

THE LOST DRAGON

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FADE IN.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, THRONE ROOM - DAY

The throne room of Egberun Castle is unlike other throne rooms. The walls and floors are made of an advanced, processed metal called CEEK, shiny and silver. Grand windows let light in through a glass never seen in Medieval times.

The room is packed. The villagers are all black-skinned and dressed in fine robes, except for the knights, who wear a futuristic armor that is form-fitting, but allows for more mobility than traditional armor.

At the head of the room sit the queen and king upon their thrones. GLETI is the queen. She is in her 40s, athletic and regal. She wears a thin, but powerful crown. Her robes are brown and emerald green. She wears a necklace made of gold and ceek. A bright blue gem hangs from the necklace.

XEVIOSO is the king. He is a massive man in his 30s. His crown is thick and full and his robes are gold and emerald. He wears the same necklace as the queen.

Surrounding the king and queen are a half dozen other COUNCIL MEN and WOMEN, who all wear black robes and the same necklaces as the king and queen.

Before them stands LEGBA, a thin old man in black robes with highlights of gold and garnet. He isn't weak or sickly, but he's not much better than that. He wears the council necklace, as well.

Gleti raises her hand, palm down, and gestures towards Legba.

GLETI

May the Voice of the Throne speak
the creed.

Legba steps forward and clears his throat.

LEGBA

On the first day, Mawu created the
world.

The assembled crowd nods and responds: "Vodu!"

LEGBA (CONT'D)

On the second day, Mawu created
women and men.

ALL

Vodu!

Legba turns towards the windows and waves at the grasslands that surround the castle.

LEGBA

On the third day, Mawu made the lands and the beasts that roam them.

Legba turns back towards the queen and king.

LEGBA (CONT'D)

On the fourth day, Mawu gave women and men the gift of technology.

ALL

Vodu!

Legba gestures towards GU, a man in his 20s who is nearly as large and muscular as the king. He a full suit of ceek armor and a council necklace.

Gu steps forward and pulls a starsword from its scabbard. He holds it aloft.

ALL (CONT'D)

Vodu! Vodun! Vodzu!

A green energy field surrounds the blade.

The audience all kneel, except for the queen and king (who are seated), Legba, Gu and AYABA.

Ayaba is a girl in her mid teens. She stands near her parents, the queen and king. She has the largest and most luxuriant afro of any woman in the room. Her robes are colored blue, grey and red.

Gleti makes eye contact with Ayaba and nods in her direction. Ayaba is exasperated, but she kneels.

Gu points the glowing starsword at a large boulder placed at the opposite end of the throne room.

GU

Vodzu!

A blast of green energy emerges from the starsword and blasts the boulder into many pieces.

Quickly, various knights, both men and women, gather the pieces of the boulder and carry them out of the room.

The rest of the audience rises.

LEGBA

From Mawu to Mawu-Lisa to the
ancestry to the present, the power
of the realm rests upon Queen Gleti
and King Xevioso, long may they
live!

As the crowd responds, the green energy disappears from Gu's
starsword.

ALL

Vodu! Vodun! Vodzu!

Gu puts the starsword back in its scabbard.

LEGBA

My queen, the floor is yours.

Gleti stands up and steps forward.

GLETI

Thank you all for joining us again
on this day. We face grave matters.

The audience murmurs.

GLETI (CONT'D)

Gu, what have you learned since we
last met.

Gu steps forward.

GU

My queen, as always our village's
defenses remain strong.

The audience expresses approval.

GU (CONT'D)

The Dogbari have made several
incursions. They have not
penetrated the valley. Our defenses
have easily repelled them.

XEVIOSO

As expected.

Gleti shoots the king a look and he shuts his mouth.

GLETI

Evaluation?

GU

The best evidence points to an invasion.

Gasps.

GU (CONT'D)

Soon. The Dogbari do not appear to have grown past their decisive defeat at Avrikiti and they want vengeance. The incursions are a test of our defenses.

XEVIOSO

And our defenses will stand.

GLETI

They may. They may not.

Xevioso is wounded.

GU

I am not wise enough to see the future.

XEVIOSO

Few are.

He casts a glance at Gleti, but she ignores him.

GLETI

We must be prepared for invasion. Our defenses ARE strong.

She smiles at Xevioso.

GLETI (CONT'D)

And we have technology, praise Mawu.

ALL

Vodu!

GLETI

The valley has never fallen. We have never served another. The future shall be as the past.

Gu is frustrated.

GU

My spies tell me that... new approaches may be UNDERway.

GLETI

And we shall prepare for them as we
always have. What else can we do
beyond what we have always done?

Gu looks towards the king and then back to the queen.

GU

As I said before, I am not wise...

AYABA (O.S.)

I... I have an idea.

The audience all turns to look at Ayaba, who steps forward.

LEGBA

The future queen, Ayaba, speaks.

Ayaba nods to Legba. The audience pays rapt attention to the girl.

AYABA

My studies advance at a swift pace.
The great Legba...

She nods towards the Voice. He returns the nod with a proud smile.

AYABA (CONT'D)

Has taught me the lore. ALL of the
lore. And I have studied well
beyond his curriculum...

Legba frowns.

LEGBA

The apocrypha are nonsensical...

Ayaba waves him off. Xevioso is amused by his daughter.

XEVIOSO

My daughter speaks.

Legba yields with a bow.

AYABA

The books speak of legends.

Gletti frowns.

GLETI

Dare not waste our time, or your
own, on fanciful ideas.

AYABA
But the legends are true!

Gasps, laughter, shock.

AYABA (CONT'D)
I have seen lights... no, not
lights, more than that, fires. I
have seen fires among the seven
castles.

GLETI
The castles have long been
abandoned. Is there evidence to the
contrary?

She addresses Gu.

GU
I... WE have seen nothing in the
castles.

XEVIOSO
And when was the last time you
actually visited the castles?

Gu frowns.

GU
Well, you see, I have been busy
preparing to defend against the
Dogbari, I... WE... haven't had the
time to...

Xevioso waves him off.

AYABA
I've seen the fires.

GLETI
Have you visited the castles?
Alone?

AYABA
No.

GLETI
The castles are forbidden. Only
knights may visit them.

Ayaba is frustrated.

AYABA

I didn't! I have never broken one
of your rules, mother.

Gleti nods.

AYABA (CONT'D)

But I have eyes. And I've seen the
fires. The dragon is real.

Gasps, shock, but no laughter this time.

LEGBA

Clearly we are not...

Gleti glares at him.

Xevioso stands.

XEVIOSO

If my daughter shall be queen, we
shall listen to her.

GLETI

Is this the best use of our time?

GU

The invasion is imminent.

Xevioso takes his daughter by the hand and walks towards the
exit.

XEVIOSO

This valley was made by dragon
power. Mawu gave us the valley and
Mawu acted through dragons. Dragons
created our home and dragons will
save it.

Gleti stands to follow them.

XEVIOSO (CONT'D)

If the future queen says she has
seen a dragon among the seven
castles, then we shall investigate.

GLETI

Gu, prepare a party, we make for
Castle Fa before the morn is over.

Gu snaps to attention.

GU

It shall be done.

The royal family walks out of the room.

ALL
Vodu! Vodun! Vodzu!

The audience starts to file out of the throne room.

TITLE CARD: Egberun Castle

EXT. EGBERUN CASTLE - MOMENTS LATER

From the outside, the castle is a technical marvel. It is made of shining ceek metal and the castle is a beacon of hope and futurism.

The large gate closes behind them. It slides downward more like a blast door from Star Wars than anything seen in Medieval times. Next to the large gate is a smaller one, the size of an single person.

Outside the castle is the bustling village of Egberun. Hundreds of Black people go about their daily tasks. Knights patrol the village wearing armor made of ceek. They carry starswords like Gu, sheathed and currently silent.

Small huts and structures fill the unpaved streets throughout the village. Merchants sell wares, farmers sell crops and livestock, artists sell paintings and jewelry, cooks sell meals. The village is much like a Medieval village, but with ceek making everything sturdy and clean. The village is otherwise very neat and clean and the people are happy and healthy.

In the distance, a curved cliff wall surrounds the valley the village sits in. Atop the cliff is a ring of seven castles, each more than a mile apart. Forest fills the land between the castles and the only access to the cliff is a slope leading up the eastern side to the first castle.

