

ACT THREE  
THE COURT.



The stage is a Court as in Act I Scene (1), except that a high grille, occupying upstage centre, shuts off the players from the audience. In this grille are two gates. On top of the dais is the Principal's table and chair, and on the table is the Punishment Book. Upstage right is the witness box, and upstage left is the prisoner's dock.

The chorus and the REFORMATORY BOYS (but not WALTER, SPIKE, HA'PENNY, SPONONO and HIS ATTENDANT) are placed as in Act I Scene (1).

But the costumes are quite different. With the exception of JOHANNES MOFOKING, all are in tribal costumes, very colourful. Two are dressed as WARRIORS; they will later stand, one on each side of the witness box.

(When the Act begins, the DRUMS play and the CHORUS sing NGEKE NGIYE KWAZULU. JOHANNES opens the WARRIORS' DANCE as before. When the CHORUS breaks into INYANDA, SPONONO and ATTENDANT enter from stage R. SPONONO is wearing a robe and a circlet far more magnificent than those of Act One. Underneath the robe he is still wearing his Khaki shirt and Khaki long trousers. He is greeted with great enthusiasm and cries of "SPONONO". He begins to dance the twist with one of the girls from the CHORUS. Then imperiously he stops the singing and dancing. The IMBONGI calls out praises, which the crowd approve. He ascends the dais and on his left stands his CHIEF COUNCILLOR, with a ceremonial stick. SPONONO raises his hand for silence. He sits.)

SPONONO

What is the charge?

CHIEF COUNCILLOR

Desertion, meneer.

(It is clear that this is a grave charge. Many groan).

SPONONO

Bring him in.

(At one end of the grille appears the PRINCIPAL and TWO MORE WARRIORS. We see that the PRINCIPAL is the prisoner. There is a huzz of excitement in the Court. The WARRIORS unlock the further gate, all go through, and the gate is locked. The nearer gate is unlocked, all go through, and the gate is locked. The WARRIORS escort the PRINCIPAL to the dock, and stand, one on each side. The high grille is removed.)

SPONONO

(gravely)

You are charged with desertion. You are charged with having deserted your duty. You are charged also with having deserted the teaching of your own religion. There cannot be a greater offence. But you can defend yourself. You can ask any questions. You can call any witness you like.

PRINCIPAL

I understand.

SPONONO

When a man is fighting for his life, he may kill. Even if he does not kill, he may inflict wounds.

PRINCIPAL

I understand.

SPONONO

What do you plead. Guilty or not guilty?

PRINCIPAL

I plead not guilty.

CHIEF COUNCILLOR

Bring JOHANNES MOFOKING!

(JOHANNES, who has been taking part in the dance, goes to the Witness Box.)

SPONONO

JOHANNES, you have not stolen again?

JOHANNES

No Meneer.

SPONONO

Your head JOHANNES - does it still turn?

JOHANNES

No meneer.

(triumphantly)

It doesn't turn any more. Sometimes it goes klop, klop, klop, but it doesn't turn.

SPONONO

Why didn't you steal again, Johannes? Was it because you were forgiven?

JOHANNES

Yes, meneer.

SPONONO

Who forgave you?

JOHANNES

SPONONO!

(There is a great wave of commendation in the Court).

IMBONGI

(rises and calls out praises. There is a buzz of approval. JOHANNES leaves the Court smiling. SPONONO raises his hand. All are silent. IMBONGI sits).

CHIEF COUNCILLOR

Call the small one.

(CHORUS sings THE LAMENT.)

(HA'PENNY enters very shyly from Stage R. ATTENDANT leads him to the Witness Box. There is a murmur of excitement in the Court. SPONONO'S face lights up with pleasure at the sight of the small boy. HA'PENNY goes into the box, but he cannot be seen. A stool is brought for him to stand on. The CHORUS stops. SPONONO comes down to the witness box).

SPONONO

What's your name?

HA'PENNY

(Just audible. His speech is always just audible)

Ha'penny, meneer.

SPONONO

What's your other name?

(no reply)

Have you any family?

