainpublishers.co.ug

Fountain Publishers

P.O. Box 488

Kampala

E-mail: sales@fountainpublishers.co.ug
publishing@fountainpublishers.co.ug

Website: www.fountainpublishers.co.ug

©Yusuf K. Serunkuma 2025

First published 2025

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior written permission of the publisher.

ISBN 978-9970-19-925-9

Dedication

To the memory of my friend, Ramlah Ssimbwa Nkinzi,
and her friend whom she never met, the comedian and
later politician, Paul Kato Lubwama.

Every time she met this particular vendor, Princess Nkinzi would not stop laughing at his poetic chants proclaiming the effectiveness of the manpower enhancement herbs and sticks he was hawking. “This vendor would make a wonderful politician if he tried,” she would say, “The only problem is that his sticks might actually work,” she would add.

Table of Contents

Prologue	1
Main Characters	3
Act One	5
Scene I.....	5
Scene II.....	13
Scene III.....	20
Scene IV.....	27
Act Two	30
Scene I.....	30
Scene II.....	36
Scene III.....	47
Scene IV.....	52

Prologue

This is the story of a people on an island in the Indian ocean off the East African coast. The country is called Middle Oceania, the people Oceanians, and their language, Oceania. By the time these events happen, the population is estimated at about 1.5 million people. Oceanians are part of the Bantu group and have names similar to those on the East African mainland. The Oceanians are mostly fishermen, but they also rear animals. However, the animals are few and meat-eating is expensive and thus tabooed. After independence from British colonial rule, like most of Africa, the island fell in the hands of bad leadership, which outlawed meat-eating on the grounds that it put stress on the economy.

This is the story of celebrations marking the end of bad leadership, with five-year meat-eating festivals organised across the country. Meat-eating became a symbol of the liberation. Individuals were encouraged to buy and eat more meat and the government organised meat festivals in every corner of the country every week for five years. It is now 1995, four years into the festival. There are meat shortages in the country because the level of consumption is higher than the growth of the animals being slaughtered in this island nation known for fishing. The leaders have to find solutions for the festivals to continue – because men are judged by commitment to their promises.

Main Characters

Kiyanna	Plumber, and former engineer, now market vendor in the Mango Town farmers' market
Zaza	Electrician, now market vendor in the Mango Town farmers' market
Nyeko	Former driver, now market vendor in the Mango Town farmers' market
Chair Trish	Elected head of market vendors in Mango Town
President Dindi	Head of Middle Oceania
Min. Edmund Ocen (Mr Science)	Minister of Science and Innovation
Min. A.K. Bbosa (Mr Farmer)	Minister for Farming and Cooperatives
Chief Tembo-Tembo (the Seer)	Seer and herbalist, and trusted confidante to the president.
Mr Dean Doubleday	Development and poverty consultant

The First Cast

Character	Cast
Nyeko	Baguma Matthew
Zaza	Namboozee Gloria Harriet
Kiyanna	Komuhendo Winfred Pamela
President Dindi	Kato Lauben
Min. A.K Bbosa (Mr Farmer)	Edwin Ssekatawa Kagwa
Min. Edmond Ocen (Mr Science)	Ndyabawe Derrick
Chief Tembo (The seer)	Ssenkungu Ian Elijah
Chair Trish	Ambasize Mable Gift
Dean Doubleday	Edward Mabiririzi
Christer	Ndagire Goretti Gayita
Herbal Medicine vendor	Carol Namaweje Makumbi
Market Announcer	Mukisa Dorothy
Intelligence	Ssenyonga Abdul
Customer 1	Adikini Sharon
Customer 11	Elizabeth Kisakye
Newsreader	Joy Namugenyi

First staged at the Bat Valley Theatre in Kampala on 28 February 2025.

Directed by Arthur Kisenyi.

Act One

Scene I

It is late afternoon in the farmers' market in Mango Town. Three market vendors (two women and a man in their mid-thirties) with neighboring stalls talk about different things as they sell their farm produce. One stall has vegetables, tomatoes, peeled beans, cucumber and onions. The other two vendors, seated side by side, are selling cabbages, pumpkin and watermelon. It is a typical farmers' market; the conversations tend to be full of gossip, and they move from one topic to another in no orderly manner. Customers are walking through the market, and sometimes, one stops to buy, and interrupts their conversations, while another stops by and joins in the talk. There are other interruptions, such as megaphones, passing customers visiting other stalls, etc.

Nyeko: *(Reflectively)* Living longer shows you things... Our elders were right in saying that delaying death gave a mouse chance to dance at the funeral of a cat. Who thought... *(pauses to collect his thoughts)*.

Kiyanna: Who thought what? Who died that you are now celebrating in proverbial Oceanian speech?!

Nyeko: That the Greek gods of fertility would be reincarnated in Middle Oceania. Ever thought so?

Kiyanna: *(Laughing out loudly, cynically)* Wait, did you just say Greek gods! You mean you know about the Egyptian gods of fertility and harvest. You have books, Nyeko. I didn't think you knew anything about the Egyptian gods.

Zaza: He said Greek, not Egyptian!

Kiyanna: They were Egyptian gods. When the Greeks learned about them, they called them Greek gods. But it is the Egyptians who gave the Europeans civilisation. The English had jiggers before coming to colonise us.

Zaza: And they survived jiggers and came to colonise us? Liar! How then did they manage?

Nyeko: What did you think, Professor Kiyanna? Madame Books. You thought you were the only educated person in this market? These markets don't know any qualifications. All of us are here. I have books, too! *(Laughs sceptically)*.

Kiyanna: I have heard you say this before. But you rarely sound like a baked person. Sometimes you do, like right now. But where were you going with your rats and cats?

Nyeko: Kiyanna, let not these dirty clothes and broken shoes deceive you. Not all tall men are tall; and, not all short men are short. Did you know, I even speak Spanish? "*Hola buenas tardes*"? Hee!

Zaza: Look at these colonised heads! They measure their education by speaking the white men's languages. Colonial schools create colonised minds! *(Potential customer approaches his stall)*.

Nyeko: Let me first attend to my customer, I need to leave you gossiping women. It is as if gossip is the mother tongue of market women. *(Nyeko turns to attend to his customer)*.

Kiyanna: *(Reflectively)*: Truth is, there are so many educated people in this market. "Education is the key; education is the key," we used to sing. We didn't know it was the key to the farmers' market! Hehehe!

Zaza: You know that man pushing a wooden wheelbarrow used to teach at a secondary school at the coast. They sold the school to an investor from Germany. He turned it into a store. I know a senior weaver who worked at a textile company for 20 years from independence. He now vends peeled sugarcane to tired labourers downtown.

Kiyanna: These 90s have been wild. People losing their jobs in many numbers. Public things being sold to white legs. Some public things just rotting away. These 90s have been bad. All over our country. I have heard that even part of the ocean is in the market for white legs, too?

Zaza: *(Pensively)* They say anyone can buy... anyone can buy. But look at us. Most of us have just come from the village... we are still peasants despite the education. Who has money to buy a textile factory? Except the white legs! There is a white leg that recently bought Oceania Hotel near Orange Town. Can you imagine? That was our pride as Middle Oceanians.

Nyeko: *(Picking up an old conversation he missed while attending to a customer).* No way, Zaza! You mean, Professor Nseko used to teach in a secondary school? I thought it was a joke calling him “professor”. Eh. Surely, they changed the doors that the education keys used to open.

Zaza: Imagine, not even “technical know-who”, anymore. But whose relatives slept with whose relatives. Hahaha! Not sure what to call that, “technical-who-your-ancestors-slept-with”?! Hahaha.

(Being a roadside market, a vehicle with a megaphone announcing a music show is passing by, and the sound is deafening. They all pause).

Kiyanna: Those ones also. They think we have to party all the time. It is Monday.

Zaza: That is what it means to be in a market. Everyone is selling their goods. *(Pause).* That man, Nseko, is actually a story. He taught those hard sciences, chemistry, maths and physics. No wonder he is always talking about making bombs. It must have been his dream.

Nyeko: Making bombs! That is a strange dream for a person whose parents were still hunting with spears and dogs! Eh.

