

An excerpt of:

The IVth Interrogation

A play by Zaza Muchemwa

### Synopsis

The 100th Anniversary Celebrations for the establishment of the Union will be held in four weeks time. This important occasion is marred by the possibility of an attack by the Usiku Initiative, a rogue group whose action is to destabilise the Union through a display of exaggerated spectacle and uncontrolled laughter – unmitigated human feeling. Within Unit A, there have been discrepancies in how agents have been dealing with captives from the Usiku Initiative. The Central Unit for the Establishment and Maintenance of Order, Morality and Guided Commercial Returns is concerned and putting measures in place to discipline Unit A. Norest, an associate working at Unit A, fights to prove that she is a dedicated worker and loyal member of the Union, as she races against time to find out whether a returning Union citizen, Kundai Anderson’s business idea does not threaten the Union’s stability.

**Place** In an office somewhere in the Union

**Time** In the not too distant future

### **List of Characters**

**Norest** - A dedicated Union worker stationed at Unit A. She is an associate of Inspector Chikamu who runs one of the interrogation rooms for those who are said to pose an imminent threat to the Union.

**Inspector Chikamu** - Head of unit A, a fact-finding and information gathering cluster that reports to the Central Unit for the Establishment and Maintenance of Order, Morality and Guided Commercial Returns in the Union.

**Kundai Anderson** - A woman her late 20s, a divorcée with one child.

**Head Sekai** - A woman in her early 50s, a detainee in Unit A. Mother to one child, Timoti, who was brought in and died in Unit A after his mother was taken to Cell D where they keep the most dangerous elements identified in the Union. Sekai is married to Gabriel.

**Jailer** - The Associate downstairs keeping and monitoring detainees sent from Upstairs.

\*The Actor playing Inspector Chikamu should play Jailer and the Actor playing Norest must play Head Sekai

**Scene 1 Prologue**

Lights come up dimly on a sparsely furnished room. A desk, on it a tray. Crudely written on separate corners of the tray, IN and OUT.

*Norest stands beside one of the chairs at attention, isolated, in a spotlight.*

**Norest:** What are our obligations? To find the truth. Nothing but the truth no matter what. What is our duty? To be the one, the beginning and the end of all search for truth. State our motto. We rely not on our minds nor on our beliefs but in our Strength and honour.

At ease soldiers of the union,

We are the truth!

**Scene 1**

Lights up. A woman, Inspector Chikamu, dressed in a neat, expensive dark suit enters holding a red dossier.

*She drops the dossier onto the desk.*

**Inspector Chikamu:** Are you ready?

**Norest:** Yes, ma'am!

**Inspector Chikamu:** Is the captive in?

**Norest:** Yes. She's waiting outside.

**Inspector:** Good. We need to solve this quickly. The honour of the Union is at stake. Your life in the Union is at stake.

**Norest:** I will do my best.

**Inspector Chikamu:** You better get this one right because your security level clearance is under question.

*Pause*

**Norest:** I will do whatever it takes.

*Norest sits on one of the chairs. She takes the dossier and opens it. Inspector Chikamu opens the door. Kundai enters.*

**Inspector Chikamu:** Great. I will leave you to it then.

*Inspector Chikamu exits. A clock on the wall strikes Midnight. Kundai goes to sit.*

**Norest:** I will tell you when to sit. Do you know why you are here?

**Kundai:** You want to know why I am here?

**Norest:** Do you know why you are here?

**Kundai:** You want *me* to tell you why I am here?

**Norest:** Why are you here? Do you know?

**Kundai:** Yes. Yes I do.

**Norest:** Hmmnn.

*Norest pauses then makes notations in the dossier vigorously.*

**Kundai:** Is this not the final stage of my application? I was told to come here, office 8, number 8; this is the place, yes?

**Norest:** Here? You were told to come here?

**Kundai:** I was referred to this office. I have seen four officials each asking me different questions, processing my papers. Then I was told to come to this room ... to go down a corridor until I found room 8. It's a maze. Corridors, go east, go west, this one intersects with that ...

There are no labels, no markers. But I found it and I've got to tell you, it was a trial. Anyone with less patience and guts wouldn't be standing before you now.

*Norest looks up at Kundai then back to the dossier. She continues to write.*

**Kundai:** I'm sorry, but is this the right office?

**Norest:** What do you mean by 'right office'?

**Kundai:** The right place for me to get the stamp. That is all that is left for my land application permit, right?

**Norest:** Hmmn. And you are applying for a land permit for what again?

**Kundai:** Oh. OK. I feel like there is some kind of misunderstanding. You see, I'm trying to get a permit to use a lovely piece of land to build a one of a kind ...

