

THE CRIES OF THE CRICKET

By

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Man: You are accused of using a false passport to come to the UK. Do you confirm this ?

Youwane: If you are in a house that is burning, do you break a window to get out or do you die in the house because the main door is locked?

Man: You have been asked a question, Mr Youwane. Did you have the right to use the passport you used ? Yes or no ?

Youwane: No and Yes. No, because it was for priority people. Yes, because I had to flee danger and death. If I asked you to choose between a passport and a life, which would you want to choose. What do you say?

(A Stand Off)

Man: Next question: you are accused of being violent. What can you say about this accusation?

Youwane : What is this violence which I am said to have practiced? Yes, I refused to be returned to my country where I am in danger of death. But believe me, your prosecution is like the thief that cries 'thief'

Man: Are you incapable of answering a direct question? If the British government asks you to leave after refusing your request for asylum, will you leave?

Youwane: I would first ask the advice of my solicitor, my helpers, my visitors, all of whom are present.

Man: When would you leave the UK of your own free will?

Youwane: When the rain of mortar shells stops falling on my homeland's skies; when political pornography no longer exists in the hands of vermin politicians; when evil, bitterness and black luck disappear in the bloody hearts of one-party state apparatchiks.

Man: And if the Judge orders you to leave the UK, will you leave?

Youwane: No one is above the law because the law is supreme. However, I ask the mercy of the judge in the light of the danger of death which haunts my life.

(He leaves the trial and directly addresses the audience)

My name is Youwane. I am here in England, alone. They want to deport me to a place where I will be killed. Back home my wife and six children are constantly harassed by the police who are determined to track me down. I'm frightened about what they will do to my wife. They might rape her. They might kill her. The family move from village to village to escape the danger. They are now in an area where the police cannot reach them because there is civil war and no telephone communications.

So they are still in danger but now I have no contact. Only in my dreams.

(His wife appears in his dreams)

Youwane: And if God were to take away the very breath of life, would it not be good so to suffer, better than see my wife and children weep before my eyes

Soso: If one is not close to those with power, one is crushed. We gaze at the home you built, fearing that death might take us by surprise if we stay.

Youwane: Yes, my love. It is the politics of the lion. Where the lion is King no animal is allowed to lie beside him.

Soso: What will become of this country where even priest are persecuted?

Youwane: We will all become exiles.

Soso: Yes. Now that villages, districts, whole regions have been pillaged by the authorities corrupted by the folly of Black Gold...

Youwane: And where children of 10 or 12 are armed to the teeth.

Soso: Indeed the politics of the lion.

Youwane: This greed will destroy Africa, will wipe out Asia, and retard the development of Latin America. The strong never share the wealth of the country with others.

Soso: This greed is now on such a scale. We eat petrol. We drink petrol, we dress ourselves in petrol, we dance petrol. It's petrol a go-go.

Youwane: Our country has been taken hostage. I can't do anything about it. Giant ants have invaded all the avenues, even the smaller streets of our nation; so we must pull back in order to move forward again.

Soso: Sooner or later we will see each other so it is worth weeping. It's better seek the protection of the Queen of England who knows a little of the reality of African politics, and who knows more still about human rights and fundamental liberties.

Youwane: I am merely fleeing this rain which seems to carry all before it; but the moment that it ends I will return. The rain will cease, the sky will chase away the bad clouds, and then the day will dawn again. And God will bless us a hundredfold for what we have lost.

Soso: One thing I ask you, husband, is that that you are not harassed by the beautiful women of Queen Elizabeth. You must bear hunger and thirst and understand that all women are equal. The eyes of your children and I will be fixed on the mountain.

(Youwane gets up)

Youwane: I think that my suitcase is ready. Time approaches and I must leave you. May peace be with you.

Soso: May God go with you and stay with you during your exile in the country of the Queen.

(And so, back to the England)

Man: Good day, sir.

Youwane: Good day

Man: Do you know where you are, sir?

Youwane: I am in the country of Queen Elizabeth. I am in the UK

Man: What is the reason for your visit to the UK?

Youwane: I was persecuted in my country; that's why I am here.