(Other customers walk by and are haggling with Nyeko over the prices of his water-melon).

Customer I: Your water-melons, five shillings. Why are they so expensive? Are they soda-melons? We used to eat these at two shillings.

Nyeko: They are beer-melons! After you buy one, you'll not need to go to the bar anymore.

Customer I: *(Laughing)* Okay, but you man, if I had not known your bad mouth from school, I wouldn't be buying from you.

Nyeko: Those were the good days, my friend.

Customer I: Remember when you shouted at the teacher of English, Teacher Sarah, "Hopeless!" after she asked for the meaning of pessimism. I knew you were insulting her *(They both laugh out loudly)*.

Nyeko: Leave me alone, I was well-behaved.

Customer I: I will take two of your beer-melons! I wish you had said a different *b-word*; don't they look like that? *(Laughing)*.

Nyeko: Your mouth is worse than mine.

(Other customers walk through the market).

A market announcer on the megaphone:

Market Announcer: *(Music jingle plays to catch attention)* Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I hope all of you are having a good day. The time is 2.30 pm. The market chairperson has told me to remind you that all people with stalls in the market will pay an extra 1000 shillings for garbage collection every week. It is not

a tax. I repeat it is not a tax. Just garbage collection. Also those with announcements, promotions, please bring them to us, we'll communicate them.

Nyeko: They should leave us alone. But I haven't told you why I was talking about the Greek gods, rats and cats, and living longer.

Kiyanna: Yes, the Greek gods. Although I think you meant the Egyptian gods. Because they are the ones who went to Greece, reached Greece and they thought them Greek. It is the Egyptians that made Europe. Just so you know.

Nyeko: Kiyanna loves the limelight. I'm not sure where you got your fiction from, but I will tell you why I was thinking about these Greek gods.

Kiyanna: Tell us.

Nyeko: Who inspired these meat festivals? I remember we read the gods of the Greeks decreed that their people would go to a mountain and party all the time, and there was free sex with whoever was around you. Where did our leaders get this idea of a meat festival?

Zaza: I have heard that story about the women in Greece during those festivals. That the women would go around naked during the celebrations at Mt Olympus, and the men jumped on whoever they wished. Eh. What was that?

Nyeko: Eh, those must have been the best times to be a male.

Zaza: Now see this pervert. That is all you live for. Men will be ruined by life's pleasures.

Nyeko: Like all the world's kings and generals. Just like your husband. It is the reason men wake up every morning to toil their entire lives. For our wives and our lovely small houses.

Kiyanna: And how about the women? Why do you think we work? To please you?

Zaza: Well, I think men work to please us. But we work for ourselves. Men love spending their money on us, and we love spending our money on ourselves. But we also spend on these idiots sometimes, although that is not all we do for them. I think they love us too much, that they are willing to spend their entire wealth on us. I would not do that.

Nyeko: Philosopher Zaza. I should buy you some fresh juice this evening. I have heard that men at the meat festivals, goodness, when darkness falls, they become real animals. Hunting dogs.

Kiyanna: I hope they seek permission from the girls they mount. But our girls are too loose nowadays. I recall men used to take over six months to have a piece of the pie. Nowadays it is days, sometimes, hours!

Zaza: But the meat festivals are not about the Greek gods. But it is this new leadership freeing us from the past regime which had outlawed meat-eating. This one is making us buy more meat and enjoy more meat.

Nyeko: I have other questions: who knows anyone who has eaten this meat government distributes? I know the festival is held in a particular area at a time, but I smell meat all the time. Are we supposed to buy it for ourselves?

Zaza: So, we are going to continue with the meat festivals for the next two years? Where are all these animals going to come from?

Nyeko: *(Talking to a customer)* That pineapple is really good. It is fresh... fresh like a village girl at a meat festival *(laughing)*.

Customer II: You market people and your language. You can even sell hot pepper claiming it is honey. (*Customer buys and leaves*).

Kiyanna: Nyeko and his customers! How do you manage your house? How does your wife deal with you?

Zaza: Just make sure his stomach is full and make sure to exhaust his male power.

He'll be the calmest person in the house. Also make sure he knows you know about his "small houses", but never bring up the matter. He'll be forever guilty... and friendlier... and forgiving of all your mistakes as a woman.

Nyeko: Eh, Zaza, another juice for you. So, how many "small houses" does your husband have?

Zaza: Can we go back to the meat festivals. Leave me alone.

Nyeko: By the way, talking about our dear leader, and his meat festivals. Why doesn't he have children? Doesn't he have enough meat in his system? Could it be his wife with dead seeds?

Kiyanna: Stop blaming women all the time. Could it not be that President Dindi has dead seedlings. Come on. Men have seedling problems, too.

Customer III: (*Joining in*) You are talking about Dindi! Nooo. That man is rumoured to have a long list of small houses (*laughing*). He has our money; he can eat all the meat he likes. The wild, the domestic... all animals.

Zaza: For a man who closely works with seers and herbalists, surely, he would have found a cure for dead seedlings. Our herbal medicines work. We have cured hard diseases like sugar and coughs. The problem now is that we have also bought into white people's medicine and ditched ours.

Kiyanna: There is a man who always passes here announcing male strength traditional cures, I'm told even 70-year-olds have found their backs again.

Zaza: There comes the man you have just talked about. Talk about the devil. But his tongue is very dirty, just like his merchandise. I'm told one time he told people complaining about government meat festivals, that "if you cannot find government meat, enjoy the vegetarian options in your house". That he was marketing his merchandise as "extra teeth!" I'm not sure they understood him. *(They all laugh).*

Kiyanna: There he comes, listen to his images...

Herbal medicine vendor

(Laden with merchandise passing by and chanting):

Your house has problems singing the national anthem?

Are you less patriotic to stand during the anthem?

Do you have appetite problems?

Your wife never cooks you wondrous morning meals?

Do you want to eat more and more dishes?

I'm the solution you have waited for

You can call me your government.

Because I'm the revolution

These sticks will increase your patriotism,

This powder will sharpen your teeth,

These seeds will increase your amniotic acids

These herbs are the medicine of the world

And your entire house will be just wild

You'll all be crying like hungry hyenas

Wuu, wiii, wuu, wiii!

Here is the long revolution.

I come with the solution

Curtain

Scene II

Inside the leader's private residence. The leader has invited his ministers and workers including the head of intelligence, normally known as "Intelligence". Also present is Minister of Science, Dr Edmund Ocen (simply called Science); the Minister for Agriculture, Min. A.K. Bbosa (called Farmer; and the chief traditional seer of the palace, Chief Tembo-Tembo (Seer). They are consulting privately on a weekend. They are seated in a living room, dressed casually and relaxed. No one calls the leader by name; they call him by the title, Elder of Elders.

President Dindi: I called you here to discuss the festivals. We have so far done three years of our planned five. But I have heard reports that the numbers of animals have gone down. How are we managing this situation? My man, in charge of farming, Hon. A. K. Bbosa, tell me. (*As an aside, lightly*)... I have never understood what A.K. in your name means, by the way... but another day.

Farmer: Elder of Elders, the number of animals has actually gone down. Most of the cows have been eaten. We have eaten the goats and sheep. Even 'the animal of the nation,' which is expected to be reproducing faster than the others, cannot keep up with our consumption. It seems when we said meat, the poor understood it to be that animal.

President Dindi: (*Hysterical laughter*). Poor people and the animal of the nation! They cannot have enough of it. Not sure how it even got named "the animal of the nation". But this country is gifted. We should be able to have meat sustain our festivals for the next two years. I need some ideas.

Intelligence: In fact, Elder of Elders, it is not the poor people eating the meat. It is our rich friends benefiting the most from these celebrations. They are the ones eating meat daily... and have also found that animal preferable.

More seriously, they are also selling it abroad. Europeans eat a lot of meat and are buying it everywhere.

President Dindi: Thank you, Intelligence. But who allowed them to export it when we have so little ourselves? Compile a list of all the meat merchants; we need to know them. It should be criminal to sell our meat for export when our own country doesn't have enough. But Hon. Bbosa, do you mean the celebrations will stop before the promised period? You know these meat festivals are the difference between us and the past leaderships, they cannot stop.