**Norest:** There's no misunderstanding. Look at me, do I make mistakes?

**Kundai:** No-I-

**Norest:** Then let us proceed.

**Kundai:** Proceed with what exactly?

**Norest:** What do you want to use the land for?

**Kundai:** I've answered this question before - I am applying to the Federal Commission for Entrepreneurial Advancement to get a piece of land to build a spa. So far all the officers I've seen, seem to think my application is sound. All that is left is the stamp of approval, which I'm hoping you will give.

**Norest:** Hmmn. Tell me about this spa.

**Kundai:** On the piece of land, stated in the documents, I'm going to build a place where people can come to rest and reflect – a spa.

**Norest:** Why do you think people need to rest and relax?

**Kundai:** I just think that people need to rest from time to time. Hopefully my spa can offer that service.

*Norest writes in the dossier vigorously again.*

**Norest:** How long have you been out of the Union?

**Kundai:** What bearing will it have on my application?

**Norest:** Is that where you developed your idea? Out of the Union? And now you want to bring this idea here?

*Pause*

**Kundai:** I left the Union to start again, to make some money. Then I came back. ... I came back (she speaks with emphasis on the last three words).

**Norest:** So you have come back to cause trouble for the Union?

**Kundai:** I'm sorry there must be a mistake. Office 8, number 8, is this the place?

**Norest:** I will ask the questions. You answer me with truth, no in-betweens. Have you come back to become a problem for the Union?

**Kundai:** No. Hopefully my dream will help the Union.

**Norest:** Then why are you trying to build a spa, a spa that will encourage the people to rest and relax when our mandate is to *work*? Right now, all hands should be *working* towards maintaining the glory of the Union and you want them to reflect? Reflect on what? The state of affairs? You want our valued labour force to stop working?

*Inspector Chikamu enters carrying a large red file.*

*Pause*

**Inspector Chikamu:** Are we making any progress?

**Kundai:** Please ma'am, maybe you can help me. I came here to process a land permit to build a spa. I don't seem to be getting anywhere with her. (She nods her head in the direction of Norest.) Can you give me the stamp of approval?

**Inspector Chikamu:** Clearly, there is no progress. Associate Norest, come here.

*Norest stands and goes to Inspector Chikamu. Kundai takes this opportunity to look around the room and glance at the papers on the desk.*

**Inspector Chikamu:** I went to the Central Unit and they were asking about progress.

**Norest:** I'm trying to get to the bottom of it.

**Inspector Chikamu:** You've not gotten anywhere because you're too soft.

**Norest:** You need to let me do my job. We have different styles, ma'am.

**Inspector Chikamu:** Your style has not been effective of late. It didn't work with Thomas Bhuka. You were too lenient. You got nothing out of him.

**Norest:** That was not my fault. I ...

**Inspector Chikamu:** Thomas Bhuka disappeared and now the Central Unit for the Establishment and Maintenance of Order, Morality and Guided Commercial Returns has put this unit, Unit A, under suspicion. They say it was an inside job. Now, they need to prove we're all working for the glory of our Union.

*Pause*

**Inspector Chikamu:** She is guilty. Do your job.

**Norest:** My job is to find the truth and find out who is guilty or not.

**Inspector Chikamu:** Get the confession.

**Norest:** (Turns to Kundai and motions her to sit) Tell me about this spa. What is your plan?

**Kundai:** Look, I didn't know it is a problem to get our people to rest and reflect. I just thought I would be providing a much-needed service.

**Inspector Chikamu:** Your name is Kundai Anderson, yes? Your village is in the Buffalo Mountains. You have five siblings; one brother and you are the youngest of four girls. You have had three pets in your life. Two were family pets, one a dog that was hit by a truck when you were seven years old. Your blood type is AB and despite that you never needed to have any genetic weaknesses wiped out of you as a child. Your favourite food used to be fried plantains before an unfortunate incident with the fryer at your grandmother's switched you over to steamed beans. Need I tell you what you ate last night?

**Kundai:** How do you know so much about me? I've done nothing wrong, I swear. I'm just trying to build a spa. It is a perfectly innocent dream, really.

**Norest:** Is it innocent, really?

**Kundai:** Yes. It is. One thing I did not mention, er um, it is not aimed at locals only. B-but there is also a component where we offer the same kind of services to foreigners-Here, let me show you.