Beyond the ridge with the castles are massive impassable craggy mountains. The mountains reach to the coastline that provides a small beach, which is filled with small boats made of ceek metal. Several villagers are loading boats for the day's fishing expedition.

Gu and Legba lead the way down the village's main road, walking ahead of the royal party.

LEGBA
Clear the way! Clear the way! The
royal family approaches.

The crowd makes way. They are excited to see the queen and king, who follow Legba and Gu. Behind them follow Ayaba, several of her friends and a half dozen knights. Ayaba carries a starsword in a scabbard.

AYABA

This will definitely qualify as my lifequest! I'll be on the council in no time!

ZINSU claps Ayaba on the shoulder. Zinsu is a tall, thin Black girl in her early teens. Her hair is braided and she wears green and orange robes.

ZINSU

Of course you will.

They laugh.

ZINSU (CONT'D)

And once I finish my latest invention, I'm joining you!

AYABA

That will be great. What's your new thing?

AGASU catches up to them and playfully shoves Zinsu. Agasu is tall and heavy. She's no older than 15, but is over 200 pounds and very strong. She wears the same armor as the scouts and has natural hair. Unlike the knights, the clothes she wears underneath the armor plates is colorful, blue and orange. Agasu carries a starsword.

AGASU

Zinsu made a contraption that turns music to energy.

AYABA

Agasu! Does it work?

ZINSU

Well, not yet... but...

They all laugh at her.

PERDITA joins the group. She's about the same age and height as Ayaba, has Afro puffs on either side of her head and is of average weight. Her robes are blue and gold.

PERDITA

Do your ideas ever pan out?

More laughter.

ZINSU

(singing)

One day, you'll see/You'll wanna be
like me!

AYABA

(singing, poorly)

You aren't the only one who can
sing/You'll surely see!

The group laughs.

GLETI

Quiet down over there.

They do.

RADIN joins the group. He's the only boy in the group and he's a little older than the girls. He's tall and athletic. He wears robes of green and gold and carries a starsword in a scabbard.

RADIN

How are you going to get on the
council, Perdita?

Perdita laughs.

PERDITA

I score perfectly in practice for
the Inquisition, I plan to score
perfectly on the actual
Inquisition.

RADIN

Which one?

PERDITA

All of them.

She isn't joking.

AYABA

I'm going to score perfectly in the
history Inquisition!

AGASU

You NEVER get your nose out of
those history tomes.

Laughter.

GU
We move toward Gbadu Forest,
presently.

The party advances.

EXT. GBADU FOREST - DAY

They approach the Gbadu Forest, which is thick enough that the interior is nearly black with shadows. It is green from the outside, but not inviting. Things lurk within.

Gu holds up a fist to stop the party.

GU
Cal! Zek!

Two knights, CAL and ZEK, run to the front of the group. They are both Black, a man and a woman, each in their late 20s. They wear lighter armor, with only standard leather covering their arms and legs and ceek covering their chests. They also wear ceek helmets and carry starswords.

CAL AND ZEK
(together)
Sir!

They stand at attention.

GU
Scout the forest. No surprises.

CAL AND ZEK
(together)
Sir!

Cal and Zek make their way into forest, starswords drawn, but not glowing.

AYABA
Why are we stopping?

Xevioso puts a hand on her shoulder.

XEVIOSO
Times are... dangerous. Caution is
a virtue.

GLETI
A virtue that is often in short
supply.

She steps towards Gu.

GLETI (CONT'D)
Let's go over the plan again.

Xevioso steps up to join them.

GU
Yes, my queen. We will head
directly through Gbadu Forest...

Ayaba walks back to her friends.

PERDITA
How long do we have to wait?

Ayaba shrugs.

AGASU
Where does that road go?

They all look at a road that branches off from the main one and goes into the forest the opposite direction from the castles.

AYABA
Oh, my aunts live down there.

ZINSU
Like Okanu and them?

Ayaba nods.

SAKPATA arrives. He is a lighter-skinned Black boy a little older than Ayaba. He wears robes of gold and burgundy and wears a scabbard with a starsword.

SAKPATA
Everyone knows what you're doing.

AYABA
(venomously)
Brother.

He gives her a cruel smile.

SAKPATA
You can play innocent, but we're
not all fools.

ZINSU
That's up for debate.

Sakpata ignores the laughter.

SAKPATA

This...

He waves his hands around at the expedition and the forest ahead.

SAKPATA (CONT'D)

This is all a show. Someone's trying to score points.

Radin steps towards Sakpata.

RADIN

It might be time for you to be elsewhere.

Ayaba puts a hand on Radin's shoulder to restrain him.

AYABA

Not now. Not here.

SAKPATA

As if you have a choice in the matter.

Sakpata walks away giggling to himself.

SAKPATA (CONT'D)

There are ways to earn one's place on the council. But not with children's fairy tales and dragons.

Radin, Perdita and Zinsu step in Sakpata's direction, but Ayaba waves them back again.

Sakpata catches up to the rest of the party.

AGASU

Don't worry, Ayaba, we believe you.

Beat.

AGASU (CONT'D)

I said we believe you.

She glares at the rest of the group. Zinsu, Radin and Perdita all respond at the same time.

ZINSU

Yeah, sure!

RADIN

I always believed you.

PERDITA

Never a doubt.

Ayaba waves them off as she takes a step away from them and closer to the forest.

AGASU

What is wrong with you guys?

RADIN

What?

PERDITA

I didn't mean it like that.

Ayaba tunes them out. She's lost in thought staring into forest.

Until she sees something move.

An eye.

Two eyes, they open and stare at her.

The rest of the crew has started walking away.

Ayaba doesn't break eye contact.

The outline, then the shape, of a small creature starts to appear as its' camouflage wears off the longer Ayaba stares at it.

The creature is a small, flying oval-shaped thing with green fur and uselessly small arms and legs. It has big oval shaped white eyes and it stares at Ayaba without blinking. This is BULUKU.

BULUKU

Hi.

Ayaba falls backward in shock and lands on her bottom with an oof.

Buluku buzzes down towards her face.

BULUKU (CONT'D)

Aido is awake.

Ayaba stares at the creature without understanding.

BULUKU (CONT'D)

It was the digging that woke her.

AYABA
What's an Aido?

BULUKU
One is either friends or enemies
with a dragon.

Ayaba scrambles to her feet.

AYABA
A dragon!?!

BULUKU
There is no other choice, Ayaba.

The creature flits back into the forest and is quickly out of sight.

AYABA
Wait! I don't understand!

Ayaba looks towards her friends and family, who are starting to distance themselves from her.

AYABA (CONT'D)
Everybody?

They can't hear her.

AYABA (CONT'D)
Wait up!

She runs after them, looking back one last time as she goes.

Once she catches up to the others, Sakpata steps out of the forest opposite the Buluku. He stares after Ayaba, then turns and stares at the jungle where the Buluku appeared.

TITLE CARD: Castle Fa

EXT. CASTLE FA - MOMENTS LATER

The party approaches Castle Fa. Gu, Cal and Zek lead the way, with the other knights following. All carry glowing starswords. The queen, king and the children stay behind.

The castle itself is massive, made of grey stone. It's dirty and weathered; the grass is overgrown and nature is doing its best to take back the land, with vines and ivy covering much of the structure.

Cal digs into a slot next to the front gate. Something clicks into place and he smiles.

The gate opens.

Gu leads the knights inside.

INT. CASTLE FA - LATER

The party stands in an empty throne room. It's dusty and filled with cobwebs, but nothing else. Not even thrones.

Gleti and Xevioso stand at the front of the room. They are disappointed in Ayaba.

Gu walks up to the king and queen.

GU

We have double-checked every chamber in the castle.

GLETI

And?

GU

No sign of any living thing larger than a small knifeback. And we took care of it.

XEVIOSO

And you're sure?

Gleti raises an eyebrow as she looks toward her husband.

GU

On my word.

GLETI

Ayaba?

The girl steps forward. Her mother glares expectantly.

AYABA

M-maybe it wasn't in this castle?

XEVIOSO

She is right. 'Seven castles do ring the valley fair.' Isn't that how the line goes?

Gleti turns and walks from the chamber, she motions for the others to follow.