Science: If I may come in, dear Leader, the festivals can continue. I have some suggestions, which I think will save us. Science has always saved the world.

Seer: Science has also ruined our world. It depends on where your soul stands. Ugly scientific souls made smoke bombs, which we hear kill all living creatures. The same scientists made beer, kill-me-quick, and sugar. All these are dangerous.

President Dindi: Go right ahead with your suggestions, Dr Ocen.

Science: We read in the books, that the most delicious meat in Europe is the meat of calves. The small ones. Slaughtered right after they are born. It is the meat of the gentry they call it.

President Dindi: Is that so? Will our people eat that? I have not heard of it before.

Science: They are very delicious and extremely nutritious. In fact, Europeans prefer them to anything else. We could market them to our people who also want to appear like white people. But once they are in it, we'll be good with our festivals – and will have some more to distribute.

President Dindi: You are a good man. I need more men like you around me. Brilliant ideas! The calves will do it. Did you say white people love them so much? Then we have reason to act like those white people.

Farmer: But dear Leader, once we begin eating the calves, the numbers will go down further. This is eating the future in the present. It is even more dangerous.

Science: Eating calves is even environmentally friendly in the sense that there is no need to feed them for a long time. So, you save on the grass they would be eating in competition with the adult ones. You save the milk they would be drinking and give it to the people.

Farmer: What would be practical dear Leader, would be farming with machines, something like mechanically reproducing the animals, especially the piglets. That is what Europeans do. It is a very dirty enterprise, but it makes meat available. But the problem, we don't have the money and the machines for carrying out the process.

President Dindi: Too much caution, Hon. Bbosa... too much caution. We are politicians. We need to keep our promises going by all means. I need practical answers now. I have an urgent concern. I like this idea from this man, Science. But we need to do it with caution, not to eat all the animals.

Seer: Dear Leader, I see Farmer here sees the future. And my friend Science here is sometimes stupid (*laughs*) but a very practical man. You need to find a balance between these two heads.

President Dindi: I know, Chief Tembo. Now that you are talking, I have remembered we have our bottles here (*pointing at the tables with beers and liquors*). You, and I should focus on an upcoming beer festival (*laughs*). Leave these matters of meat to these men. Gentlemen, feel free to help yourselves. A weekend with a dry throat is punishment.

Seer: You see, sometimes, these bright heads have no sense of politics. But you need them around. And these stupid heads are good politicians, you need them as much. You need to decide dear Leader. Farmer here, seems to be a good man, seeing ahead like a seer.

Science: Dear Leader, if I may. Today I will prove to Chief Tembo that I actually went to school. See, the first thing, we start by promoting them as special delicacies for the high-end restaurants. "A man of class eats calf meat," and so our meat festivals will get a touch of class. We'll say, "We are not just eating meat, but eating class, like the whites."

Seer: This empty head knows how to craft words. Dear Leader, I will have my glass now. (*He pours himself a bottle and starts drinking*).

(A woman, one of the servants in the presidential palace, walks in and whispers in the ear of the dear Leader who acknowledges the message, and she goes away.)

Science: Also, I have never understood why people are throwing supposedly dead cows saying they cannot eat them because they died by themselves. What is the difference? You kill a cow to eat it. Why not eat it if it died by itself. It is all meat. It should be simple business education... against wastage.

President Dindi: Hon. Bbosa, you seem to be silent. What is that story in the news that animals are being thrown away or being buried – when we have scarcity of meat.

Farmer: Dear Leader, this man is misleading. There was an animal disease that broke out in villages in the east, and farmers have been burying these animals on our recommendation. It will be dangerous for the population to eat diseased animals.

Science: I have not heard of any cases of infection or deaths from eating those animals. In fact, many of the villagers enjoyed it. In the past distributions of meat to the poor, I didn't discriminate; death from slaughter or death by itself, a dead animal is a dead animal all meat is a dead animal.

Farmer: Dr Ocen, this is a very misleading position you have taken. It is unscientific. Death from slaughter and death from infection are different deaths. One is meat, the other is carcass. You don't want to endanger the people's lives.

Science: Dear Leader, my suggestion is this: in addition to promoting eating calves, we should decree that dead animals should never be thrown away. It should be illegal to throw away an animal because it died of illness or anything else. It should be seen as compromising the spirit of the meat festivals.

Farmer: With all due respect, Mr Science, people aren't rats in your laboratories. This is dangerous thinking. But I know, science is a very corrupting thing, sometimes.

Intelligence: What Hon. Bbosa is suggesting is not entirely true, dear Leader. We have sampled those dead animals already. All meat is a dead animal. There is no meat that is a living animal.

Seer: Here is another head called Intelligence, but with no intelligence. Give him another bottle (*Laughs*).

Science: We could offer to encourage the farmers to sell their dead animals to the state, and we would then see how to distribute this meat. We could treat them in our government labs, and then distribute the meat to the poor. If they are receiving it as provision from the state, what will be the problem?

Farmer: What do you mean “treating a dead animal”?

Science: This man does not even know that when an animal dies, not all of its parts die. Some are actually taken out and put in other animals. A little learning is a dangerous thing. This farmer needs re-education.

Farmer: Dear Leader, I wouldn't recommend anything that this man says, especially buying diseased corpses of animals from farmers, and then passing them to our poor people. It is suicide.

President Dindi: Okay, we need to end this meeting. I will not venture into buying or eating dead animals. If the people do it, it shouldn't be on my encouragement. But the calves, let this be the new campaign now.

Farmer: If you wish it dear Leader. Although I still have strong reservations about it.

President Dindi: Thanks a lot for coming; I have protocol as usual, my friends. Anna confirmed when she came. We could go down to the bar in the east side of the palace. We have prepared some music and some fine people. It is a weekend.

(As they all stand to move to the entertainment wing in the palace, the Minister of Farming moves to the president and informs him he is not attending the entertainment).

Farmer: Dear Leader, if you could allow me, I will simply run back to the ministry, I have some more emergencies to attend to.

President Dindi: It should be okay. Your ministry is always having one emergency after another. Please go and keep me informed.

He goes away. They all move to the entertainment section, a well-organised bar with a small stage. The band is already set and is playing soft music. The men who were in the meeting are joined by two other people, most likely other ministers. Drinks are being served and the band continues to play.

Curtain

Scene III

In the market square at Mango Town, Kiyanna, Zaza and Nyeko are in animated conversation as they all attend to their stalls. Market chair, Trish, joins them to tell them about the forthcoming meat festival. As they talk, they pause to talk to their customers.

Zaza: But where is the “meat” in the meat festivals? These are meat-smoke festivals!

Kiyanna: I cannot imagine in a country renowned for its meat festivals, all we eat is the smoke (*Loud laughter*). We are the smoke eaters! How does that sound for a name?

Zaza: The entire island is endlessly engulfed in this delicious aroma of smoking meat. I have been told that our neighbours across the great waters call us “Meat Island,” (*They laugh*) or do they say, “the meat peoples?”

Nyeko: (*Cynically*) I tell you what; the aroma of smoking meat warms my heart!

Kiyanna: They say in the villages the festival is organised, that entire week, the government distributes meat to the whole village. I have not seen any of it, but that is what they say. And then, on the weekend, the party comes down.

Customer I: But isn't this government telling lies? I was in the villages for one weekend, and I did not see any meat distributions. But there was a lot of meat smoke in the entire village. One animal was slaughtered. And other animals are being burned because of the foot and mouth disease breakfast. It seems they have no more animals to slaughter.

Nyeko: For me, after the laws allowed meat eating again, I have returned to the old regime, only on Sunday. Which people can afford meat every day? Let me first attend to a customer and leave your gossips alone. (*Turns to his customer*).

Kiyanna: And the meat aroma will be coming from one place. From the so-called Ministers' Village, Lovington Town, it is far... (*Raising his nose to catch more*), but the aroma still reaches all of us. It is like a meat smoke pandemic for some of us.

Zaza: (*Reflectively*) That is the problem with our leaders nowadays. They tell us they want us to be modern; industries, factories, science, tractors, flyovers, but are instead surrounded by seers and witchdoctors interested in festivals.