(no reply)

Didn't you have Mrs. Maarman? And Richard and Dickie and Anna and Mina?

(no reply)

In your thoughts?

HA'PENNY

(he smiles)

Yes, meneer.

SPONONO

And you played with them in your thoughts?

HA'PENNY

Yes, Meneer.

SPONONO

And you got letters in your thoughts?

HA'PENNY

Yes, Meneer.

SPONONO

(His voice shakes the court)

And this man said to you, show me one of the letters that you get in your thoughts.

HA'PENNY

(Nodding, but not audible. The question, and the loudness of SPONONO's voice, have frightened him).

Yes.

SPONONO

And you could not?

HA'PENNY

Yes.

SPONONO

And you were afraid that if you couldn't, your thoughts would die?

HA'PENNY

Yes.

SPONONO

(Moderating his voice a little)

And you were afraid.... that if your thoughts died... then you would.....

PRINCIPAL

(Thundering)

In God's name, what are you trying to do? What are you trying to prove? Must the child go through all this again? Didn't you call yourself the protector of the small ones? Must he go through this agony again?

SPONONO

(Swiftly and angrily)

Who made the agony?

PRINCIPAL

I did it to save him from a worse one. I didn't want him to back there and be rejected.

SPONONO

Then why didn't you let me go and see Mrs. Maarman? Were you afraid I might do what you and MABASO couldn't do?

PRINCIPAL

I wasn't afraid. I believed you couldn't do it. So I decided to break his fantasy.

SPONONO

And you broke his heart as well.

PRINCIPAL

I wanted him to face reality.

SPONONO

Keep your big words. Wer'e talking about deeds here.

PRINCIPAL

You're the last man to talk about deeds. Call the Two Visitors.

SPONONO

(In anger, and without thought)

All right, call them.

CHIEF COUNCILLOR

(Rising)

Bring the Two Visitors.

(SPONONO returns to the Bench. He sits).

SPONONO

Ha'penny, you can go now. But wait for me outside.

(Ha'penny leaves box and crosses to stage centre where he is surrounded by chorus and others, who call out many things to him. Then the CHORUS sings CHU CHU, and all join in the TRAIN DANCE. When it is over HA'PENNY goes off Stage L. By this time MR AND MRS. MAKATINI are in the box. They are awed by the Court as they were by the reformatory.)

PRINCIPAL

MRS. MAKATINI, you remember Christmas Eve in the Visitor's Room?

MRS. MAKATINI

I'll never forget it, Meneer.

PRINCIPAL

You remember the first boy, the nice one, who said he would find your son Henry?

MRS. MAKATINI

Yes, I remember him.

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PRINCIPAL

And you remember the second boy, the one who knocked you both over and took your money!

MRS. MAKATINI

Yes.

PRINCIPAL

Do you remember him, Mr. Makatini?

MR. MAKATINI

Meneer - well you see -

(he laughs his loud inappropriate laugh)

I was not remembering very well.

(as once before, he looks as though he has made a fool of himself).

PRINCIPAL

But do you remember that the nice boy and the bad boy were proved to be the same?

MR. MAKATINI

Yes, I remember that.

PRINCIPAL

Do you remember his name?

MRS. MAKATINI

His name was SPONONO!

(The IMBONGI has been drowsing, but he gets his cue, and he stands up and begins his praises. He ceases when he sees the disapproving looks of all. SPONONO looks down at his papers).

PRINCIPAL

Mrs. Makatini, when he took your money, did you cry out?

MRS. MAKATINI

Yes, I cried out, please don't take our money, that's our Christmas, for ourselves and our family.

PRINCIPAL

And when he heard you cry, did he show mercy?

MR. MAKATINI

No, Meneer. He said, to hell with your Christmas.

SPONONO

(standing)

But in spite of all this you were willing to forgive him?

MRS. MAKATINI

Yes.

SPONONO

Then why was he not forgiven?

MRS. MAKATINI

The Principal would not forgive him.

SPONONO

What did the Principal say?

MR. MAKATINI

Judge.... well you see....  
(he laughs his nervous laugh)  
I was not remembering well.