GLETI

Yes. That IS how the fairy tale goes.

The party follows the queen.

Ayaba's friends surround her.

PERDITA

Don't worry. We're just in the
wrong castle.

AGASU

Yeah.

The others remain quiet. Until Sakpata arrives.

SAKPATA

Maybe you should start studying for
the inquisitions?

ZINSU

Yeah, why don't you, Sakpata?

Sakpata laughs.

SAKPATA

I've already passed them all.

Ayaba is surprised. They're all surprised.

SAKPATA (CONT'D)

My place on the council is within
my grasp. Yours? Well, I'm sure
empty castles will be quite
persuasive.

Sakpata walks away leaving the others in shock.

TITLE CARD: Castle Da

EXT. CASTLE DA - LATER

The party approaches Castle Da a little more dusty, a little
more weary.

This castle is made of black rock filled with holes, almost
like coral.

The gates are already open and the knights have gone inside.

Xevioso and Gleti walk in and the other kids follow.

Sakpata walks past them.

SAKPATA

This should be exciting.

He laughs and walks into the castle.

INT. CASTLE DA - CONTINUOUS

The party stands in yet another empty throne room. At least there are still thrones. Long-empty thrones surrounded by trash and animal bones.

Gleti stands with her arms crossed. Ayaba looks towards her father for mercy.

XEVIOSO

We shall try one more castle,
Ayaba. Time grows short.

Gleti walks away, wordless. The others follow.

ZINSU

You sure you saw a dragon? In one
of the castles?

Ayaba glares at her.

ZINSU (CONT'D)

I'm just saying...

PERDITA

Yeah, if you were mistaken, you
could just tell...

Ayaba storms out of the room.

AGASU

What's wrong with you two?

Zinsu shrugs.

PERDITA

I was just trying to be helpful.

Perdita walks out.

ZINSU

What?

Zinsu shrugs again and follows Perdita.

PERDITA

What?

She follows, totally perplexed.

As she nears the castle gate, she sees a gleaming object reflected in the light.

PERDITA (CONT'D)
What's that?

She looks closer.

PERDITA (CONT'D)
Hey guys, there's something here.

They ignore her. Zinsu jogs to catch up.

Perdita looks a little closer.

It's a silver coin with the outline of a dragon on it.

She picks it up.

PERDITA (CONT'D)
Warm.

She puts the coin in her pocket and runs to catch up.

TITLE CARD: Castle Jo

EXT. CASTLE JO - LATER

The party arrives at Castle Jo, tired and annoyed.

The castle is made of more traditional grey stones, a standard historical castle. It looks a lot like the first one, except it's less overgrown.

Gu leads the knights in opening the gate.

INT. CASTLE JO - CONTINUOUS

Gleti is upset. Xevioso makes no move to defend Ayaba this time.

GU
This castle is empty. Like the others.

GLETI
Of course. Enough of this child's play. We have important matters before us.

Gleti walks out of the throne room. Gu shepherds the rest of the party out.

Xevioso lingers for a moment. Ayaba is depressed.

AYABA
I know I saw it, dad.

XEVIOSO
I believe you, Ayaba.

She looks up and smiles.

XEVIOSO (CONT'D)
But your mother and I are busy.

The smile fades.

XEVIOSO (CONT'D)
But YOU aren't busy, are you?

It takes a second for Ayaba to understand.

AYABA
You mean?

He nods.

He puts a finger to his lips and shushes her as he leaves.

Ayaba smiles, then runs out of the room.

She runs down the hall and sees Zinsu, Agasu, Perdita and Radin talking in the corridor.

She rushes up to them and puts her arms around Zinsu and Agasu.

AYABA (CONT'D)
Come with me. I've got an idea.

They follow.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, THRONE ROOM

The full audience sits in the throne room, discussing the invasion and plans to defend the valley. The children aren't present.

GU
We found nothing in any of the castles that would suggest any dragon presence.

Gletti nods.

GLETI

How much of the advanced knight armor do we have ready to go?

GU

At this point, we only have six full suits.

Gleti nods.

LEGBA

My queen? I have a concern we need to discuss.

GLETI

Yes, what is it?

LEGBA

It would appear that Ayaba isn't ready for the duties that may befall her as a member of the council. She's too young and impotent.

Xevioso glares at Legba who bows in fealty.

XEVIOSO

Surely she is the most qualified to fulfill the junior position on the council.

GLETI

She has completed the necessary training and only needs to complete the inquisition.

LEGBA

She is yet to accomplish anything of note. Certainly we have other options.

The assembled audience murmurs and gossips.

XEVIOSO

None of the others is ready.

LEGBA

This is no longer true. There is another.

The audience quiets down.

XEVIOSO

Who could possibly...

LEGBA

Your son.

XEVIOSO

I have no son.

The audience is shocked by this statement.

GLETI

He means Sakpata.

XEVIOSO

But he isn't even of Egberun, how
can he join the council?

LEGBA

If I may, your majesties...

Gleti nods in approval.

LEGBA (CONT'D)

Sakpata is an adopted son of
Egberun.

Murmurs of assent.

LEGBA (CONT'D)

The law makes no exceptions. If one
is the daughter or son of Egberun,
they are eligible to serve on the
council.

GLETI

The legality of Sakpata's
membership in our community is not
at question.

Xevioso crosses his arms and frowns.

LEGBA

While I do not question Ayaba's
loyalty or enthusiasm, I
question...

GLETI

Tread lightly....

LEGBA

Always, your majesty. I wonder if
she is mature enough to take on
such a great responsibility.

XEVIOSO

She is. Without question.

Gleti looks towards her husband.

GLETI
(gently)
I have question.

XEVIOSO
But...

She holds up a hand to silence him.

GLETI
I did not say I have the answers
yet.

Legba bows with deference.

XEVIOSO
And what does that mean?

GLETI
It means we have more important
matters for now. This is not the
time to determine the future of the
council. We must focus on the
future of our people.

The audience applauds.

Legba walks away from the queen and king. Gu steps forward to
continue the discussion.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, AYABA'S CHAMBER - LATER

Ayaba lays on her bed on her stomach. Sitting in chairs
around the room are Zinsu, Agasu, Perdita and Radin.

AYABA
Okay, so here's the plan.

Zinsu and Radin exchange discontented looks.

AYABA (CONT'D)
We're going search the castles and
find that dragon.

AGASU
Obviously.

PERDITA
All the castles?

Ayaba shakes her head.

AYABA
No, we start with the fourth
castle.

RADIN
Castle Fomo?

PERDITA
(laughing)
It's Castle Loko.

ZINSU
Do you know the name of EVERY
castle?

Perdita nods.

PERDITA
Fa, Da, Jo, Loko, Nana, Fon, Tado.
And Egberun.

She smiles proudly. The others are impressed.

AYABA
We start with Loko.

AGASU
I agree.

Zinsu balks. Agasu shoots her a dirty look.

PERDITA
What else are we going to do?

Radin shrugs.

RADIN
When do we leave?

AYABA
How about right after school?

ZINSU
Leave? Like, we're all actually
doing this?

Ayaba and Agasu nod eagerly. Perdita reluctantly joins them.

Zinsu isn't happy.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, SCHOOL CHAMBER - DAY

Ayaba, Zinsu, Agasu, Perdita, Sakpata, Radin and other students sit in a classroom. At the head of the class is OKANU, one of Ayaba's aunts. She is a Black woman in her 40s, with long braids. She is a tall, large woman who wears billowy flowing robes of red, green and black. She wears a gold tiara.

OKANU

For years, alchemists and sages have made these claims, but if magic is a real thing, there's little evidence to support it.

The kids the class boo and hiss quietly.

OKANU (CONT'D)

Calm down. I didn't say it wasn't real.

Ayaba perks up.

OKANU (CONT'D)

I said it's hard to prove to those who can't use it and choose not to believe.

Ayaba raises her hand.

SAKPATA

What about dragons?

Oohs and aahs from the class.

OKANU

Calm down. What about dragons?

SAKPATA

(smirking)

SOME people think they're real. What do you think?

Ayaba restrains herself from punching Sakpata.

OKANU

As always, it's not about what you or I...

She waves her hand around the class.

OKANU (CONT'D)

...or anyone THINKS. It's about knowledge.

RADIN

That leaves Sakpata out.