Kiyanna: How many cows do they claim we have eaten so far? I have lost count. Is there anyone counting? Are the radio people counting?

Customer II: Is there anyone counting? No one. (*As she leaves*).

Zaza: I heard on the radio, from the Minister of Farming that over 200 cows are slaughtered on the entire island every day. And how big was our animal population for a fishing island? They said 800, 000 cows! It must have sounded a lot to these idiots. But 200 animals weekly for five years!

Kiyanna: Me I even doubt those numbers. I thought we were a fishing people. Where are all those animals coming from? Who are the farmers? Did they count those animals? How can you have gold without gold mines? Because also where is the meat? Governments thrive on deception. To believe one's government like that is to be foolish.

Customer II: The humourist said, "Lies are the lifeblood of governments." There's a lot of truth in that. But what then are governments good for? The lies themselves that keep us under order! I don't know.

Nyeko: But the rumour might be true that those charged with distributing the meat could be distributing smoke. The animals could be going outside.

Zaza: Yes, those people have turned all of us into their animals for sale. They promise animals, send us smoke, and then sell the meat claiming it has been given to us.

(A customer approaches Zaza's stall).

Customer III: Are your vegetables still fresh?

Zaza: The vegetables are okay. How much should I pack for you?

Customer III: They look hungry.

Zaza: Are you a meat eater? How do vegetables look hungry?

Customer III: Why are you so angry? I'm not the one who has eaten all the meat from the market people. I just want some vegetables.

Zaza: Then just buy some.

(Customer pays for some vegetables and leaves quietly).

Nyeko: So, for you people, you know someone eating meat? Our Mango Town, forgotten town!

Kiyanna: I do not know one either. But what I know is that it is those people living on that side of this road Orange Town and Lovington Town; the entire area called Ministers Village that are enjoying all the meat.

(The three look at each other with telling glances. They have spotted the chairperson of the market walking in their direction. They simply call her Chair Trish. She is a woman of good countenance and enjoys joking with the market vendors).

Kiyanna: Guess who is stopping by to say hello to us. The newest spy in town: Madame Trish. (*Whispering*) we should call her trash. Is it you? That you managed to use your good looks all the way up? Good for you girl. It is not just social capital or money. Erotic capital too! Ha. All capital is good capital. You used whatever your mama gave you.

Chair: But you market people and your foul mouths. Look at this man Nyeko also gossiping like these stupid women. Degree in Gossip Management, is that what you studied in school? You voted me here, and those people in government want me to help them as all other market chairs.

Kiyanna: It is your government that made us stupid. What do you do when you go where dogs are eaten. We are here eating market dogs.

Nyeko: You even abandoned your stall. You don't want to sit with unwashed bodies in the market. Seems things are going good for you.

Zaza: Beauty and big hips help, sister (*cynical laughter*).

Chair: Stop, you people. As your former neighbour, I have come to give you some gossip, too, hihhi. The meat festival is coming to our village next weekend. It is coming to our centre, finally. This is our chance to eat.

Nyeko: Do we have more animals to complete the remaining years?

Chair: Our dear Leader is encouraging farmers to rear more animals. The ministry is distributing pigs and day-old chicks to farmers. We are also attracting our friends from the white world to come and invest here.

Nyeko: Our friends from abroad! Beware of cultural corruption, Trish-Trash. Attracting people from the white world has not been good for Africans. Coming to invest in our land is how they steal our resources. The more they have invested, the poorer we have become.

Chair: Not true.

Zaza: Listen, they are not our friends. While they may not have guns and colonial outposts here, they have people like you. See, those men in suits, dining and smiling with us, and sometimes marrying our girls, are the new colonial admins.

Chair: You are envious of white legs marrying our girls. You think you own the legs of those girls, hehe.

Kiyanna: You are right Zaza. You work in this dirty market but are very smart. I'm not sure this beautiful newly-minted politician understands. Trish-Trash, let me tell you; those white legs, if it were not for our gardens, and the stupidity of our leaders, they would be starving.

Nyeko: In their countries, when it is cold, it is too cold. When the sun comes out, it is too hot. They have no chance to grow any food. Maybe onions. They rely on our stupid leaders for free food.

Chair: But what do you villagers know about rich people bringing money into this country! (*Speaking as she walks away*). You just stick to selling vegetables. We'll deal with the white legs. But do not miss the Meat Festival. It is finally here.

Kiyanna: (*Turning to her friends, somewhat whispering*), I have heard everyone up there has floored that one. You see all those women; they floor them for those positions. They sleep their way up the ladder. Eh.

Zaza: Well, how are they different from athletes? You use your muscles for own advancement. No one told you not to be good looking, Kiyanna. Let her benefit from her good looks. It is her power. Let the girl use it.

Kiyanna: I know. I just said the same thing to her. But she better beware, men are energy consumers! They are bad feeders. They are like goats. They leave no green behind. They even leave their awful smells behind after feeding in your green garden! She'll be running crazy. Hehe (*laughing cynically*).

Zaza: Not sure where Kiyanna gets her theories about men and women! Did you feed those he-goats at some point? Or your husband is the one you are calling a goat! Hahaha.

Kiyanna: I'm just saying the way men consume – even when they pay their taxes – can be bad for your environment. Their carbondioxide is a lot. Since we cannot do without them – I need my man, for sure – but one needs to have a good environment management plan. Don't allow every "capitalist" with money to mine your environment.

Nyeko: Talk about the devil, the man of herbal medicines is back. He has perfect timing. He comes when people are talking about mating. But how does he manage all these images?

Herbal medicine vendor

(Laden with merchandise passing by and chanting his merchandise):

Problems singing the national anthem?

Less patriotic to stand during the anthem?

Do you have appetite problems at home?

Your wife never cooks you wondrous morning meals?

Do you want to eat more and more dishes?

I'm the solution you have waited for

You can call me your government.

Because I'm the revolution

These sticks will increase your patriotism,

This powder will sharpen your teeth,

These seeds will increase your fluids

These herbs are medicine of the worlds

And your entire house will be just fine

You'll all be crying like hungry hyenas

Wuu, wiii, wuu, wiii

Here is the long revolution.

I come with the solution

Curtain

Scene IV

The meat festival is ongoing in a market square. There are three grills, and a lot of people are gathered in the square. There is disorder in the square – but also a lot of merrymaking. DRUM Singers has set up a stage in one corner and is rehearsing, and getting ready for the stage that has been erected at one end of the square. Chair Trish is present and takes to the stage to welcome the revellers.

Chair: Hellooo. Hellooo! (*Calling people to order*). It is a special day. Good to see everybody. Even us poor people have the chance to eat some meat from the state. And we celebrate the good fortune of our leaders. Even those without eyes can see the many things that the new leadership has brought us. Hmm, [*Sniffing the air*] Smell the aroma of meat! So delicious!

(Pauses)

Here are DRUM Singers to entertain us this entire afternoon. And without much delay, let's get entertained.

(DRUM Singers storm the stage to whistles and drums).

Chorister: My people, my people, where are you? Don't say we did not tell you. The fruits of the struggle are here for you. Our leaders are here for you. Eat and dance to ours and their good health. That is why we say (*starting to sing*):

Oceania, Oceanians of Mango Town!

President Dindi, everywhere

Meat, meat, everywhere

People, people, everywhere,

Feast, feast, everywhere

Peace, peace, everywhere

Fire, fire, everywhere

Long live, our peace hunters,

Long live, our liberators,

Long live, beautiful country

Long live, handsome women,

Long live, singing birds

Oceania, Oceanians

President Dindi, everywhere

Democracy, everywhere

Peace and love, everywhere

Prosperity, everywhere

(As the drumming and dancing continues, a fight breaks out at one of the grounds, around one of the grills, causing commotion).

Villager I: That piece is mine. Give it to me. *(Violently pulls it from the other).*

Villager II: It is mine, I picked it first *(Pulling it from the other hand).*

Villager I: You can only eat it over my dead body *(pushes the other away and the one pushed knocks the grill over. The coal and meat spills and people scamper. There is pandemonium).*

Chair Trish: Order, order, order..., there is enough meat for all of us. Please calm down. Let's be peaceful.