MRS. MAKATINI

(thinking hard)  
Something....  
(she gets it)  
Something about the.....con.....quince.....conquincences.

SPONONO

That the boy must bear the consequences of his act?

MRS. MAKATINI

Yes. Yes that was it.

SPONONO

Why did you want to forgive him?  
(but she does not know)  
Was it not, Mrs. Makatini, because you hoped that if you forgave him,  
that the bad boy would grow more and more like the good one, until the  
only one was the good one after all?

MRS. MAKATINI

(with admiration)  
Yes, that is what I thought.

SPONONO

You're a wise woman, Mrs. Makatini.  
(Mrs. Makatini is delighted)

MRS. MAKATINI

(earnestly)  
Judge....Judge, what became of the second boy?

SPONONO

What became of the second boy?  
(the question is for SPONONO quite devastating.  
His thoughts leave the Court and go back to  
ELIZABETH and Victoriatown. The PRINCIPAL cannot  
take his eyes off SPONONO. Perhaps he alone  
understands what is happening up there on the Bench.  
But even if the others do not, they watch SPONONO  
and are silent. The IMBONGI is watchful; he feels  
he ought to be doing something, but he does not  
know what it is. SPONONO sits, his thoughts still  
elsewhere).

CHIEF COUNCILLOR

(quietly to the Two Visitors)  
You may go.  
(Mrs. MAKATINI smiles and bows to SPONONO but he  
does not see her. Both MR AND MRS. MAKATINI  
say goodbye to the PRINCIPAL).

Bring SPIKE MOLETSANE.  
(SPIKE saunters in from Stage R, as gaily dressed  
as ever. He takes his place confidently in the  
box. SPONONO recovers as he sees SPIKE, and he  
looks at him with affection).

SPONONO

(intimately as he comes down from the dais).  
How are you, SPIKE?

SPIKE

Well, Meneer.

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SPIKE

It's C.K. (they laugh) But it's quiet. Too quiet! (they laugh)  
Sometimes I wish I was back in Victoriatown.

(they laugh)

Stealing a pie from Old Nick's car. Me at the front and you at the  
back. Then off you'd go down the street, with old Nick shouting  
and waving his hands -

(SPIKE acts the part)

Sponono, jou klein boggertjie, wag totdat ek jou vang, dan sny ek  
jou keel af met my groot execution mes.

(they laugh and they laugh. Some say execution mes.)

Tell me, how is ELIZABETH?

(The laughter stops dead. SPONONO retreats from SPIKE)

Tell me, Spononc, how is Elizabeth?

(SPONONO pulls himself together. He puts on his  
circlet. He turns and goes back to his seat on  
the dais. But when he sits down, he turns his  
back on the court. SPIKE watches bewildered.  
Then he goes from one to the other, asking wildly,  
How is Elizabeth? Finally he runs up the steps of  
the dais).

SPIKE

Sponono, what happened to Elizabeth?

SPONONO

(thundering, but still keeping his back turned)

You are not here to ask questions, but to answer them.

(All SPIKE'S gaiety is gone. Humiliated, he  
comes down the steps. He turns once again to  
SPONONO).

You have shamed this Court. You may go.

(SPIKE descends, not knowing what to do. Then  
he goes to the PRINCIPAL).

SPIKE

Meneer, what happened to Elizabeth?

(PRINCIPAL looks at SPONONO, but SPONONO will  
not look at him)

PRINCIPAL

Spike.....

SPONONO

(thundering)

Leave the Court.

(Two WARRIORS come, and SPIKE leaves the Court  
between them. CHORUS sings, COME WALK WITH ME.  
In his rage, SPONONO leaves the Bench again and  
comes to the Prosecutor's table).

You are a Christian?

PRINCIPAL

Yes.

SPONONO

And your first duty is to obey the law of love?

PRINCIPAL

Yes.

SPONONO

Always?

PRINCIPAL

Yes.

SPONONO

But you broke a small boy's heart?  
(no reply)  
You taught your boys to obey the law?

PRINCIPAL

Yes.