The class laughs. Sakpata ignores them with a knowing and devious smile.

Okanu pulls a chair to the center of the room and takes a seat.

OKANU

Let me tell you a story.

Groans.

OKANU (CONT'D)

I think you might like it.

The class calms down.

OKANU (CONT'D)

Long ago, there were four young girls. Girls who believed in dragons.

The class is interested, especially Ayaba.

OKANU (CONT'D)

These four girls went in search of dragons. They left their castle and village and voyaged into the great mountains.

She picks up a bag from her table and pulls a handful of dust from within. She tosses it into the air. The dust starts to sparkle and forms into the outline of a mountain range.

The class oohs and aahs.

OKANU (CONT'D)

The four girls were certain that a dragon lived in the mountains.

Okanu throws more dust into the air. This dust takes the form of four stick-figures. They walk up the slope of the first mountain.

OKANU (CONT'D)

They searched every mountain surrounding the valley.

The stick figures walk up and down each mountain.

OKANU (CONT'D)
 They searched from toe to tip.
 Every mountain they could find.

Ayaba leans in. She is enthralled.

OKANU (CONT'D)
 But no dragon.

Ayaba frowns.

OKANU (CONT'D)
 The four girls soon got into a
 disagreement. Three girls wanted to
 search on. They were certain the
 dragon must be hiding.

More dust. A cave entrance appears on one of the mountains.
 The four stick figures stand in front of it. Three on one
 side, one on the other.

OKANU (CONT'D)
 In a cave. Or a distant mountain
 yet reached.

The lone stick figure turns and walks away from the cave
 entrance, head down.

OKANU (CONT'D)
 The skeptical girl turned and
 walked home. The others had no
 choice but to follow.

Ayaba slumps back into her seat, disappointed.

OKANU (CONT'D)
 And that was the closest anyone
 from Egberun has ever come to
 finding a dragon.

Ayaba frowns.

OKANU (CONT'D)
 If one exists, no one has seen it
 and told the tale.

Okanu waves her hand at the dusty mountains and sparkling
 stick figures and they dissipate.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, SCHOOL CHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER

Ayaba stands at the front of the class as the last student
 leaves the chamber.

AYABA
Aunt Okanu, can I ask you a question?

OKANU
Of course, my door is always open to you.

Ayaba stares at the floor.

AYABA
That story...

Okanu grins.

OKANU
Yes.

AYABA
Why did my mother stop looking for the dragon?

Okanu hugs her.

OKANU
You're quite the smart one aren't you.

Ayaba shies away from the compliment.

OKANU (CONT'D)
When she was young, your mother was much like you.

Ayaba laughs.

OKANU (CONT'D)
It's true. She was always rushing into battle. She was the first to show up for school. She was the first to join the council.

Ayaba is shocked.

AYABU
The first?

OKANU
Yes, I was once on the council. So were my sisters.

Ayaba pulls up a chair and sits, shaking her head while she does.

AYABA
What happened?

OKANU
Let's just say your mother changed.

Ayaba frowns.

OKANU (CONT'D)
Our trip through the mountains
wasn't easy. Especially for your
mother.

Okanu pulls up a chair and sits as well.

OKANU (CONT'D)
When it ended, she refocused on
studies. She aced the Inquisition,
joined the council and worked so
hard she became the queen.

Beat.

AYABA
Is that what's going to happen to
me?

Okanu puts her hand on Ayaba's.

OKANU
You don't have to leave your
imagination behind.

Ayaba looks up.

OKANU (CONT'D)
I never did. And I'm not the only
one.

Ayaba smiles.

EXT. GBADU FOREST - LATER

Ayaba follows Okanu down a path in forest. Zinsu, Agasu,
Perdita and Radin follow.

ZINSU
So, just to be clear, we're just
going to walk to the castle, go in
and meet the dragon?

AYABA

Not yet. We have to visit my aunts first. To get ready.

PERDITA

Your aunts?

RADIN

(grinning)

It is a GREAT plan.

Ayaba turns to face them.

AYABA

Well, do you have a better...

They all hear a rustling in the bushes.

Ayaba puts a finger to her lips.

AYABA (CONT'D)

Shhh! I told you there was something magical out here.

The others are not convinced. They slowly back away from Ayaba.

Ayaba moves closer to the bushes and kneels down to get a look.

Nothing.

PERDITA

Are you sure that's a good...

AYABA

Shhh! I see something...

She leans in closer.

Out leaps a KNIFEBACK, a hairy beast the size of a large boar. It has tusks, horns and a series of sharp, knife-tipped ridges on it's back, hence the name.

It smashes into Ayaba, knocking her to the ground, and heads towards the others.

They scatter.

Radin steps forward to draw its attention, but then he thinks better of it and leaps out of the way as it goes by.

The knifeback starts to chase Zinsu, but she's too fast and it stops. It snorts a few times in anger and shakes its head.

Then it rushes straight at Agasu.

Agasu thinks of running, but instead hunkers down to face the beast.

It rushes straight at her. With a surprising quickness, Agasu sidesteps the beast and grabs ahold of the ridges on its back, low so it doesn't cut her hands.

Momentum carries the beast forward a little bit more, but Agasu digs her heels in and the beast stumbles and falls forward in a roll. Agasu is thrown off and the beast comes to a stop in front of Ayaba.

Ayaba reaches down and slaps the knifeback on its hind quarters.

It leaps up and scrambles towards the forest, knocking into the invisible Buluku, which is revealed. The knifeback runs away as fast as it can.

AYABA (CONT'D)

Ah hah!

The others all stare at the Buluku as they dust themselves off and get up.

AYABA (CONT'D)

I told you!

RADIN

Huh?

ZINSU

Literally did NOT see that coming.

The Buluku isn't scared, it stays visible.

BULUKU

Hi.

The kids give each other an incredulous look.

PERDITA

Uh... hello.

RADIN

What kind of mystical creature says "hi"?

Ayaba leans closer.

AYABA

Why did you run away last time?

ZINSU

Don't get too close to it.

The Buluku flits around a bit, but doesn't leave.

As the knifeback continues to run away, it veers off the road and into the forest. After a few steps, it comes upon Sakpata, who is hidden.

It runs right at him.

He barks like a dog and the knifeback runs away, deep into the forest.

Sakpata starts creeping towards Ayaba and the crew.

Agasu is looking towards the knifeback (and Sakpata).

AGASU

Was that a dog?

Everyone ignores Agasu and focuses on the Buluku.

BULUKU

It won't be easy.

PERDITA

What won't be easy?

AYABA

It talks in riddles.

BULUKU

SHE. Not IT.

The Buluku flies forward smiling at Ayaba.

BULUKU (CONT'D)

Hi again.

AYABA

Uhhh... hi.

Ayaba smiles. The Buluku returns the smile.

It flies from person to person, getting a close look at their faces.

In the distance, Sakpata steps closer, but stays hidden.

BULUKU

Are you all off to see dragon?

ZINSU
What dragon?

AGASU
Are you saying dragons are real?

BULUKU
Buluku is real, yes?

It flies up to Zinsu. She doesn't respond.

Radin nudges her.

Zinsu reaches out to touch the Buluku, but hesitates.

It nods to her.

Zinsu touches the Buluku's green fur. Her eyes grow larger.
She starts to pet it.

ZINSU
I've never felt anything so soft.

BULUKU
Dragons never live alone.

RADIN
What is it talking about?

The Buluku flies over to Radin.

BULUKU
SHE. Not IT.

RADIN
What is she talking about?

The Buluku smiles.

BULUKU
The guardian.

Ayaba runs over to the Buluku.

AYABA
The guardian?

BULUKU
Give it the coin.

AGASU
What coin?

The Buluku flies away.

Perdita looks down at the ground.

AGASU (CONT'D)
What coin?

The Buluku flits into the bushes and comes face to face with Sakpata.

BULUKU
Hi.

Sakpata covers his mouth so he doesn't scream. He runs off into the forest.

EXT. WEIRD HUT - LATER

Okanu leads the crew towards the front of the hut. The hut is made of a cherry-colored wood and is covered in vines and plants. If you didn't know what you were looking for, you might miss it.

SOGBO stands outside waiting for them.

SOGBO
Good to see you. I assume your trip was uneventful, as always.