Villager III: There's not enough meat Chair. They brought so little (*Shouts from one end*).

Chair: More meat is on its way. Let's enjoy what we have already as we wait for more. Dear DRUM Singers, please don't stop. Carry on.

Drumming continues, as they dance. Vigorous dancers take to the stage and dance and raise so much dust. The people join in as the party rises to a crescendo.

(As darkness falls, people can be heard talking in the dark as the drumming dies out).

Voice I: At least the poor also have a chance to eat some meat. We have eaten so much smoke for too long.

Voice II: But the meat was so small. How could one call this a meat festival? Maybe a dance festival; at least we danced. They promised more meat was on the way but it seems the meat will reach here tomorrow. And there'll be no one to eat it.

Voice: Maybe it was a smoke festival.

Curtain

Act Two

Scene I

Nyeko, Zaza, and Kiyanna are attending their stalls as usual.

A radio is playing in the background.

Zaza: Where did the customers go? What happened to this market? I feel like selling my stall if I had someone to buy it. If there was a boat taking slaves to Europe in this year, 1995, I would volunteer myself. Because what is this? These times seem harder than the colonial times we read about in books.

Kiyanna: You want to leave this country and migrate to Europe... as a slave?! Ha, with your jackfruit face. I have heard that it is difficult to travel to those countries. That white world doesn't want your type of faces in their countries.

Zaza: But they are all over our small island. They have bought all the beautiful parts of our small island! Why should we not be in their country as well?

Kiyanna: I don't even think they are even buying. Dear Leader, is a man of humble education. I have heard he fears white people. I hope they aren't giving him mirrors and guns in turn (*laughing at his joke*). You know when you are weak, the strong people will ask for your things while taking at the same time.

(Radio is playing in the background. An advert plays)

*Everybody loves them young,
Everybody loves them new
The unwrapping of nature,
Tasty beef, very nutritious.
Served young, truly delicious,
Served fresh; finger-licking good*

CALF MEAT,

we call it

CAMIT.

*The true taste of beef
For the modern people
Be an European-African
The true taste of the revolution*

CAMIT.

Nyeko: But who came up with this stupid idea of eating calves? How did they do the calculations? Isn't this eating your eggs while expecting chicks at the same time? We are led by fools.

Zaza: White world delicacies. They copied this from the white world. We so badly want to be like them, and we just do things like them. Talk about colonised minds... the greatest form of colonialism.

Nyeko: But the advert is so good. It sneaks in on our appetites. They turned our love for young girls into their money-making scheme. Those fools are smart. They have scientists and philosophers coming up with those adverts. The imagery of a young lover... fresh, new, young... I'm telling you.

- Kiyanna:** If I had power, I would have made advertisement illegal. It makes people do stupid things... like eating calves. Buying things they do not need... especially us women. Profit seekers prey on our emotions. People should look for and buy only those things they need, not what the market entices them to buy.
- Nyeko:** I know. We have replaced the idea of a good life with just more goods. It is stupid.
- Zaza:** That advert utterly changed our meat behaviour. We grew up respecting newly born cattle. Now it is a delicacy. The animals will soon be finished. I have heard all the rich people in expensive hotels only want calves.
- Zaza:** Nyeko liked the advert. He sounds like a man who is often running after young girls. They perfectly understand men's weakness.
- Nyeko:** This is the problem with old women when young things are talked about, the jealousy boils over. They are like people with leprosy. Hahaha!
- Zaza:** Think about this, however I have heard that advert for the last one year, but I have never tasted calf meat. Have you, my friends, tasted this young meat?
- Kiyanna:** It is the usual thing. The smoke from our neighbours. We are smoke eaters. I have also heard that since rich people embraced calf-meat eating, it made it expensive and scarce.
- Zaza:** We might need another group of people to get rid of these smoke-serving politicians. I'm really tired of this meat festival nonsense. How could this be the country's main project for all these years?

Kiyanna: I have a plan. And this is going to sound crazy. Why don't we also start getting ourselves dirty and hold these politicians at smoke-point? Like gunpoint. But this should be smoke. If smoke is the only language they understand, we should give it to them.

Nyeko: We call these the "dirty-people-protests". Hahaha! But you'll be dirty alone Kiyanna. If you stopped bathing as a form of protest, I'm not sure your man would be okay with that.

Zaza: But let me ask before you people turn yourselves into rubbish for a weapon! Do these people have farming experts? There is that man called, A. K. Bbosa; we heard he has a PhD, why did that thing burden his head?

Nyeko: Zaza, you seem so naïve about money and power and politics. If the most educated man is not the one on top, their education is useless to the powerful. We are fishing people; you know the fish starts rotting from the head.

Kiyanna: Free money corrupts. Free money blinds. Money earned without breaking a sweat makes even the most steadfast loose. With a soft life, sex, and more and more goods, the rest can go kill themselves.

Nyeko: Talk about women and sex, and our herbal medicine man shows up. He has perfect timing. And I'm told he serves the rich so much. They are his major customers. That rich people are extremely weak in the bedroom.

Zaza: In that case, money and power weaken the bedroom!
(*They all laugh loudly*). Don't say, Nyeko that you
would rather remain poor than be weak in bedroom
(*Snickers*).

Nyeko: It doesn't matter; I'll be here seeking the services of
this man. He is so musical though... Listen to him

Herbal medicine vendor

(*Laden with merchandise passing by and chanting*):

Do you have appetite problems?

Do you have problems singing the national anthems?

Your wife never cooks you wondrous morning meals?

Do you want to eat more and more dishes?

I'm the solutions you have waited for

You can call me your government.

Because I'm the revolution

These sticks will increase your appetite,

This powder will sharpen your teeth,

These seeds will increase your fluids

These herbs are medicine of the worlds

And your entire house will be fine

You'll all be crying like hungry hyenas

Wuu, wiii, wuu, wiii

Because I'm the revolution.

Because I'm the calf-meat injection.

Nyeko: This vendor has added a line on calf-meat, did you hear it? He calls himself the calf-meat injection. Very smart of him to work with the time.

Kiyanna: Good people, I have to go. My husband must be home already. He needs my care. I'm a wife after all this. But I'm still thinking about the dirty-people protests. Or we could just work in the night and take the garbage van and dump all our market garbage in the drainage at Orange Town Roundabout.

Nyeko: (*Whispering*) Talk quietly, Kiyanna: Everyone in this market is a sipy. As we used to say in school, in these things of protesting power... did we read this in a book...? Yes, in these things of protesting the powerful, you only trust yourself.

Kiyanna: I will go now.

Curtain

Scene II

President Dindi is meeting with his usual inner circle. They are meeting at home as usual on a weekend. All the honourable ministers are in their traditional dresses, as is the custom; these garments are embellished with African prints as is common in most of West Africa.

President Dindi: I have called you for this urgent meeting because I need some quick solutions. We have two more years to the end of the celebrations we announced; I fear that we do not have enough meat for the next year. How do we get out of this?

Farmer: Your Excellency, it is possible to explain to the people that we ran out of animals, and we could stop the festivals. They will understand, since not even many have eaten the meat.

President Dindi: I do not like the idea of ending these festivals. A politician is as good as their promises. Also, remember, with more people drinking and spending time in pleasure, the pressure on us is less. The festivals have created a good atmosphere. I wouldn't like the pressure that comes with serious subjects. I'm happy with these merrymaking subjects.

Farmer: We then need to busy them with farming. We need to call off the festivals and challenge them to grow more crops and keep more animals, and then we would see a rise in the number of animals, and perhaps spread the festivals over a ten-year cycle, dear Leader.

President Dindi: But I do not want to call off these festivals. They are my lifeblood. The festivals keep the memory of our victory going. My people need to continue celebrating.

Farmer: But we need to engage them more productively, dear Leader. We need them to work. The rains are coming down.

President Dindi: Minister for Science, I want to hear your thoughts on this. I hear my minister here; he is talking farming because that is the only thing he knows, farming, gardens. And I agree with him. But what do we do in this moment. (*Addressing Science*). Give me some ideas.

Science: Dear Leader, this is why I came with this book. I have some suggestions you will surely like (*Showing the book and opening some pages*). We need to make use of the poor more productively.