SPONONO

Always?

PRINCIPAL

Yes.

SPONONO

So you let a young man be killed!  
(no reply)  
Did you ever think that a man might do wrong, and that there might be only one consequence of his act, and that was to be forgiven?

PRINCIPAL

Yes.

SPONONO

Even to seventy times seven?

PRINCIPAL

Yes.

SPONONO

But you never forgave like that. You said you forgave me but I must bear the consequences of my act.

PRINCIPAL

I did. It was the only kind of forgiveness for you. Without consequences you would have promised anything. You would have promised.....

SPONONO

(with anger and fear)  
Silence!  
(he speaks theatrically to the Court)  
That's the kind of man he was. He was appointed to be the father of us all. But if we asked for bread, he'd give us a stone.  
(a brilliant idea occurs to him and he says triumphantly)  
If we asked for a knife, he'd give us a stick.  
(he continues as before)  
If we asked him for fish, he'd give us a scorpion.

PRINCIPAL

(with asperity)  
It was a serpent, not a scorpion.

SPONONO

You see, he knows the words. It was the meanings he didn't know. He believed we must bear the consequences of our acts. An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.

PRINCIPAL

I did not.

SPONONC

You did. Call Walter.

(He goes back to the dais. The IMBONGI calls his praise. When he is seated, he signs for the praises to end).

CHIEF COUNCILLOR

Call WALTER MASINGA!

(He sits. WALTER enters. He takes his place in the witness box. He looks round the Court with concealed contempt. He does not even take off his cap).

SPONONO

(He behaves ambivalently towards WALTER. He hates him, but still more does he wish to humiliate the PRINCIPAL)

When you were at the school, you fought with another boy, and you struck him in the eye with your belt?

WALTER

Yes.

SPONONO

Were you punished?

WALTER

No.

SPONONC

(angrily)

When you speak to me, you will say, Yes, meneer, No, meneer. Do you understand?

WALTER

Yes.....Meneer.

SPONONC

Were you completely forgiven, with no punishment, no consequences?

WALTER

Yes, meneer.

SPONONO

Was your life changed by this forgiveness?

WALTER

(coolly calculating)

Yes, Meneer.

SPONONO

You never used your belt again?

WALTER

No.

(he conceals his insolence)

You see, I was changed, Meneer.

SPONONO

Who forgave you?

WALTER

It was Sponono.

(there is a wave of commendation. The IMBONGI

shouts praises. All rise. WALTER looks on inscrutably. SPONONO is pleased. He holds up his hand for silence. All sit).

SPONONO

Who killed Spike Moletsane?

WALTER

I don't know.....Meneer.

SPONONO

Do you think Sponono killed him?

WALTER

No, Meneer.

PRINCIPAL

Are you going to let him lie? Didn't he say you had a reason for killing Spike?

SPONONO

(to WALTER)

Did you say I had a reason?

WALTER

No, Meneer.

PRINCIPAL

(to WALTER)

Didn't you bring Spike a message from George? That he must go back to the gang?

WALTER

(to Sponono)

No, Meneer.

PRINCIPAL

(to Sponono)

Don't you want to find out who killed him?

SPONONO

You also killed him. You would not let him carry a knife.  
(the CHIEF COUNCILLOR has risen and is standing behind SPONONO. He whispers something to him. All the players gather round SPONONO. SPONONO is pleased with what he hears. He nods vigorously. All the company cries out, YES. They return to their places. IMBONGI brings a stand to upstage centre. CHIEF COUNCILLOR comes down to PRINCIPAL. While he is coming down, a COURT ATTENDANT brings a pot of boiling water and places it on the stand.)

CHIEF COUNCILLOR

(who has come down to the dock)

Do you know the crdeal of the water?

(A DIVINER in appropriate dress comes into the cast from the stage right)

Is everything ready?

INSANGOMA

Everything is ready.

(off stage right there is great excitement,

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(the beating of drums, the ululation of women. The ISANGOMA'S ATTENDANTS enter, carrying the pot of boiling water. They place it between the dock and the witness box. There is singing and dancing. Then the ISANGOMA calls for silence. The CHIEF COUNCILLOR comes down and goes to the PRINCIPAL).