Okanu and Sogbo hug. Ayaba looks at her friends and then back at Sogbo.

AYABA
As always.

They go inside. Through a big window, they can see AGADJA.

INT. WEIRD HUT - CONTINUOUS

Okanu leads Ayaba and her friends inside the hut. They leave the front door open.

Inside, the hut is much larger than it was on the outside. Okanu walks in and hugs Sogbo and Agadja, her sisters, both of whom are also in their 40s.

The three sisters are very different, even if they resemble each other in the face and wear similar robes. Where Okanu wears patterns of red, green and black, the other two wear the same three colors, but in different combinations. For Okanu, red is dominant. For Sogbo, it's green. For Agadja, it's black.

Sogbo is medium height and weight and wears a silver tiara. Her hair is in cornrows. Agadja is short and stout and she wears a platinum tiara on her shaved head.

The hut is filled with a little bit of everything. The center of the room is a large cauldron made of ceek metal. Around the room are utensils, vegetables of all types, ingredients for potions in may jars, bottles and baskets. Clothes hang from hooks and several creatures are loose in the room: birds, frogs, cats, a snake.

SOGBO

Welcome, friends of Ayaba!

She holds her arms open to hug them all, which she does.

AGADJA

Vodu! Vodun! Vodzu!

Sogbo swats her on the arm.

SOGBO

That's about enough of that nonsense around here.

From outside, Sakpata peers into the hut. He ducks back down to avoid being seen.

OKANU

So what brings you young people to the Weird Hut today?

AYABA

Dragons.

The aunts smile and chuckle. The kids not so much.

ZINSU

Some people are obsessed with dragons.

AGASU

We're not obsessed with dragons. We want to find ONE dragon.

SOGBO

One dragon is more than enough.

AGADJA

(laughing)

What do you know about dragons?

OKANU

More than anyone needs to know.

Ayaba walks closer to them.

AYABA

Anyone?

Okanu laughs and puts her hand on Ayaba's shoulder.

OKANU

Sorry, Ayaba, that was about my past, not about your future.

AGADJA

What do you want to know, little one?

AYABA

Well... uh... how do you catch a dragon?

ZINSU

That's a GREAT question.

AGASU

I thought so.

SOGBO

We know how to catch a dragon...

She walks over to a bookshelf and starts digging around.

SOGBO (CONT'D)

...in fact, I think...

RADIN

What?

Sakpata peeks through the window again. He ducks down again and leans closer to the open door to hear better.

SOGBO

...here it is!

She pulls a scroll from the shelf.

AGADJA

You found that old thing?

Perdita perks

PERDITA

What is it?

OKANU

Instructions.

Perdita perks up. Ayaba walks over and looks over Sogbo's shoulder as she opens it.

SOGBO
Back in the day...

AGADJA
When we were on our own dragon
hunt.

Agadja rubs Ayaba's back.

OKANU
We spent MANY hours in the royal
library.

PERDITA
My favorite place.

AGADJA
There was also that traveling
scribe. You remember him?

SOGBO
Where was he from again? I've heard
of it, but it slips my mind at the
moment.

Sogbo scratches her head.

OKANU
Avrikiti.

SOGBO
Yes! I never got to visit myself.

AGADJA
Okanu and I had a chance to visit
during the war.

OKANU
It was nice once. Now? Who knows?

Sogbo rolls the scroll up and hands it to Ayaba.

PERDITA
What's in the scroll?

OKANU
Directions on how to catch a
dragon.

Zinsu and Radin exchange a worried look. Ayaba, Agasu and Perdita excitedly stare at the scroll.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, AYABA'S CHAMBER - LATER

Ayaba and her friends walk back into Ayaba's bedchamber.

AYABA
See. I know we can do it.

RADIN
See what?

Ayaba plops on the bed in frustration.

AYABA
Clearly there is a dragon.

ZINSU
According to your weird aunts.

AYABA
One of those aunts is a teacher.

AGASU
And a pretty good one.

Perdita shrugs.

PERDITA
Sure, she's a good teacher, but you
have to admit she's a little weird.

AYABA
Why do you say that?

Perdita backs down.

PERDITA
I... uh....

Radin steps forward.

RADIN
I mean, she lives alone with her
sisters. In her 40s.

Agasu punches him in the shoulder.

AGASU
Shut it.

Radin gives a "what, me worry" shrug.

ZINSU
It is weird.

AYABA

It's weird that some people want to live outside the castle?

PERDITA

Alone?

Ayaba gets up off the bed.

AYABA

She isn't alone, she has her sisters.

ZINSU

Then why doesn't your mom visit them?

Ayaba shrugs.

AYABA

Okay, maybe they're a little weird.

RADIN

I wasn't going to say anything, but you saw the jars and bottles, right?

ZINSU

Frogs legs. Toad stools.

Perdita makes a gross out face.

AGASU

I like them. I like the Weird Hut.

RADIN

You would, wouldn't you?

She punches him again.

AYABA

Whatever, they said the dragon was real and gave us this!

She pulls out the scroll.

ZINSU

It could be a fake.

Everyone shoots her dirty looks.

ZINSU (CONT'D)

Okay... okay...

Ayaba opens up the scroll and starts reading. The others lean over her shoulder to read along.

RADIN

I thought it would be like a magic spell or something.

PERDITA

No, you can clearly tell it's not magic by the lack of runes on the outside...

AYABA

It says here that a dragon will have a protective spell outside their home.

Agasu can't read very well and walks away. She grabs a pitcher from a table and pours herself a glass of water.

AGASU

I don't much care for magic.

ZINSU

Too hard for you?

AGASU

No, because I can't punch it.

She smacks her fist into her palm.

RADIN

What kind of spell?

AYABA

A guardian spell.

AGASU

What's that? Can I punch it?

Ayaba traces her finger over the scroll's text as she reads.

AYABA

Maybe?

She reads a little further.

PERDITA

Probably not. Nobody ever gets past a guardian spell.

ZINSU

Because magic is real?

AYABA

Says you have to give the guardian
a gift.

RADIN

I don't have any gifts. I'm a
little behind on my Harvest
Festival shopping.

Zinsu slaps him on the arm.

RADIN (CONT'D)

What? It's been a tough year.

AYABA

No, it says it takes a magical
coin.

Perdita lights up. She reaches into her pocket and pulls out
the coin.

AGASU

What kind of coin.

PERDITA

A dragon coin.

They all turn to look at Perdita, who holds up the dragon
coin.

They all rush over to take a closer look.

RADIN

Wow, where'd you get that?

PERDITA

In the castle.

Ayaba rushes over and takes the coin from Perdita and holds
it up to the light. Perdita is a little miffed.

ZINSU

Which castle?

PERDITA

Castle Da.

RADIN

Which one was that?

AGASU

The second one?

Perdita shakes her head.

PERDITA

The third.

She walks over and tries to take the coin back from Ayaba, but Ayaba turns away. Ayaba walks towards her bed, engrossed in the coin. Perdita crosses her arms and pouts.

AYABA

This has to be it! This is how we get to the dragon!

Agasu gets excited. Perdita pouts. Radin shrugs.

Zinsu picks up the scroll and examines it with a frown.

ZINSU

Are you sure that thing isn't cursed?

AYABA

Of course not. It's perfect.

Ayaba beams over the coin.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, THRONE ROOM - LATER

Ayaba walks into the throne room. Xevioso sits on his throne, reading a book. Gleti stands next to Legba at a table looking over a map that is stretched out and held open by heavy candlesticks at each corner.

No one looks up when she walks in. She stands there for a few seconds.

No response.

She clears her throat.

XEVIOSO

Ayaba! To what do we owe this pleasure.

Gleti doesn't look up.

Legba nods casually towards Ayaba.

AYABA

I... I wanted to ask you...

Xevioso closes his book and sets it on his lap.

AYABA (CONT'D)

If I could... you know...

Xevioso smiles gently.

XEVIOSO

Go ahead.

AYABA

I... okay. Would it be okay if I went to the rest of the castles?

Gleti finally looks up at her.

LEGBA

And why would you possibly want to do that?

Gleti fully stands up and takes a few steps towards Ayaba.

GLETI

That is a good question.

AYABA

To... uh... look for the dragon?

Xevioso continues to smile. Legba chuckles as he turns his attention back to the map.

