

From the final scene of MEETINGS by John Sibi-Okumu (2013)

[GRAN enters from the kitchen and looks on.]

GRAN: May I, please, join you?

GUS: Of course, Mother. [He points to a chair. Pause] May I ask for everybody's attention. The honours shouldn't fall to me, really. If we were following tradition to the letter, there should be an elder outside our immediate family to assume the role of spokesman. But, the truth is there isn't one, so we'll do the best we can. First of all, I'd like to thank everyone for coming. And, then, let me introduce our host, my mother, who since I was last here has acquired the name 'Gran.' [Points to GRAN] So, this is Gran [Clapping. GRAN stands and speaks before sitting down again].

GRAN: Yes. The joys of growing old. *Karibuni!*

SAMORA: *Asante sana!*

JULIUS: Good jahb, Samora! Well done, oh good and faithful student. Makofi kwake! [JULIUS claps vigorously alone. Silence.] What's wrong with you guys? No appreciation for learning? [Awkward silence]

GUS: [Pause] And now, maybe, I could hand over the honours to Meshack. Mother, Meshack and I shared a room at university.

JULIUS: Am I not allowed to speak?

GUS: Later, Julius.

JULIUS: Always last....and least

GUS: Nobody said that, Julius. Meshack, please.....

MESHACK: Thank you, Gus. Yes. Gus and I were at university together. He was Gus the Guy and I was Meshack Mshamba or Meshack the Peasant. That must tell you something about my roots.

JULIUS: Yes. Join the club...and tell us more!

MESHACK: Be that as it may, I hope that as we get to know each other better I'll just be Meshack, to all. We have come as gang of two. My wife died some years ago and I am here with my son Ezekiel, who is 'Zeke' to your Faoulata. [Zeke stands. Clapping. Sits down again]. Of course, it is the two of them who bring us all here. Gran, I must tell you that you are famous through your writing and it's a pleasure to meet you in person.

GRAN: Thank you.

MESHACK: And I am also very happy to meet Faoulata's mother. I have heard many good things about you, Esther, before now.

ESTHER: Thank you.

GRAN: [Stands] As you know, Meshack and Ezekiel, these are particularly happy times as a mother and a grandmother. My own son has returned after many years abroad and, with your Ezekiel, I am soon to have not one but two grandsons.

JULIUS: They also serve who stand and wait.

GRAN: That comment was completely uncalled for Julius. Just exactly did you mean by it?

JULIUS: What I mean by it, mother, is that I am sick and tired of this some sons are better than others 'Cult of Augustus' which pervades this home. This Augustus who was forced to leave for what he believed in. Augustus who refused to return until the moment was right. Augustus who toiled away in a foreign land to buy his mother a house. But what about the rest of us? We who stayed behind and were sidelined at every turn for being Gus's brother? For having That Name? We who were unable to be real men, real providers and whose families abandoned us? We who have had to look on as others of dubious morality, some of them here present, went from rags to riches and yet more riches.....

MESHACK: I am sorry. But who, exactly are you referring to?

JULIUS: Oh, shut up, you informer!

GUS: Hey, Julius! Wait a minute, there!

EZEKIEL: Look! I don't know you from, Adam. But I am not going to sit here and have my father be insulted.

MESHACK: And I'll let you know that I have warned my son to beware of gold diggers.

ESTHER: May I ask whom you are referring to?

MESHACK: You understand English.

ESTHER: Don't you dare talk to me like that, Meshack! Go on making money! It's the only thing you've made.

FAOULATA: [Pause.] Zeke, do you think I'm a gold digger?

SAMORA: Hey, hey, you guys! Enough already!

GRAN: Yes. Samora is right. Enough! [As long a silence as can be sustained. Reactions all around.]

JULIUS: [When GRAN's disapproving gaze sets on him, he speaks then lowers his head] I am sorry, mother.

GRAN: [After shorter silence] I am sure we all appreciate that, in our own different ways, we're all on ceremony here. That we're each carrying a lot of baggage. That we're all walking wounded. And it's true that what we have lived through could serve as an excuse to destroy the rest of our lives. But, as my guests, I beg you not to allow it to happen. There is so much to celebrate. So much to look forward to. We are all know that the aim is to mend, not to destroy further. [Silence] Now, I'm sure that everything is ready. So, let's go inside and have something to eat.

MESHACK: Thank you.

ZEKE: Thank you.

GRAN: This way, please.

SAMORA: [Hesitantly] Cool, Gran! [All enter the house through the kitchen door. Lights fade to darkness on scene. Actors return for 'curtain call.']