PRINCIPAL

(looking at SPONONO)

Yes, I know it.

CHIEF COUNCILLOR

You will put your hand into the boiling pot, and bring out the pebbles for me. If you are innocent, you will come to no harm. If you are guilty.....

(He calls)

SANGOMA.

(Drums usher in ISANGOMA. ISANGOMA starts dancing and singing ABAGULAYO. Company forms a semi-circle with ISANGOMA at centre. They are kneeling and clapping as she sings. She goes through the preliminaries of sounding out. They all show fear)

ISANGOMA

Who is the first?

(All look to SPONONO for his decision. Dramatically he stands)

SPONONO

I am the first.

(Many try to expostulate with him, but he silences them. He comes down and stands by the dock. He speaks to the PRINCIPAL)

Now you will see.

(He goes to stand by the boiling pot, and the ISANGOMA dances around him. He stands proudly. When she is finished, he bares his right arm. He gives a last look at the PRINCIPAL. He puts his right arm into the pot. He keeps it there longer than he need. He brings out the pebbles and gives them to the CHIEF COUNCILLOR who receives them deferentially. He shows his arm which is unscathed. His performance is greeted by great excitement. The IMBONGI calls out new praises. SPONONO goes to the dock and talks to the PRINCIPAL).

(pulling down his sleeve)

Do you believe it now.

Would you like to be excused? Shall I tell the Court you have asked to be excused?

PRINCIPAL

(curtly)

No.

(He leaves the dock and goes to the ordeal. ISANGOMA dances around him. When she is finished he puts his arm into the pot. The PRINCIPAL keeps his arm there almost as long as SPONONO kept his. Then he brings out the pebbles and gives them to the CHIEF COUNCILLOR. The IMBONGI begins to praise the PRINCIPAL, crowd cheer. SPONONO silences them. The PRINCIPAL examines his arm critically, almost as though he finds the result rather surprising. He makes a little gesture which might say, Well, what do you make of that? He pulls down his sleeve and goes back to the dock, giving SPONONO a quizzical glance as he passes. SPONONO cannot conceal his displeasure. He climbs back to the bench. SALTER clings fast to the railings of the witness box. He has watched the ordeals with dread.)

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CHIEF COUNCILLOR

Walter Masingal

(ISANGOMA goes to the dock, and by dancing and gestures lures WALTER to the ordeal. He is terrified, but she more or less hypnotises him. He goes to the pot and she performs her dance. When she is finished he lifts the lid of the pot. Suddenly he hurls it down and breaks away to stage R. But as he tries to break through the semi-circle, he is caught by two of the WARRIORS. WALTER digs in his heels, but they drag him back to the pot, while he shouts out prayers and curses. At the pot the WARRIORS relax, and WALTER breaks again, and runs up the steps to the Judge's seat. The crowd falls silent. )

WALTER

Save me, meneer! Save me!  
(he throws himself down before the Bench and SPONONO stands up)

SPONONO

(with aversion)  
Don't touch me!  
So you killed him?

WALTER

It was George, Meneer!

SPONONO

It was five of you.  
(no reply)  
So you went out that night to Victoriatown?

WALTER

Yes, Meneer. It was George.....

SPONONO

Silence! So you used the secret door?

WALTER

Yes, Meneer.

SPONONO

And five of you, five of you, waited for him. Five of you killed the best friend of all my time. Five of you put your knives into his back.  
(he is overcome by emotion, and by his memory of SPIKE)  
Have you anything to say before I sentence you?

WALTER

(subjectly takes off his cap)  
Yes, Meneer. It was George, Meneer. He made me go. He told me if I did not go, they would get me too.  
(He tries to come nearer to SPONONO, because the WARRIORS are coming nearer to him. They seize him).  
Don't let them take me, meneer. Please don't let them take me.  
Save me meneer.  
(They take WALTER down but he breaks away again, and climbs the steps)

SPONONO

(with extreme aversion)  
Don't touch me.