GLETI

Absolutely not.

Ayaba stamps her foot.

AYABA

Why not!?!

XEVIOSO

Ayaba....

It's an admonition.

Ayaba crosses her arms and pouts.

GLETI

This is the last I want to hear of dragons. Councilmembers have no times for kids games. We must prepare for battle.

She turns and walks back toward the table.

AYABA

But...

GLETI

Enough.

Ayaba thinks of responding, but she makes eye contact with her father. Xevioso shakes his head.

Legba flashes a devious smile, but quickly hides it.

GLETI (CONT'D)
You are to go to your room and stay
there until I call for you.

Ayaba appeals to Xevioso with her eyes.

He shakes his head again.

Legba rejoins Gleti at the map, suppressing a smile.

Ayaba storms out of the throne room.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, SAKPATA'S CHAMBER - LATER

Sakpata sits at a desk in his chamber, staring at a parchment and holding a quill pen. He's been writing on it, but the ink is now dry. He's stuck.

A knock at the door interrupts him. He looks panicked.

He rolls up the parchment and tosses the quill on the desk. He opens a drawer and crams the parchment in.

LEGBA (O.S.)
Don't fuss about. It's me.

Sakpata looks relieved, but he still closes the drawer with the parchment in it.

He walks over and opens the door, letting Legba in.

Sakpata looks up and down the hallway outside his room. He closes the door and locks it.

LEGBA (CONT'D)
Careful, as always.

Sakpata turns around and looks at him angrily.

SAKPATA
Clearly I place more value on my
life than you place on your own.

LEGBA
Truer than you may think, young
one.

Sakpata laughs.

He reaches into his robes and pulls out an amulet. He smiles.

Legba reaches into his own robes and pulls out his own amulet.

Each of them takes their amulets off and places them on the table.

Smoke begins to emit from each of their bodies, the cloud around Sakpata growing bigger and faster. The smoke grows to envelop each of the men.

Seconds later, the smoke dissipates. Where Sakpata stood is now a taller man. He is in his early 30s, has lighter Black skin, is on the shorter side and has a shaved head.

Where Legba stood is now a woman in her late 20s. She has long orange hair that contrasts with her dark Black skin. She is taller than Sakpata.

The two embrace and kiss.

Once they are done, Legba walks towards the desk and looks around.

LEGBA (CONT'D)

Have you finished your message home?

Sakpata walks towards the desk and opens the drawer. He pulls out the scroll.

SAKPATA

Not yet, I was just finishing up.

LEGBA

Excellent. You would've enjoyed it. The queen didn't even give her a chance.

SAKPATA

Good, but I have other news.

Legba smiles.

LEGBA

What is it? I love new news.

SAKPATA

The dragon is real.

Legba doesn't believe it.

LEGBA
Yeah, right.

SAKPATA
(nodding)
It's true.

LEGBA
(laughing)
Because you saw it?

Sakpata shakes his head.

SAKPATA
No, but the old weird jungle ladies
did.

Legba is taken aback.

SAKPATA (CONT'D)
My AUNTS.

LEGBA
Those crones?

They laugh.

SAKPATA
(nodding)
They saw it when they were younger.
So did the queen. It's why they
aren't friends now.

LEGBA
This is hilarious. Taking the
valley will be easy.

SAKPATA
Our Dogbari brothers and sisters
will remain unbeaten in combat.

Legba picks up the quill and hands it to Sakpata.

LEGBA
Let's tell them the good news.

Sakpata takes the quill and starts writing again.

SAKPATA
Bring me the bat.

Legba walks across the room to a large black bat in a cage.
She opens the cage and the bat steps out onto Legba's finger
as if the creature already knows her.

Sakpata finishes writing in the scroll and sets the quill down. He leans down and blows on the ink to dry it.

Legba walks over with the bat. Sakpata reaches up and pets it.

SAKPATA (CONT'D)

Hello there, Dahomey, my pet. You ready to journey home?

The bat lets out a happy screech. Sakpata reaches for a bowl on the table and grabs a berry and gives it to the bat. Dahomey chomps it down.

LEGBA

I wish it were us that were flying home.

Sakpata rolls up the scroll and ties a string around it. He ties the scroll to the bat's leg.

SAKPATA

Soon, my love, soon.

He takes the bat to the window and tosses it into the air. It flies into the night.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, AYABA'S CHAMBER - LATER

Ayaba stands next to her bed, surrounded by Agasu, Zinsu, Perdita and Radin. Each of them carries a backpack.

Ayaba places a canteen in her pack and closes it.

AYABA

Is everybody ready?

ZINSU

Not really.

Ayaba frowns.

AGASU

I am always at the ready.

RADIN

So you aren't even going to try to obey your parents?

AYABA

My mother, you mean? My father TOLD me to go.

ZINSU
Did he really say that?

Ayaba walks across the room and grabs a length of rope and puts it into the backpack.

AYABA
Not it so many words.

PERDITA
Are you going to get in trouble?
Are WE going to get in trouble? Am
I going to get in trouble?

AYABA
No, no, no. They're all too busy
preparing for the Dogbari. We'll be
fine.

ZINSU
Sure we will.

Ayaba zips up her backpack and slings it over her shoulder.

AYABA
Are you coming?

AGASU
Of course.

PERDITA
I'm coming. But I'm worried.

Ayaba and Agasu walk out.

Perdita walks out the door.

RADIN
(to Zinsu)
Let's go.

Radin stares at Zinsu until she finally gives in.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, THRONE ROOM - LATER

Ayaba leads the group quietly down the hallway. To get to the exit, they have to get past the open entrance to the throne room.

Ayaba tiptoes down the passage and stops just outside the throne room. She turns back towards the group and whispers.

AYABA
We need a distraction.

ZINSU
Why can't you do it?

Ayaba shakes her head in frustration.

AYABA
I'm supposed to be confined to my
room until further notice.

Zinsu rolls her eyes.

PERDITA
I can't do it, your parents don't
even know who I am.

AYABA
Yet. You'll get there.

PERDITA
But not today.

They all look at Radin.

RADIN
Don't even think about it. Your
parents and my parents don't
exactly... uh... get along.

Ayaba turns to Zinsu.

AYABA
Please?

Beat.

AYABA (CONT'D)
If there were any other way...

Zinsu turns and walks towards the throne room.

ZINSU
I need to talk to Legba about my
latest invention anyway. I think
the signal may have a strange
interaction with ceek.

AYABA
Whatever works. Meet us outside as
soon as you can.

Zinsu enters the throne room. As she walks in, she pulls a scroll out of a pocket in her robes.

ZINSU
My queen, I have something I think
you'll need to see.

GLETI
What is it?

ZINSU
A new invention. It seems to have
certain interactions with ceek that
produce... interesting effects.

While everyone inside is distracted, Ayaba and the others
sneak by one-by-one.

ZINSU (CONT'D)
If Legba would take a look at these
calculations, I think we can
confirm...

Agasu is the last to get past the entrance to the throne
room. The group slowly walks down the passage.

RADIN
The knights!

He points towards the doorway at the end of the passage where
Gu and a dozen knights stand.

PERDITA
Now what do we do?

Agasu steps forward.

AGASU
I got this.

Agasu walks straight up to the knights and addresses Gu.

AGASU (CONT'D)
Sir, can you tell me how to sign up
to be a knight apprentice?

Gu gets super excited.

GU
You want to be a knight?

AGASU
I'm ready.

Gu puts his hand on Agasu's shoulder.

GU
That's great!

Gu turns towards the knights.

GU (CONT'D)
Cal, take this crew to the Western
wall of the castle. There are
reports of a missing bolt in one of
the retaining panels.

CAL
Sir!

Cal heads out the front gate. The other knights follow.

GU
I see you've already started
collecting your armor.

AGASU
Armor is kinda my hobby.

GU
Fascinating.

They walk down the passage.

Ayaba holds Radin and Perdita back for a second, then they
slip out the gate.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, ENTRANCE CHAMBER - LATER

Ayaba walks towards the gate. The others follow.

Zinsu walks up to them, finally catching up.

ZINSU
Wait.

The others all turn back to look at her, standing just inside
the gate.

Agasu catches up to them as well.

ZINSU (CONT'D)
I don't want to do this.

Agasu is exasperated.