*Kundai pulls out a brochure from her handbag and gives it to Norest.*

**Inspector Chikamu:** Foreigners? What foreigners?

**Kundai:** er-foreigners- to enrich the economy of the Union. And these are the services for the locals. (Pulls out another brochure) They are meant to come to the spa for a whole week.

**Norest:** A week, a whole week?

**Kundai:** Studies have shown that people work better when they have time to rest. They are more effective workers that way. This will be offered only to those who can afford it, as a reward for good work. (nods vigorously)

**Norest:** Are you saying that the corporate authorities do not know what they're doing?

**Kundai:** I wouldn't dare tell anyone what they should do, let alone our esteemed corporate authority. Is that who you answer to? The Multi-National Global Corporate Council?

**Inspector Chikamu:** What were you saying about the foreigners?

**Kundai:** The foreigners will come in and be part of our program. This will include taking part in activities around the countryside, which is where the spa will be as you can see.

**Inspector Chikamu:** So you want to provide a hide-out for foreigners who will be gathering information about our Union and fabricating and peddling tales about the incompetence of the labour force who are so stressed out they need to go to a spa?!

**Kundai:** No. They will meet locals, go on safaris and attend cultural events. They will get a dose of our culture, our way of life and this will be good for the Union. They will see us in all our glory.

**Inspector Chikamu:** We don't need foreigners messing up the purity of our culture.

**Kundai:** But this spa will bring money to the Union by attracting foreign investment which will be good for Union business.

**Norest:** We need rigour. We need discipline in the work force. The spa promotes leisure. It is bad for business.

**Inspector Chikamu:** You are trying to discredit us by suggesting that workers are stressed and need rest.

*Norest looks at Inspector Chikamu who nods her head.*

**Norest:** Are you part of the Usiku Initiative?

**Kundai:** What is the Usiku Initiative? Look I don't know a thing you are talking about. Who are you people?

**Norest:** Did the Usiku Initiative tell you to build a spa?

**Kundai:** Like I told you. I came to process my application for a land permit. I am ready to pay for the stamp of approval right now.

**Inspector Chikamu:** If you get the permit, it will be in the foreign newspapers and all over the blasted Social Medias. The headline will be, "Woman given a permit by the Federal Commission for Entrepreneurial Advancement to build spa! Clearly there is something wrong with the Union and they have failed to deal with it." You are trying to embarrass us.

**Norest:** These are the long-term plans of the Usiku initiative. They get people to laugh, dance and rest. They make people happy and relaxed. A happy worker is hard to please, harder to control.

**Kundai:** Clearly, I have made a mistake. I have come to the wrong place. All you need to do is point me in the right direction and I will be on my way.

**Norest:** (scoffs) All we need to do is... (laughs) can you believe this Inspector?

**Inspector Chikamu:** We have not seen one like her in the past 4 years.

**Norest:** 4 years 11 months to be precise.

*Inspector Chikamu looks at Norest in surprise.*

**Inspector Chikamu:** Wonder what would happen if they were to meet.

**Norest:** We could certainly benefit from such an interaction.

**Inspector Chikamu:** Wherever we go with this, she should meet the old woman.

**Norest:** The old woman can get her to reveal more.

**Kundai:** I do not need to meet your old woman!

**Norest:** Then tell us about the Usiku Initiative. You came back to the Union to work for them, did you not?

**Kundai:** I worked very hard to raise some capital to build my dream resort. A place where people can-

**Inspector Chikamu:** Take over the Union. First by spreading malcontent, disillusioning people, making them think that there is something wrong with the Union when there isn't. They will dismantle all the great tenets of our Global Corporate power. Go to the top of the mountain and shout fabrications of what is wrong with our Multi- National Business Practises. Take over first the minds of the people, then their hearts, the rest will fall into place.

**Kundai:** Can I call someone?

**Inspector Chikamu:** Why worry? You are in good hands. Is she not, Norest?

**Norest:** Yes, ma'am! (turns to Kundai) Just tell us all you know and then you can call someone.

**Kundai:** Unless I am under arrest, you cannot hold me.

**Norest:** Who says we are holding you? Are we holding her, Inspector?

**Inspector Chikamu:** No. We are just having a friendly chat. That is all.

**Norest:** Unless you don't want to be our friend. Then we can be really *really* nasty.

**Kundai:** If I have committed a crime, what am I being charged with?

**Norest:** We are building a case.

**Inspector Chikamu:** In this case it is a series of crimes you are planning to commit in the future.

**Norest:** Suspicion of conspiracy to commit a crime- a high level crime.

**Inspector Chikamu:** At this stage only a confession will do.

**Kundai:** Confessing to what? A conspiracy to commit a crime that I have not committed? You think that I AM involved in some hare-brained scheme to destabilise the Union?