WALTER

(he has been studying SPONONO'S face for a sign.  
He ceases whining and adopts a pious tone).  
Can't you forgive me, Meneer?  
Like you forgave me before, Meneer?  
The time that I changed, Meneer?

SPONONO

The time you changed so deeply?

WALTER

Yes, Meneer.

SPONONO

(he is considering deeply. His emotions are  
again in conflict. Hatred of WALTER and the  
desire to humiliate the PRINCIPAL. He looks  
directly at the PRINCIPAL. He takes up the  
Punishment Book. He speaks to WALTER.)  
You have committed a grave offence. I ask myself, should you not be  
punished? I ask myself, should you not bear the consequences of your  
act? Then I hear you ask me to be forgiven. And I say to you, you  
are forgiven. (He puts down the book).  
For God's sake, take him away.  
(The WARRIORS take WALTER away. The INSANGOMA and  
ATTENDANTS remove themselves and their paraphernalia.  
The CHIEF COUNCILLOR returns to his seat. SPONONO is  
still standing. He speaks to the PRINCIPAL).  
(with bitter grief).  
I loved you. He hated you. Yet you believed him.

PRINCIPAL

I never believed him. But I had to find out....about your secret door.

SPONONO

(leaves the Bench and goes to the Prosecutor's table).  
(to PRINCIPAL).  
You have three children?

PRINCIPAL

Yes.

SPONONO

And they love you? And you love them?

PRINCIPAL

Yes.

SPONONO

And they love their mother and their mother loves them.

PRINCIPAL

(beginning to understand)  
Yes.

SPONONO

Is your father alive?

PRINCIPAL

No.

SPONONO

And your mother?

PRINCIPAL

Yes.

SPONONO

And they too loved each other?

PRINCIPAL

Yes.

SPONONO

(with bitter memory)

Did your father ever come home and drag your mother from the bed where she lay with you, and strike her down, and lift her up, and each time he lifted her up, it was only to strike her down?

PRINCIPAL

(leaving the box and taking a few steps towards SPONONO).

No.

SPONONO

(he does not notice the PRINCIPAL'S Advance).

Did he ever leave you both? Without money? Without food? Without even a word?

PRINCIPAL

(going a few steps further)

No.

SPONONO

(bitterly)

Do you know what he left behind him? A home with no hope, a woman with no husband, a boy.....(he stops)

PRINCIPAL

Tell me, SPONONO

SPONONO

(he has become lost in his memories, and has not noticed the PRINCIPAL'S advance. But, perhaps because he is lost for the moment, he is affected by the PRINCIPAL'S last words, and he shows it by some action, as, for example, putting a clenched fist to his forehead. Then he recovers himself).

Go back at once to your place.

(PRINCIPAL returns to the dock.)

Have you any more defence?

(The PRINCIPAL struggles with himself.)

Don't be afraid. I'm asking you.

PRINCIPAL

(at last)

Then call Elisabeth.

SPONONO

(he also struggles with himself. Then he seems to decide that it is better to finish the matter once and for all).

Call her.

CHIEF COUNCILLOR

(rises)

I call Elisabeth.

(he sits)

(ELIZABETH enters the Court. She is dressed in her bridal dress. She looks what she is, tender and beautiful. The ATTENDANT guides her to the witness box, but she stops at the dock and bows and smiles to the PRINCIPAL, who has left the witness box. Then she recognises SPONONO, and she retreats towards the PRINCIPAL. The PRINCIPAL gestures, showing her she must go into the box. She goes into the box).

PRINCIPAL

(at the box)

Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH

Yes, meneer.

PRINCIPAL

Did you love Spike, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

Yes I loved him meneer. He would have been a good husband to me... but the time was too short.

PRINCIPAL

When he asked you to marry him, did he promise you to obey the law?

ELIZABETH

Yes.

PRINCIPAL

Did he later ask you if he could carry a knife?

ELIZABETH

Yes.

PRINCIPAL

What did you say?

ELIZABETH

I told him No.

PRINCIPAL

You knew what might happen?