President Dindi: Are you suggesting the same thing as Bbosa here? Did you brainstorm before coming here?

Science: No, your Excellency, in fact that minister of yours is not even my friend. We are like cats and rats. He does not like the ideas I always give. Not sure whether this is out of envy or sheer incompetence. But he is your minister.

Farmer: I just think your ideas are often selfish, and difficult. You have no idea the mess we have created with eating calves.

President Dindi: So, how is this idea... engaging more people... productively, different from what Bbosa is suggesting?

Science: My idea is very simple and cost-free, dear Leader. This book I carried (*showing the book*)... explains the different types of meat, their nutritional value, and modes of harvesting. We are all animals, dear leader, and all animals prepared the right way, make wonderful delicacies.

President Dindi: We are listening.

Science: The poor can be harvested. They are not really bad. It is said in this book, that the most nutritious type of animal, is the human animal. Now the question becomes, how does one harvest these human animals. I need to explain this well without appearing like a witch.

President Dindi: What is this, comrade? (*Looking aghast.*) What do you mean “harvesting the poor”? I just hope you aren’t suggesting cannibalism.

Science: Allow me to explain more, dear Leader. This is extremely scientific and in the modern world, it has been tried and passed. Nutritionists and fellow scientists have invested plenty of resources in testing the nutritional and medicinal benefit of human meat. Developmentalist and poverty experts have tried different ways of dealing with the poor. I will explain all these angles.

Seer: I’m not sure where this is heading, but I will listen.

Science: The poor live in a lot of pain. They struggle to find food and water, and they tend to compete with themselves and with us for the little resources the world has given us. To harvest them actually means saving them of their pain. This is what Europeans and Americans do; they harvest the poor, and turn them into a more valuable product.

President Dindi: What do you really mean “harvesting the poor”? How do the Europeans and Americans do it? Do we have to embrace every little barbarism of Europeans?

Seer: I might have to switch positions with this man called, Science. He seems to have entered my domain of witchcraft. Tells us more “Science” (*cynically*).

Science: Hon. Bbosa here suggested giving the poor more work. Enslaving them on the land. Making them work on the farms. How do you burden a poor person twice? Starved, sickly and dying, how will they work in their sickly frame? What the white world does is that they put the dying bodies of their poor to better use.

(There is silence in the room)

President Dindi: Are you speaking figuratively or literally? Do you mean slaughtering and eating poor people like we do with animals? You said Europeans also eat the poor like that?

Science: They are treated more respectfully than animals, of course. Slow, less painful medical slaughter, like they are sleeping. You feed them well and recover some weight, and then medically turn them into beef. It is like sleeping. They don't even realise it.

Seer: If they ever wake up from their medical sleep, they will wake up inside the stomach of a rich man, hihhi. They better not wake up on a plate on a dining table. Otherwise, there would be absolute pandemonium!
(More laughter).

Farmer: I am lost for words, dear leader. How is this different from the cannibalism we left behind? Sometimes, these meetings sound like jokes, dear Leader. This man of science actually proves what Europeans thought about us. As barbarian cannibals!

Science: I'm actually telling you about the lives of Europeans. How do you think the Spanish and Portuguese cleaned up the poor in Latin America? Where do you think all the proteins from these people were put? Thrown away? No.

Farmer: Fictional history.

President Dindi: Hmm. I have never heard of it. Is that how Argentina did it? But there are a lot of poor people in Europe nowadays. So, what are you talking about now?

Science: There are books about it. *Open Veins* from Latin America. They were opening veins of the poor. Like myself, one patriotic Briton wrote this as a "Modest Proposal" to their king. They did it. For them, they were even more serious, they were medically preparing the poor and their babies.

Seer: If you are actually a man of science, you are also a witch. Something tells me you are reading a lot of English fiction and taking it seriously. Dr Ocen, don't you think you are misunderstanding things?

Science: Hon. Bbosa is obsessed with industrial farming. He needs to know that the white man embarked on that journey only after they ran into shortages of poor human meat. They had no option. They farm meat in their factories nowadays. We haven't reached that level. We need to slowly go through the phases of growth.

President Dindi: But I am so scared this will portray us as cannibals.

Science: Do you know that as we talk now, in these 1990s, white people have reached the level of actually manufacturing humans in their laboratories. You think they are making people to walk this earth? Not at all. They miss their high table cuisine.

Farmer: Dear Leader, I am begging you, this is a bad idea. It will cost us our leadership as many people will see you as a cannibal. Yet, these are practices we left behind.

Science: Dear Leader, this book (*showing book*) is published by a prestigious European university and includes extensive studies by pre-eminent scientists and nutritionists. This beef is considered the most delicious in the world. These animal types eat salt, which makes them even more delicious and easy to prepare. And because they also eat the cooked meat of other animals, their meat texture is slightly chewy, but soft. It is like eating a meat-eating lion itself. They say it is like eating Nile perch and goat meat combined. That is a special taste.

President Dindi: We are listening. Science has always been witchcraft to me.

Science: There is classified information that Europeans are stealing African bodies nowadays. This is very classified information. You know those wars on the mainland, in the thick forests and deserts. They are not smuggling all types of minerals and other beef products. You have packages that are labelled HUMIT. I think this is an acronym for Human Meat.

(There is a pause as everyone is between awe and disbelief.)

Farmer: Dear Leader, if I may interrupt, why do we have to emulate the barbaric actions of people in Europe? That we start eating our own! If this policy begins, dear Leader, I'll not be serving anymore.

Science: That would be good riddance.

President Dindi: I do not like this bickering in these meetings. You are in my house; let's talk freely without threatening each other.

Science: This beef I am advocating, the scientists in Europe say, is like wild meat. Unlike other animals, which are endlessly treated with steroids and other substances, a human is the most sophisticated yet wildest animal. It grows freely in the wild; it is often fully exercised, has the capacity for love and compassion, and eating this type of animals improves these qualities in other humans.

President Dindi: But this is like eating ourselves, Science. Please don't advocate cannibalism using European texts. Our people have always castigated cannibalism. It is against our cultures.

Farmer: Dear Leader, I need to leave. I have a show on radio this evening, where I'm supposed to encourage farmers to organise themselves into cooperatives, so that they grow together. This is how our country used to grow before these stupid scientists joined government.

President Dindi: It is all right, Farmer, I love your long-term projects, but I also need quick suggestions for the promises I made to the people. Tell the people that I sent them warm regards, and our government is with them.

(Farmer leaves).

Science: (*Whispering*) But dear Leader, you might have to do something about this man. Just drop him from being minister. The things he is advocating, all the time claiming to work with people, work with the people... these things might make him a serious rival. I do not like his trying to be the good one amongst all of us.

President Dindi: Nooo. This man is just a good man. He is not a politician. We'll continue to work with him. We need men like him in this leadership. It cannot be just us.

Science: Anyways, dear Leader, to make my point clearer, I also came with a newspaper advert from a European newspaper.

Seer: (*Addressing Science*): You came prepared like us witchdoctors. We never move without all our regalia. Funny how a scientist now moves with all his toys, just like us witchdoctors. And these things you are talking, it is absolute witchcraft, but we seem to believe you. (*Sneers*).

Science: (*Reading from newspaper advertisement*).

Thinking Bio-Meat? Think HUMIT.
Soft white meat, salt-self-contained,
Organically grown, in the tropics of the world
From 15–20-year-old animals
No fertilisers, no drugs.
HUMIT is Natural.
Deliveries only once a Month

Science: If I would ask you, which animal is it that is harvested at 15 or 20 years! Yes. They never tell their buyers. We should use the same tricks.

President Dindi: Okay so, I am anxious to hear you talk about the ways in which such a horrible thing is done without arousing the suspicion of the people and being called a cannibal.

Science: *(Still standing)* First, we'll have to translate that advert into our local language. People are like sheep. They need to be herded and directed. We could ask our comedians to make it funny... and then a thing of class. Then all the sheep will be looking forward to a bite.

President Dindi: Hmm... okay...

Science: We will begin by creating special slaughter places. These are spaces that only work in the night. We will have to use the military doctors. Because soldiers have special training and are never afraid of blood, we'll use them as employees in the abattoirs.