**Inspector Chikamu:** As hare brained as that idea of yours to build a spa.

**Norest:** Yes. Why not a morals school for the Union's children or a wellness clinic for those who have strayed from their Union ways? These are the things our corporate authorities would gladly support. Why not these, hmmm?

**Kundai:** Yes, the corporate authorities have supported such initiatives in the past. But perhaps we have had enough schools and clinics.

**Norest:** Enough, you think we have all done enough for the survival of the Union's children?

**Inspector Chikamu:** What value is a spa going to give to our work force?

**Kundai:** We could all benefit from the—I have got nothing else to say.

**Inspector Chikamu:** You have to try harder than that.

**Kundai:** I guess I shall have to keep quiet then.

**Inspector Chikamu:** Now listen here, Mrs Anderson. We know you were married to a foreigner.

**Kundai:** It's Miss. I am no longer married.

**Inspector Chikamu:** Don't interrupt me. You will speak when we tell you to. And you will keep quiet when we tell you to.

**Kundai:** I don't know what you want from me.

**Inspector Chikamu:** Say your spa is part of the Usiku Initiative's plan to destabilise the Union's celebrations. Say it or Higher Powers help me.

*Kundai bows her head in surrender and holds her head in her hands. She starts to cry.*

**Inspector Chikamu:** Typical. You think your crocodile tears will save you? Nothing but the truth will save you, right Norest?

**Kundai:** I am not crying.

**Inspector Chikamu:** After this you will cry. You will cry for mother, for Union, for everything but no one will hear you because in here...only your silence will condemn you.

**Norest:** It is getting late. We will have to continue this tomorrow morning.

*Inspector Chikamu looks at Norest and starts laughing.*

**Kundai:** Look, I have a young child and she needs me. She will be left alone. She is only five years old.

**Norest:** Where is your mother? She can take care of your child.

**Kundai:** I don't know.

**Inspector Chikamu:** You don't know?

**Kundai:** We no longer speak.

**Inspector Chikamu:** You don't speak to your own mother? Mothers are the heart of the Union. The Union lays its head on the bosom of the mother.

**Kundai:** (looks at Inspector) Surely, (turns to Norest) you must know that a child needs its mother. Let me go to my child.

**Norest:** You don't seem to need your mother. Maybe your child does not need you.

**Kundai:** She is just a child. What will she do without me?

**Norest:** Yes, a child needs her mother but not one who is a traitor.

*Pause*

**Norest:** (motions to Kundai) To your overnight accommodations, please.

**Kundai:** I am not going anywhere else except the way I came in.

**Inspector Chikamu:** We can take that route too, any route you want. But just so you know, you will not see the exit.

*Norest gathers up the files and sets them aside.*

**Norest:** Step this way and do it in an orderly fashion (Kundai remains seated),

**Inspector Chikamu:**-or else I will use force.

*Kundai stands. She steps forward. Lights shift and isolate Kundai in a spotlight.*

## **Scene 2 Prologue**

*Over the course of this monologue Norest removes articles of clothing and transforms into Head Sekai.*

**Kundai:**

How does conscience die?

Mine died in four stages.

My mother was a woman of courage.

She walked tall bowed by no shame not even the hard work she did to put food on our table.

She was a good worker.

I loved her from the moment I came into this world.

My world was her and only her.

Playing under her skirts, especially the long flowing blue one, I would feel loved and safe.

I would call out and almost tear her skirt from her as I danced in the light.

Through the darkened folds of the blue cloth, she would let me see the people I would meet, the places I would go and the great things I would do. I knew I would do it all because my mother would whisper, "You can do it. You will do it." Everything I did would fulfil the love she had for me.

I consumed the world.

I took on the world.

Then the disappointment kicked in.

The light that shined in her eyes dulled.

The unconditional love became conditional.

She saw it in my eyes.

I had joined those with the power to change the world and take control of it.

She warned me;

This will consume you,

This will take your heart,

This will cripple your imagination and mutilate your sensibilities,

but I didn't listen.

She saw it in my eyes,

The damage the world was doing to my heart.

We never spoke again,

We never spoke again.