ELIZABETH

Yes.

PRINCIPAL

And if he could come again, and ask you again, what would you tell him?

ELIZABETH

I would tell him No. Ah! It wasn't easy meneer. Like being caught between two ways, and both ways dangerous. That happens to us Meneer.

PRINCIPAL

Both ways were dangerous, Elizabeth. So how did you choose?

ELIZABETH

Well..... I just chose, meneer.

PRINCIPAL

You mean, you chose the way you understood?

ELIZABETH

Yes. I wanted our children to have a father who was good. I wanted them to have a father like.....

(shyly)

like you Meneer..... I wanted him to be honest at his work..... I wanted him to think of his children first.....so that they could feel safe..... I wanted to feel safe too..... was that wrong, Meneer?

(The PRINCIPAL shakes his head. She continues confidentially)

I would have been safe with SPIKE. If he promised to do something, I knew it would be done. And not all the boys in Victoriatown were like that. Some of them.....

SPONONO

(thundering)

Silence!

(he leaves the Bench. She leaves the witness box and goes to stand near the dock).

So you wanted a husband who was good. and all you got was one who was dead.

(he comes down a step or two)

Go back to your place.

(She goes reluctantly back to the witness box and he goes and stands near the box and takes off his circlet. He looks at her with admiration, but she shrinks from him.)

Elizabeth! You look beautiful, Elizabeth, even when you are angry!  
(he sees that she shrinks and he speaks more pleadingly)

Elizabeth!

(She looks to the PRINCIPAL but he is not looking at her. Sponono speaks humbly)

Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH

Yes.

SPONONO

That night.....

(he does not continue and she does not reply)

I was mad, Elizabeth.....

(he does not continue and she does not reply. He speaks pleadingly).

Do you hear me?

ELIZABETH

I hear you.

SPONONO

I'm telling you....that night....

(he comes closer to her and she retreats to the other side of the box).

.... can't you say something?

(but she says nothing. He goes also to the other side of the box. She is frightened though she need not have been. She leaves the box and runs to the PRINCIPAL. The PRINCIPAL leaves the dock, and he puts his arm around ELIZABETH. For a long time SPONONO looks at them bitterly. Then he speaks to ELIZABETH.)

Go!

(The PRINCIPAL takes ELIZABETH to the entrance, while SPONONO watches them. SPONONO watches the PRINCIPAL's return to the dock. Then he sits in the witness box, looking at the PRINCIPAL through its bars.)

So what did you prove? All you proved was that she too, didn't know how to love.

(bitterly)

Ah, she's like you. She can't forgive.

SPONONO (Cont'd)

(For a moment SPONONO is alone with this obsessive thought; then he stands. He speaks vengefully, but it is clear that his vengeance is not sweet).

She wanted the children to honour their father, but now she has neither a child nor a man.

PRINCIPAL

There will be a child.

SPONONO

There may be a child, but his father is dead.

PRINCIPAL

His father is not dead.

SPONONO

(he comes halfway across to the dock).

You mean?

PRINCIPAL

Yes.

SPONONO

Let the Court be cleared.

(All turn their backs on SPONONO and the PRINCIPAL. SPONONO is no longer arrogant. He drops his robe and circlet on the floor. He stands before the PRINCIPAL. He is on a slightly lower level than the PRINCIPAL).

What shall I do now, meneer?

(No answer)

Shall I marry her?

(No answer)

You heard what she said. Her children must have a father who is good.

(No answer)

I can be good, Meneer.

I can make her a promise.

(No answer.

Speak Meneer.

(There is still no answer and he speaks angrily)

How can you say such a thing! Don't you know if you say such a thing, you can make it come true? Why are you so hard? Why have you always been so hard on me? Jusus taught we must forgive to seventy times seven, but how many times did you forgive me?

(his grief is real)

And the time when I most needed it, you weren't there.

(anger displaces grief for a moment).

Why weren't you there?

PRINCIPAL

I was finished, You finished me, SPONONO.

SPONONO

(He can hardly believe it)

I finished you? Me so small, and you so great.