AYABA
What? I thought we already talked
this out?

She's genuinely shocked.

ZINSU
(under her breath)
YOU already talked it out.

AYABA
Why not?

RADIN
Maybe we're not all as adventurous
as you are.

Ayaba throws up her hands.

AYABA
But we have to save Egberun.

ZINSU
Do we? Your parents think that they
can do the job.

RADIN
Yeah, what makes us smarter than
adults. Like the queen?

Ayaba crosses her arms.

AYABA
I didn't say we were smarter. We
just... know things they don't.

AGASU
Yeah, and the queen doesn't believe
in dragons. But her sisters do.

PERDITA
It does seem to be worth checking
out.

Radin is still skeptical.

RADIN
I'm not sure.

AYABA
If we're wrong, nothing happens. We
aren't distracting anyone. We
aren't part of the solution.

Zinsu's interest is piqued.

AYABA (CONT'D)
Don't you want to do something?

AGASU
I do.

AYABA
If we're right...

She sees Sakpata coming towards them.

AYABA (CONT'D)
Uh-oh.

Ayaba makes eye contact with Sakpata. He smiles.

AYABA (CONT'D)
Sakpata.

She nods in his direction.

AYABA (CONT'D)
Let's get out of here.

She takes off running. Agasu and Perdita immediately follow.

Radin starts to follow but notices she isn't moving.

RADIN
C'mon. Sakpata is a jerk.

She's reluctant, but she follows.

Sakpata gives chase, but Ayaba and her friends know the town better and they eventually lose him by winding their way through the village.

TITLE CARD: Castle Loko

EXT. CASTLE LOKO - DAY

Ayaba and her friends emerge from the forest.

PERDITA
What's wrong with your brother?

AYABA
He's not my REAL brother.

They approach Castle Loko, which looks more well-kept than the previous castles. It's made of reddish stone.

Two giants guard the front entrance, GRUM and GLOM.

Grum is tall with dark Black skin and four arms. He is pure giant muscle. Glom is shorter, stouter and she is light-skinned. Both carry large wooden clubs on their shoulders. Each of them wears what are basically hair shirts that are knee-length.

Ayaba and the others stay hidden behind trees and bushes as they move slowly towards the front of the castle. They stop behind a six-foot tall hedge that surrounds the castle, except for the road up to the front gate.

AYABA (CONT'D)
Giants. Seriously?

ZINSU
I didn't even know giants were real.

PERDITA
Oh, sure, they're....

AYABA
Shhhhh!!!

Perdita is hurt.

Ayaba sits down and gestures for the others to join her. They do. Agasu kneels while the others sit.

AYABA (CONT'D)
We're going to need a distraction.

ZINSU
Again?

AGASU
I've got it.

Agasu steps up and rushes at the giants, starsword drawn and glowing. She screams a war cry as she goes.

AYABA
Wait!

Agasu doesn't wait. She rushes through the hedge, starsword drawn.

Ayaba and Radin rush through, their starswords glowing. Perdita and Zinsu follow more slowly, being weaponless.

Agasu continues her war cry as she rushes forward. The second she passes the hedge, the giants' size is revealed to be an illusion. They are each about a foot tall in reality.

GRUM

No. You aren't the masters.

GLOM

No. But the masters will be home soon.

Perdita steps forward.

PERDITA

We're... uh... FRIENDS of the masters.

ZINSU

(whispered)

Quick thinking.

Grum and Glom walk toward the castle. They wave for everyone to follow.

GRUM

Yes. We like friends of the masters.

GLOM

Yes. Come inside for hospitality.

Ayaba looks back at the others.

Zinsu shrugs and goes inside. Everyone follows.

INT. CASTLE LOKO - CONTINUOUS

Grum and Glom lead the kids through the throne room inside the castle. Things are clean and well-maintained, even though nobody else is inside.

PERDITA

This is a very nice castle.

GRUM

Yes. We've gotta keep it neat.

GLOM

Yes. For when the masters return.

Ayaba and Perdita exchange a look of concern.

AYABA

Masters?

GRUM

Yes. We keep castle for the masters.

GLOM

Yes. They've been gone a long, long time.

GRUM

Yes. But they'll be back.

GLOM

Yes. Very soon. Any day now.

They walk into a side room, gesturing for the group to follow them.

AYABA

What is all this?

GRUM

Yes. This belongs to the masters.

GLOM

Yes. They'll be back soon. Any day now.

Radin picks up a gold coin. Perdita sees him.

PERDITA

(whispered)

What are you doing?

Grum and Glom see that Radin picked up the coin. They both grow in size, becoming almost too large to still fit in the room.

GRUM

No. The treasure is not yours.

GLOM

No. It belongs to the masters.

Grum swings his club, but Ayaba ducks.

Glom swings her club, but Radin jumps back out of the way. He throws the coin back into the room.

RADIN

Run.

They all take off running. The giants try to give chase but are too big to make it through the doorway.

GRUM

No. We don't like you.

GLOM

No. We only like the masters.

Ayaba and the crew run through the castle's gate and back into the forest.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, AYABA'S ROOM - LATER

Ayaba lies on her bed, staring at the ceiling. She pulls the blanket up to her chin.

She stares at the ceiling for several seconds and then she gets up.

She walks across the room to her desk and opens the scroll again. She reads for several seconds.

She stops and picks up the coin.

She closes her fist around it and covers her fist with her other hand.

AYABA

Great Mawu, I need your help. I wish you could give me advice directly.

Beat.

AYABA (CONT'D)

I just don't know what to do.

Beat.

AYABA (CONT'D)

Can you give me anything?

Beat.

AYABA (CONT'D)

No? Okay. I guess maybe you can at least give me the courage to try again?

Beat.

AYABA (CONT'D)
 I mean, I guess I can't give up at
 this point, can I?

Beat.

AYABA.
 Okay. I guess you've helped me make
 a decision. I'll do it.

She puts the coin down and goes to bed.

TITLE CARD: Castle Nana

EXT. CASTLE NANA - DAY

Ayaba and Zinsu lead the gang up to Castle Nana. The grey stone is mostly covered with moss. The castle looks cold and empty. It is dark, as if light doesn't want to get anywhere near the place.

RADIN
 Who lived in these castles? They're
 so gross and empty.

PERDITA
 They are pretty boring now, but in
 the past...

AGASU
 What, were there multiple kings and
 queens?

Ayaba moves ahead, headed straight for the front gate, which is broken. A crack large enough for any of them to slip through runs through the middle of the gate.

PERDITA
 No, these were originally homes for
 the council members.

RADIN
 THOSE must've been the days.

ZINSU
 Right?

AYABA
 Let's go.

She slips through the crack.

INT. CASTLE NANA - CONTINUOUS

Radin sits on the throne in an empty chamber. The rest of the crew sits on chairs, the floor, a table.

RADIN

I now call the court together for
my pronouncements.

Everyone else is mopey and doesn't laugh. Except Agasu, who is always happy.

AGASU

I couldn't begin to imagine living
under King Radin.

PERDITA

Also, what king announces
themselves?

AGASU

It's like you've never even been to
a throne room before.

Ayaba stares out the window. Agasu nudges her. Ayaba doesn't respond.

AGASU (CONT'D)

You alive in there?

Zinsu sits up in her chair.

ZINSU

She'd better be.

Agasu turns to look at her.

AYABA

It's gotta be in the next one.

RADIN

This is getting kind of old...

PERDITA

I mean, it seems silly to stop now,
but...

Ayaba turns and walks out of the chamber.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, AYABA'S ROOM - LATER

Back in Ayaba's room, she sits alone with Agasu, who drinks a steaming beverage from a ceeek metal mug.

AGASU
We only have two left.

Ayaba walks to the window and stares at the castles in the dark.

AYABA
I know. But I have a feeling about this next one.

AGASU
I hope you are right. The others are getting...

Ayaba waves her off.

AYABA
The others don't share our love of adventure. They don't want to DO anything with their lives.

Agasu shrugs.

AGASU
They all want to be on the council. Like you. Like me.

AYABA
Ha! They want to take the easy way. Through books.

AGASU
Books are not the easy way for me.

Ayaba turns to look at her.

AYABA
Sorry. I like books just fine. They serve their purpose.

She turns and looks out the window again.