Man: Your profession, please, sir

Youwane: Teacher, artist, writer, first-aid worker

Man: So many...And are you married, sir?

Youwane: I am married and the father of six children

Man: Six! Is it a creche? Or a herd?

Youwane: It is God who gives children

Man: OK. Do you have brothers, friends, families or other contacts in the UK?

Youwane: No. I have no close relations here despite the fact that I have sought refuge here.

Man: Refuge? On what basis have you been persecuted? On political grounds, or for other reasons?

Youwane: I was persecuted as a member of the opposition political party. I denounced the evil of the authorities and the way they treated our people. I wrote a play which has created troubles for me in the governments of countries.

Man: I believe your government came to power through an election, Mr Youwane?

Youwane: We are very far from the reality of democracy. What flourishes in my country is dictatorship, egoism, greed, anarchy, the crushing of the people, torture, killing, pillage, rape, debauchery and xenophobia.

Soso: Despite all this your country is still populated.

Youwane: Yes. Not everyone is targeted. Only those who speak out and call the dogs by their names. But please understand, sir, those who suffer most are the innocents, the people

Man: You can explain all this during your interview requesting asylum.

Soso: Are you ill?

Man: Do you suffer from any specific illness?

Youwane: I get chronic fevers and suffer from impaired vision and low blood pressure – all from the tortures I was subjected to back home.

Man: You will be taken from here to prison.

Youwane: To prison? As an asylum seeker?

Man: I mean to a detention centre where your case will be dealt with in two or three days. That's the new immigration law in England.

(Change)

Man: Are you a terrorist ?

Soso: A rapist ?

Man: A thief ? An assassin ?

Soso: Do you organise coups?

Youwane: I am an artist, a writer. What I have written has angered the government and because of this I have been the victim of evil right until the moment of my arrival in England.

Man: Are you telling me your story correctly; telling me the truth and nothing but the truth.

Youwane: Again. Here is my story. I was persecuted in my country, imprisoned for fourteen months, tortured and had my house regularly searched. My life was in danger. I had to flee. A search warrant was posted to find me.

Man: But you also say you are a teacher. And sometimes an orderly for the Red Cross. Next you're a politician. And all the while an artist, a writer, a dramatist. What are we supposed to make of all that?

Youwane: Quite simply, since I am a graduate in dramatic art I write books; but I also work for the Red Cross as a medical orderly and I am a member of a political party. And help to teach my the young to read and write.

Man: What is the name of your party?

Youwane: The Movement for Democracy, the main opposition party whose president is also in exile.

Man: You did not follow your president to the country he went to? Correct?

Youwane: When a violent wind hits a piles of leaves stacked in a corner, the leaves do not always fly away in the same direction.

Man: Are you in contact with him? Yes or no?

Youwane: No.

Man: But of course, every members of your party fled the country?

Youwane: Officer, I repeat; when a violent wind is blowing, it doesn't storm through everything in its way. There are always survivors and escapees. There are always some who die.

Man: Your president and you have fled but your party still exists.

Youwane: Those members or sympathisers who have remained stay silent. Many have become beggars or toadies of the ruling party.

Man: Are you against authority or simply against the present government in power?

Youwane: I could not possibly be against democracy. I am against those who are pillaging my country. Against those who believe in the one-party state. The vultures of the sole political party that runs our country today.

Man: And everyone in government belongs to this party?

Youwane: Absolutely.

Man: What can you say for yourself as a dramatist, My Youwane?

Youwane: My play could have cost me my life.

Man: What did the authorities dislike about this play?

Youwane: Firstly, its style; secondly, it's content. I was accused of libel, of being desperate for power, selling secret information, dissidence, other things. Is it normal for an exile to be put in prison as soon as he arrives here?

Man: What is the book's message?

Youwane : Its main message is social justice. That power must no longer come out of a gun. That money from our oil is for the people, not for one group

Man: Your request for asylum...It is based on based on being a writer? A Red Cross orderly or being a politician?

Youwane: I was persecuted on the grounds of all three.

Man: What would you do if the UK accepted your request for asylum today?

Youwane: The first thing I'd do would be to thank the soil of England for having accepted me and the second to put my entire trust in the British government.