President Dindi: Doctors? What are they going to be doing in the slaughterhouse?

Science: These are special operations. We need specially trained people to put the animals to sleep before slaughter. The doctors of the military are also soldiers in a way, and these will be easy operations for them. This will be taken to the streets as boneless meat, as the Europeans do it.

President Dindi: I need some alcohol right now. I need to numb my spirits. Although I want to hear the entire story. The pains that we politicians go through to serve our people! Some alcohol please *(calling... a waiter walks in which a glass)*. Anyone else want a glass?

Science: Me, too. I need one. Always need a glass when reading this stuff, myself. *(They bring him a glass, and the other five people in the meeting also ask for some glasses).*

Seer: So and how do we get the poor animals into the slaughterhouses...? Just like night dancers *(laughs sarcastically)*.

Science: That is the easy part. Our military men will run special operations and pick all those idle people and children roaming the streets. Then they will move to the people who sleep on the streets. Clearly those people sleeping on the streets have no family, and no one is going to come looking for them.

Seer: It is such an ugly sight when you walk the market squares and all these poor people are sleeping there. We need to clean them up. But this is witchcraft, dear Leader!

President Dindi: This is a dream.

Science: Then, there are a lot of poor people in hospitals who are unable to get treatment. We need to make sure that we harvest them before calamity befalls them. We need to have powerful coolers and blast freezers. I learned that our main hospital buries over 70 people every day after no loved one shows up.

President Dindi: I'm following, Mr Science. But is difficult science. *(Addressing an admin standing by)*. More wine please. This man is saying we have so much meat being wasted, and we could actually clean our towns, market squares, and hospitals, and also more productively sustain our festivals.

Science: You know, dear Leader, even without proper preparation, our ancestors never wasted the bodies of the dead. But these were just bodies of the dead. Imagine bodies of humans properly prepared. We are talking Japanese best beef.

(There is a pause as an admin walks into the meeting and whispers into the ear of President Dindi).

President Dindi: I need to end this meeting now. I will call you back. I have received some intelligence I need to go and attend to. You may all leave now.

(They leave).

President Dindi: *(Speaking to himself, pensively)*

This is how cannibalism became modernised. Living longer makes you see things, and power makes you make difficult decisions. This man of science just turned us into modern cannibals. Although they might not see us, and might not even believe it, we'll be eating people, not like our ancestors, but like the modern people of Europe. *(Laughs mirthlessly)* I am going to allow it, but I will need all the discretion in the world. If these things ever get to the public, this meeting never happened, and I will throw this stupid man of science under the bus. I will burn him alive.

Scene III

It is nighttime. Kiyanna, Nyeko and Zaza, are unusually in the market. They are planning their dirty-people protests against the meat eating.

Kiyanna: It is the final year of these stupid meat celebrations. But I have heard there are no more animals to eat. The farmers have no animals to supply. The cows were eaten. The goats were all eaten. The pigs were all eaten. They ate the calves. Where are they getting the meat from this time? They are importing back what they sold! Idiots.

Zaza: Is this why you called us back. I was getting ready for the night, sister; my man is back from a long journey. And he must be hungry in all ways. And I'm the traditional woman who never wants her man to wait.

Kiyanna: Even my man is home, too, Zaza. But I told him to wait a little longer today. But I am like you, I also never want my man to wait.

Nyeko: I thought the market was on fire. I'm told they burn markets very much in Lilongwe. That small country on the mainland. Thieves interested in stealing prime land simply set it on fire. Why did you ask us to come back?

Zaza: It is about the dirty protest you spoke about last time.

Kiyanna: Yes, you guessed it. The smoke from these meat festivals has to be carried by the winds back to those people eating the meat.

Nyeko: Okay, tell us more about this plan.

Kiyanna: *(Talking in low tone)* Come closer. *(They come closer, behind Zaza's stall).* See, I trained as an engineer, and also used to work as a plumber. I have engineering friends who built the drainage in this town. So, if we carried all this market garbage into the drainage section at Orange Town Roundabout, which is about 1km from here, and we manage to clog those pipes, all the sewage from Orange Neighbourhood will flood Lovington Town, which is the Ministers' Village. I have heard they are organising a big meat festival inside Lovington Town, and that President Dindi is going to be there. He needs to smell the stench of his ministers.

Zaza: Genius. I didn't know you trained as a plumber, though. But how then did you become an engineer.

Kiyanna: Mature-entry exams into the University of Dar es Salaam. Remember the three years I spent in Tanzania? I spent them meaningfully.

Nyeko: So, what is the plan?

Kiyanna: I want you to help me with delivering our weapon... this garbage is our weapon... into the drainage at that exact point at the Orange Town Roundabout. I told the market cleaners today that I would help them drive their garbage van to the dump site tonight. You know they drive past that roundabout. I also have equipment with me, and I know which pipes to open, and where to drop the garbage.

Zaza: But they might see us, and there are cameras at that point.

Kiyanna: I know; wherever the rich live are cameras. That is why I trusted you, Zaza. Didn't you say you trained as an electrician? It is time to put these skills to use. You'll knock out the lights, and also the cameras, and then put them back.

Zaza: I'm a woman, my friend. Climbing poles and disconnecting cameras is something I last did when I was interning. I then came straight to this market.

Nyeko: But the electricity there is on the ground; you'll not be climbing any poles. Then you can return home (*he sneers*).

Kiyanna: The secret to liberty is courage, one man said. We need to fight back. In a small way, it doesn't matter. We need to inconvenience them.

Zaza: But how liberating is just clogging drainage channels and inconveniencing rich people. You should have discussed this with us before. They'll just clean up the next day. It is like showing your privates to a blind person.

Kiyanna: Good thing, these ones aren't blind. And even if they were blind, they smell things. And exactly, they too need to go through our discomfort. It is just this discomfort. Putting a halt to at least one stupid party will be good for all of us. Especially this big one where even the president is attending. It is called, "poor people's resistance".

Zaza: But Kiyanna. This is just wind. Who have you ever inconvenienced with just ugly wind?

Kiyanna: If all of us inconvenienced these idiots, in one way or another, together... Even if it was just undressing for them to see our ugly privates like the mad women of Nairobi, then they would know their leadership is bad and we don't like them.

Zaza: Kiyanna, my privates aren't ugly. Maybe yours. My man paid to see mine. How do I show them to the world as a weapon? You are out of your wits.

Nyeko: But for me I understand the tide. Anything can be a weapon, including our beautiful privates, hihhi. But this is dangerous business. If they get us, President Dindi's hooligans will kill us!

Kiyanna: Again, the secret to liberty is courage. Let's go. Let's go. And that we are women, the less likely that they'll even suspect us. They think women are always in the house cooking and raising babies. We are doing all of them.

Zaza: Nyeko is a man.

Kiyanna: But seems to be the woman instead, more cowardly than all of us! If I were the woman in your house, Nyeko, I would be your husband.

Zaza: The secret to liberty is courage. The secret to liberty is courage. The secret to liberty is courage! Let's go.

Nyeko: Has the van been filled with garbage? Let's move them. It is almost 10 in the night.

Kiyanna: They filled the van, let's go see. We'll deliver the garbage then.

Nyeko: Ah ha, that is why you want me, because I can drive. Hahaha. You woman. This is like a movie; you assigned all of us roles.

Kiyanna: Didn't you say you were at one time a driver for the Ministry of Farming. Let's go then.

(They move to the garbage van, getting ready to move. The curtains fall and the sound of a van driving off is heard in the dark).

Curtain

Scene IV

President Dindi's private residence. The setting is the same as before. But this time, there is also a white man. His name is Dean Doubleday. Doubleday is in his 40s, and despite it being a weekend, he is dressed formally in a suit.

President Dindi: The four of you have been the main brains behind our beloved festivals. We seem to be concluding on a good note, but there is a small problem. You must be aware about it already. Mr Intelligence here tells me we have a shortage again. Also, we need to talk about next weekend; the big festival in Lovington. Intelligence, can you share the news you gathered.