(he is filled with anguish)

But even if you had been there, would you have forgiven me? You always wanted a reward for your forgiveness. You would forgive me, only if I didn't sin any more.

(angrily)

Who is as good as that? Are you as good as that?

(no reply)

Have you no defence?

PRINCIPAL

You heard what Elizabeth said, that it happens to us, two ways and both dangerous, and we choose the one we think is best. So it was always between you and me. Two ways and both dangerous; to love you too much so that you grew careless, or to love you too little, so that you lost all hope.

SPONONO

That night.... that night.... there was only one thing to save me, your voice, your words, yourself in that chair. There was only one man in the world who had any power over me that night -

(his voice rises in despair)

only one man who could have saved me - only one man who could have said to me, don't believe it, it isn't true, no man is beyond saving, no man is utterly bad, no man can sin a sin that cannot be forgiven. I said to them, yes, I am Sponono, I am the one that ran away, I am the one who has sinned a sin that cannot be forgiven, take me back, take me back to the PRINCIPAL, let him forgive me before I am lost forever.

(He puts his hands on the edge of the dock, and he puts his head on his hands. The PRINCIPAL comes to the edge of the dock and puts his hand on SPONONO's head. They stay like that for a while. Then SPONONO, his face contorted with anger and grief, breaks away)

Are you guilty or not guilty?

PRINCIPAL

I am guilty!

(SPONONO climbs back to his Bench. He claps his hands. The IMBONGI begins praises, but SPONONO silences him, and the Court re-assembles. When all are there, he sits. They all sit).

SPONONO

This case is ended. Before you all I ask the prisoner, are you guilty or not guilty?

PRINCIPAL

I am guilty.

MABASO

(Although the WARRIORS have tried to restrain him, he has forced his way into the Court).

Who are you to find him guilty? Who made you a judge? Who are you to make us weep because your father struck your mother down, and lifted her up and struck her down again?

(SPONONO looks at him angrily).

You said your father left your mother with no hope. That wasn't true. You were her hope. Who promised her all the things she hadn't had? Who promised her, and failed her, and was forgiven, and promised her again?

(SPONONO hides his face. He cannot look at MABASO any more).

She could forgive till seventy times seven, and what good did it do? (deliberately)

And then came the day when you struck her down.....

PRINCIPAL

(He leaves the dock and goes to MABASO)

For God's sake, stop it, Mabaso! Don't you know we're beyond all that? For God's sake, leave us alone.

(MABASO looks at the PRINCIPAL. He gives a despairing shrug of his shoulders, and runs out of the Court.

All look at SPONONO anxiously. The PRINCIPAL speaks to him).

I am ready.

(The GRILLE is placed in position)

SPONONO

(he sits)  
You acknowledge you are guilty. Do you ask for forgiveness?

PRINCIPAL

(gravely)  
That is for you to say.

SPONONO

How can you be forgiven? You deserted your duty. You deserted us and left us alone. That will be your sentence also.

(to the WARRIORS)  
Take him from here, and put the mark of Cain on his brow, then let him be wanderer on the face of the earth because he did not know he was his brother's keeper.

(CHORUS sings with drums CRESCENDO, then soft MELODY, then INYANDA, which persists to the end. The reformatory bells start ringing.)

(All stand except SPONONO. The PRINCIPAL comes out of the dock, and goes off between the TWO WARRIORS. The first gate is opened. SPONONO stands. The first gate is closed. The reformatory bells ring louder and louder and faster and faster. In agony he comes down from the Bench and seizes the bars of the first gate).

SPONONO

Meneer! Meneer! Meneer! Do not leave me!  
(The PRINCIPAL and the WARRIORS pass through the second gate).

Meneer! Meneer! I did not mean it.  
(He falls to his knees)

I did not mean it, meneer.  
(The PRINCIPAL looks as if he wanted to return but the WARRIORS lock the second gate. The PRINCIPAL and SPONONO look at each other. After a while the WARRIORS sign to the PRINCIPAL that he must move on. As the PRINCIPAL goes, SPONONO slumps to the ground at the first gate.)

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