Soso: How long do you want to stay in the UK?

Youwane: Until the mortar shells stop raining on my country

Soso: Are you tired, Youwane?

Youwane: Of course, and I fear I will be so for days and weeks to come.

Man: As I told you in the beginning you are in the fast track system and everything is being done quickly. After your initial interviews, the Immigration Office refused your asylum application to the UK. We are not convinced about your nationality.

Youwane: So what nationality do they think I have?

Man: Don't panic, Mr. Youwane. You can appeal against it. Also you have too many professions and they are unable to decide which is the real one.

Soso: Thirdly, you have neither family nor friends in the UK.

Man: Fourthly, your travel documents are not in order. In addition, you have too many children

Youwane: How can you blame me for having too many children ?

Man: This review is finished. You have to remain in prison to await the course of any judicial review.

(Time shift)

Soso: You have been taken to the airport four times to be deported and on one of these occasions you were beaten up by your guards. Can't you go home quietly and avoid these humiliations and this dishonour?

Youwane: Have you ever seen a corpse who fears decomposition? Or a body submerged by water which is afraid of being soaked?

Soso: I try to understand what it is like to be in your position and I do understand your sufferings

Youwane: How was I expected to cooperate with a world of torture, suffering, fire and death. If you want to help me, take me anywhere, send me anywhere, to the most miserable of countries, if you wish, so that I can at least rest in peace.

Man: I think you must consider carefully before it is too late.

Youwane: One day God will set me free. Is a foreigner or an asylum seeker wrong to come to your country?

Youwane: Here a foreigner always remains a foreigner. I didn't think of anyone in this world as 'illegal'. Don't think coming to the UK is for me a luxury or an honour. It was simply a necessity. I'm not trying to invade your land.

Man: Well if your life really is in danger back home, then living in prison here is better than that, is it not?

Youwane: You should know that international law allows anybody to seek asylum anywhere if his life is in danger.

Man: Mr Youwane. We can see you suffering. A whole year in prison all because you are seeking asylum! It is unacceptable.

Youwane: I have seen man kill man, society destroy itself, brother rising up against brother, When it rained I said that it rained and this honesty has brought great danger to my life.

Man: We are fighting hard for you. We are the friends of the written word. You were right to flee your country. We will support you. We will fight for you.

Youwane: Some are crazy for power just as others for truth.

Man: I know. Take this telephone card so that you can call your wife and children back home. We are close to you.

(Shift)

Woman: Right. Tomorrow is the hearing to decide whether Mr Youwane should be released. What do you think?

Man: There is no proper evidence to justify his release.

Woman: In your opinion how long should someone spend in detention ?

Man: There is no limit, in my opinion.

Woman: Does not the length of detention depend on the development of the person's dossier? Mr Youwane has spent 14 months in detention. Does that have no significance for you morally. Why not release him first and then see how his situation develops?

Man: Releasing him to what address ? Youwane has no family, friends or connections in the UK ?

Woman: This is not a fair argument.

Man: We don't even know his nationality. This man whom you wish to release tomorrow is violent. When he was being sent back to his country he lashed out at his escorts.

Woman: Do you have evidence of this violence?

Man: It can easily found. The escort in question resigned his post after the incident

Woman: Can we invite the Escort to give evidence about the incident to this court, bringing with him a medical certificate ?

Man: Since he is no longer in service it would be extremely difficult to see him, even to call him.

(Time shift)

Man: We must open our eyes to the circumstances. We should not offer opportunities based on misunderstandings or blackmail. Detaining or releasing someone should be the right of law and not based on the publicity which comes out of someone's mouth. Or pen.

Please consider his case. He comes from a country where the law is a disgrace. We should understand that life is priceless. We will not

regret it if he is released. Liberty, Your Honour, is a ticket which allows Man to enter the active phase of his life. Never fear that he will let us down. He will not. He is a man of honour. That's all I have to say.

Man: You claim to be a Christian?

Youwane: Yes. I believe in the word of God.

Man: Can Christians seek asylum abroad

Youwane: Adam in the Garden of Eden. Abraham at Ephron. The Children of Israel in Egypt. Exile was not created today or by your Queen.