Intelligence: Dear Leader, before I continue, it would be fair to introduce the new person in this meeting. Dr Ocen came with him, and perhaps he could tell us who he is and why he is here. The information I'm about to share is strictly classified.

President Dindi: Science, please introduce your friend; I know why he is here. But others don't.

Science: This is my friend, our friend, Mr Dean Doubleday. Dean is a development expert from the Western world. He is British, but nowadays he lives in America. He has worked with the Euro-American Bank in London. He is now a consultant on poverty and development and works with the international NGO, called the Global End Poverty Organisation, also known as GEPO. Dean and I met in Lilongwe at a conference on poverty. I shared with him how we were dealing with our poverty, and he had more attractive suggestions. When I learned about our condition, I sent him a ticket from Washington, and he has come to help us.

Seer: Thank you. Welcome Mr Doubleday. Did you say double-day, like two days together? Interesting name!

President Dindi: Welcome, our friend. Mr Intelligence, please go ahead.

Intelligence: I can confirm that there aren't any poor people in our country anymore. Through our technique over the last six months, we have cleaned up the country. However, while having zero poor people in any country is good news, it is, however, not so good news for us; it has presented us with another challenge: scarcity of meat for the meat festivals... with just two months to go.

Science: And it is this challenge that Mr Doubleday and I have been speaking about, and so I asked him to come, and we hear from the man himself. (*Trying to be funny*). We kicked his people out, but they never left, did they? We somehow always need them.

Farmer: I'm excited to hear from Mr Doubleday. It seems we actually have the chance to do industrial farming. I am anxious that this helps... I'm anxious this could help us get the meat we need in a matter of weeks. We have committed many crimes already.

President Dindi: Yes, I do recall, Hon. Bbosa, you spoke about industrial farming some time back. Now if this man can help us secure a big loan, we might actually have an overproduction of meat, and finish this festival on a high. We might even extend it for one more bonus year. Mr Doubleday, please talk to us.

Doubleday: Dear Leader, dear ministers, it is my honour to meet you. I have heard about this great country of Middle Oceania, which is very gifted by nature. And I have also heard about your good leadership. Like most of these islands and continents, you are the envy of our world. You feed us and protect our ecosystem. I'm extremely happy to be welcomed here.

Seer: And I heard that our protocol officers were very nice to you, that you plan to return to Europe with a young sumptuous maiden. That must have been an experience, Mr. Doubleday. But why are we poor with all these gifts? (Laughs).

Doubleday (chuckles): Yes. Sometimes us Europeans wish this continent was ours. Maybe one day, we'll share it. Not just the sun, and the waters, but the people, the mothers. Your maidens. Yes, I enjoyed myself, Mr Minister. Thank you.

Seer: Dear Leader, we need to put more money in our Foreign Affairs ministry especially the Protocol Officers. I have travelled to Europe, and Protocol told me the budget was small. We should never be seen squeezing in small bars in the night. I'm warm blooded and not a Muslim. See, white people treat protocol as a real national security issue.

President Dindi: Seer, we have more serious matters at present. Stop this banter. Let's do this next weekend.

Science: Sometimes, I wish this seer didn't come for serious meetings like this one. We are talking about a key security issue, meat scarcity, and he is talking about drinking and pleasure (Exclaims)!

Seer: Mr Doubleday is on a full stomach. He is taking one back to Europe. Coitus is a necessary ingredient in male psyche and work routine – you stupid scientist. Is it not why you move with your second wife on all your trips? (Laughs slyly, looking in the direction of the president). Please your excellence, forgive us, lets continue the serious issues.

President Dindi: You have now heard our expectations. We are rich, but poor. Something I also never understand. But presently, we have our urgent issue. Our country has been looking forward to industrial farming for a long time.

Doubleday: Dear leader, as a development and poverty expert, nowadays, bank loans are slower than snails. Yet you have an urgent problem. I want to suggest we push the loan option slightly ahead in the future. I have some home-grown, interest-free way of revamping meat supplies in the immediate period.

President Dindi: Tell me.

Doubleday: And I would like that this is all confidential. In the immediate period, I want to propose ways of continuing the supply of HUMIT. You cannot be a firefighter, without having the skill of starting a fire. It is easier to manufacture poor humans, than industrially farming pigs or cattle. You cannot be an expert in fighting poverty, without learning the skill of making poverty. I'm confident the poor can be easily manufactured, with modern skills.

(Doubleday pauses, and there is momentary silence in the room).

Seer: Did I hear that right? You want us to create more poor people, after getting rid of poverty? What does this mean Mr Two-days?

Doubleday: Don't get me wrong, Chief Tembo. I'm saying this in response to an immediate demand. You'll remain poor-free. Don't focus on creating poverty; let's focus on meat production for the festivals. We'll have to ensure that supply meets demand. We do not oversupply the market. The poor that are produced ought to be in the quantities the country can consume. We need not disturb the forces of demand and supply.

President Dindi: (*Pensive*) Mr Doubleday, I understand you are responding to our urgent need for more meat. But we also heard you Europeans and Americans reproduce animals really quickly. Why don't we focus on animals... and forget this thing about producing poor people? We did it, but it was not something we really liked doing. You also did it, but abandoned it after some time.

Doubleday: Dear Leader, I also perfectly understand your predicament. But help from our banks will take long and might be not as forthcoming as the next two months, but manufacturing the poor won't take time.

Seer: I really don't like this idea. We survived it with Mr Science here, not anymore.

President Dindi: Okay, let's say for arguments' sake; how can we make poverty in an instant Mr Doubleday... I mean how do we manufacture poor people in an instant?

Doubleday: Some of the averagely non-poor people entirely survive on the environment. Fishing the ocean, and they have kept away from delicious meat... and the festivals entirely. Yet you sacrifice for their sake. They never know what is best for them.

President Dindi: Tell me more. How then do I turn them around?

Doubleday: You need to promote the festivals more and declare the ocean unsafe for the next two years. You might actually invoke the spirits of the Ocean, demanding that fishing is stopped for three months as the gods demand it. The Seer here could be the one to make this announcement. Fishermen have zero saving culture, they'll be impoverished in one week, and you'll have what you need.

Seer: You sound like an expert who has been creating poverty for a long time.

Doubleday: No, Sir. I have been fighting poverty the whole time, but also learned how it is made. The two skills live side-by-side.

Seer: Indeed, you are a poverty expert.

Doubleday: And there is a catch, your Excellency; you stand to benefit individually as well. Europeans and Americans have no fish, and there is high demand for it. As you sustain the meat festivals, you have ready market for those fishes in our land. You will kill many birds with one stone.

(Door swiftly opens. An impatient admin enters and whispers something to the dear Leader).

President Dindi: What...? No way. Who has done it? Please turn on the TV, there is a story....

They turn on the TV in one of the corners of the expansive living room.

Newsreader: ... at this moment, it is difficult to tell what happened, but clearly as you can see the pictures picked this morning, all of Lovington Town is being flooded with sewage. The stench is unbearable. The city engineer we spoke to earlier told us there is one huge sewage line through which all the sewage from Orange Town leaves the area before it pours

into the sea. A lot of market garbage is visible in the flooding. It looks like garbage from the nearby farmers' market, but how did the rubbish get into these closed pipes?

(President Dindi signals to admin to turn off the television).

President Dindi: Intelligence, what does this mean? Is it a climate disaster? The floods from the morning downpour? Were we not scheduled to have our festival in Lovington Town in the next two weeks, and I'm supposed to be there?

Intelligence: I need to run there now. I need to call the Mayor of Lovington, and also the Chair of the market. Dear Leader, allow me to go immediately.

President Dindi: This meeting should end here for now. Mr Doubleday thanks for coming. I will ask Dr Ocen to bring you back sometime. *(Addressing Science).* Dr Ocen, please keep him around, if possible, find him an office. But we need to clean the Ministers' Village urgently.

You can all leave now *(They leave).*

President Dindi *(Laughs mirthlessly, speaking to himself):* Someone is surely messing with me. I know this game. I did these things myself against the past regime. "Bad regimes have to be fought, in whichever way, however, small. They'll adjust or fall completely, if all do something small." That was our slogan. Someone is surely messing with me. But these meat festivals will continue, whether they want it or not.

END.