Man: Sometimes we need God and often we seek solace in him but immigration is immigration and God is God. There is no link. When you arrived at Heathrow you said you had come to the UK on business. Is this true?

Youwane: Questions. Questions. What kind of business could I carry out with no money?

Man: So you are now denying your initial claim? And there is a discrepancy between the number of children you claim to have.

Youwane: There is no discrepancy. Maybe your clerk is not a shepherd.

Man: You were persecuted for your play. What did you say in it.

Youwane: That the President must be merciful to his people.

Man: And then?

Youwane: That power must no longer come out of a gun. That nobody should be exiled even if his thoughts differ from others or if he is against the ruling power. There should be no more sacrifices of people to defend the state. Money from our oil is for the people, not for one ethnic group, one clan, or one political class of dictators. I want to see dialogue, a round table, social justice, peace, brotherhood and national unity as the basis of true democracy. Tribal and ethnic hatreds, anger, the settling of accounts,

the violation of laws and rights must disappear in the hearts of our leaders. Precisely, because in my country people are begging for help, are escaping and seeking asylum all the time.

Woman: Why did you not choose France or another country to seek asylum in?

Youwane: Your Honour. I had permission to come here. The UK gave me an entry visa.

Woman: Why?

Youwane: I don't exactly know but I had the visa and coming here became my absolute priority.

Woman: Where did you obtain your visa?

Youwane: In Kinshasa.

Woman: Before going to Kinshasa did you go to other countries?

Youwane: I went to the Ivory Coast, the Central African Republic, then to Benin, Togo and Ghana.

Woman: And were none of these countries suitable for asylum?

Youwane: The Ivory Coast is divided between government and rebel forces; the Central African Republic has seen its ruler flee into exile; in Togo, the heir to the ruler is destroying his people; Ghana and Benin have been virtually invaded by refugees fleeing terror in neighbouring countries; the ex- Zaire, Congo-Kinshasa is threatened by neighbouring Rwanda and by its own politicians.

Woman: But in Kinshasa, the population and the refugees are at peace, Mr Youwane.

Youwane: On my way to the feast I do not want to change direction for another feast where I have not been invited. My destination was the UK.

Man: Thank you, Mr Youwane, The court has considered everything you have to say and it appreciates it,

For having deceived the government, used violence and false documents, I believe this court should reject your applicaton. Have you anything to say?

Youwane: What I want to say is that you only have one life. If you lose it you are finished. You are dead. Life is the unity of activities and events which fills each being and each space in time. When it is in danger it must be saved, protected as it is by UN articles and by divine law. Life must not be separate from freedom because freedom is the very wealth of life. Depriving a life of liberty is a crime against humanity and against God. This is my final word

Man: Dear ladies and gentlemen. We have listened with close attention to the arguments of both parties. After analysing and counter-analysing all the documents we, an independent immigration court, have decided as follows: We understand that Mr. Youwane used false documents to enter the UK

Woman: We understand that he has not sought asylum elsewhere

Man: That he entered the UK without a valid a visa. That he has not spoken the truth before the law

Woman: That he has no family or contacts in the UK

Man: That certain members of his political party have remained in the country and continue to operate

Woman: That his country continues to function normally despite coups and civil wars

Man: That his country's president was voted into office with 99.99% of the popular vote

Woman: That opposition exists in his country despite the fact that its leaders are in exile

Man: In the light of all this the court has decided to refuse to release Mr. Youwane or to give him the right of asylum in this country. You have a final chance to make a second appeal within 48 hours. But I can assure you that this appeal will have as little chance of success as the first appeal. Please bring proof of your employment as an orderly with the Red Cross, as evidence that will help us believe in you a little. Good luck and May God bless you. The hearing is over.

(And back to Youwane's dream)

Soso: Sooner or later we will see each other so it is worth weeping. It's better seek the protection of the Queen of England who knows a little of the reality or African politics, and who knows more still about human rights and fundamental liberties.

Youwane: I am merely fleeing this rain which seems to carry all before it; but the moment that it ends I will return. The rain will cease, the sky will chase away the bad clouds, and then the day will dawn again. And God will bless us a hundredfold for what we have lost.

THE END.