AYABA (CONT'D)
I'm just ready. I want to DO something. I want to meet a dragon.

Agasu looks at her with concern. Ayaba ignores her and stares at the shadow of Castle Fon.

TITLE CARD: Castle Fon

EXT. CASTLE FON - DAY

In the daylight, Castle Fon doesn't look imposing. It's the smallest of the castles so far. Small blocks make up a small castle. It's almost Lego-like.

The gate is open.

INT. CASTLE FON - CONTINUOUS

Ayaba kneels on one knee. The others stand spread out behind her. They look curiously at something on the floor before them.

AGASU

What is it?

Reverse to see what they are looking at.

PERDITA

I think it's dung.

AGASU

What's a dung?

Everyone looks at her.

AGASU (CONT'D)

What?

They turn back to the dung.

AYABA

It's dragon dung.

Zinsu stands up. She's angry.

ZINSU

You have to be kidding me?

RADIN

How could you possibly know that?

Ayaba stands up and gestures towards the dung.

AYABA

Look at the size of it.

PERDITA

It IS awfully large.

AYABA

It's pretty fresh, too.

Zinsu laughs.

ZINSU
So you're an expert on fresh dragon
dung now?

AYABA
No, but Perdita is.

They all turn to Perdita.

PERDITA
I... uh... I mean, it is the
largest dung I've ever seen.

They wait expectantly.

PERDITA (CONT'D)
Like larger than anything in the
library.

Beat.

PERDITA (CONT'D)
But other than what your aunts told
us...

Zinsu smiles.

PERDITA (CONT'D)
There's just no evidence for
dragons. Now as to what this COULD
be...

Ayaba walks out of the chamber.

PERDITA (CONT'D)
I mean it could be a dragon?

RADIN
Pick a side.

He and Zinsu walk out.

AGASU
Do NOT pick a side, Perdita. I
support you.

Agasu and Perdita walk out of the chamber.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, AYABA'S CHAMBER - DAY

Ayaba stands ready to go, backpack on her shoulder. Perdita and Agasu sit in chairs, a bit more relaxed than Ayaba.

Zinsu walks into the room. Alone.

Ayaba is puzzled.

AYABA
Where's Radin?

ZINSU
He's not coming.

Perdita and Agasu leap to their feet.

AYABA
What happened?

PERDITA
Where is he?

AGASU
Who...
(trails off)
...is he?

They all turn and stare at her.

AGASU (CONT'D)
Sorry. Got carried away.

ZINSU
He got in trouble with his parents.
He is confined to his chambers.

Ayaba relaxes.

AYABA
Oh, no problem. We'll just sneak
him out!

ZINSU
We can't. He's under guard. His
parents will be having a
conversation with your parents.

Ayaba paces back and forth.

AYABA
We can definitely get him past the
guards. All we have to do is...

ZINSU

AYABA!

She stops and looks at Zinsu.

ZINSU (CONT'D)

He doesn't want to break out.

Beat.

ZINSU (CONT'D)

He's done.

Ayaba is shocked.

PERDITA

What?

ZINSU

He's tired of all this nonsense.

Beat.

ZINSU (CONT'D)

And so am I.

Zinsu walks out of the room.

PERDITA

This all seems too problematic. I
don't think I can keep it up.

She walks out, too.

Agasu stays.

AYABA

You can go.

Agasu shakes her head.

AGASU

No, I believe you.

Ayaba hugs her.

AYABA

You can go. We can't do this. Not
just the two of us.

Agasu starts to leave.

AGASU

You sure? I could stay.

Ayaba shakes her head.

AYABA

No. Go.

She does.

Ayaba shuts the door and throws herself on her bed.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, SAKPATA'S CHAMBER - LATER

Sakpata stands at his window. Dahomey the bat flies down from the night sky and lands on his finger.

He takes a scroll from the bat's leg and puts Dahomey back in his cage.

He walks over to the desk and opens the scroll. He reads it.

SAKPATA

A transmogrification spell?

He reads a bit more.

SAKPATA (CONT'D)

An organic material component?

He walks over and picks up one of Dahomey's treats and returns to the scroll.

SAKPATA (CONT'D)

Okay, what were those words again...

He scans the scroll.

SAKPATA (CONT'D)

Oh... klaatu buluku nikto!

The treat briefly glows green.

He takes it and gives it to Dahomey.

He feeds it to the bat and steps back.

The bat coughs.

Then it falls over on the bottom of the cage.

Sakpata rushes over to take a look.

From the bottom of the cage, the Buluku flies up. Except this one glows green.

SAKPATA (CONT'D)
It worked! Now...

He runs back to the scroll.

SAKPATA (CONT'D)
Karis... Ayaba!

The glowing Buluku flies across the room and out the window.
Sakpata grins as it goes.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, AYABA'S CHAMBER - LATER

Ayaba sits at her desk reading and re-reading the scroll. She fidgets with the coin.

BULUKU (O.S.)
Hi.

Ayaba's eyes light up and she turns towards the window to see the Buluku hovering outside.

She leaps up and rushes towards the window.

AYABA
What is it? Why are you here?

BULUKU
I came to warn you.

Ayaba listens eagerly.

BULUKU (CONT'D)
You MUST complete your quest.

AYABA
How can I? All my friends left.

BULUKU
Then you must go it alone.

Ayaba paces back and forth.

AYABA
When should I go?

BULUKU
Tonight. Now.

The Buluku flies back out the window.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ayaba steps out of her chamber, carrying her backpack.

She looks around. Seeing no one, she starts to run down the hallway.

She turns a corner.

There stands Sakpata.

Ayaba sighs.

SAKPATA

And what are YOU doing out and about so late at night?

AYABA

Clearly that's none of your business.

SAKPATA

Quite the sisterly attitude, if I say so myself.

AYABA

You're the one creeping about at night.

Sakpata laughs.

SAKPATA

Let me tell you a story.

AYABA

Don't.

SAKPATA

It's brief. Boy vs. girl.

Ayaba rolls her eyes.

AYABA

Oh, please.

SAKPATA

Once upon a time, a time that has yet to pass...

Ayaba can't help but show her curiosity.

SAKPATA (CONT'D)

A boy faced a girl where dangerous creatures dwell.

(MORE)

SAKPATA (CONT'D)

The girl thought she could save the
d... ay. The day.

Ayaba raises an eyebrow.

SAKPATA (CONT'D)

And the girl thought she was the
smart one. She thought she had
everything under control. But the
BOY knew things she didn't. And the
boy, as always, won the day.

Ayaba frowns.

AYABA

Nice fairy tale. Grimm's?

SAKPATA

You'll soon learn more than you
know now. I look forward to that
day.

AYABA

Whatever.

She walks past him.

He chuckles to himself.

EXT. EGBERUN CASTLE - MOMENTS LATER

Ayaba slips through the small gate and closes it behind her.
The village is quiet and dark.

She slips away into the night, headed towards the Gbadu
forest. No one sees her leave.

Once she's outside the village, she pulls out her starsword
and lights it up. She moves into the forest.

EXT. GBADU FOREST - LATER

Ayaba comes to the fork in the road.

She looks down the path towards her aunts' hut.

She follows the path to the castles.

Something rustles in the bushes near her.

She stops and stares into the forest.

She sees nothing.

She turns back and takes the road to her aunts' hut.

INT. WEIRD HUT - NIGHT

Ayaba walks through the darkness, her starsword leading the way.

She arrives at the hut. Her aunts are awake and candlelight flickers through the window.

Ayaba walks inside.

OKANU

It's a bit late for a visit, don't you think?

AYABA

You're still up.

SOGBO

We're always up.

AGADJA

Too many things to do.

Ayaba sits on a chair.

Sogbo hands her a cup with a steaming beverage in it. She takes a sip and makes a face of disgust. She takes another sip.

OKANU

So what brings you out at this time of night?

Ayaba takes another sip of her drink.

AYABA

I... I've been talking to a magical creature.

Okanu looks from Sogbo to Agadja with concern.

SOGBO

That's always a dicey proposition.

AYABA

It said I have to go ahead and find the dragon, even if my friends aren't going to help me.

SOGBO
Why wouldn't they help you?

AGADJA
Doesn't seem very friendly to me.

Ayaba finishes off her drink and holds the cup up for more.

AYABA
I mean... they MEAN well, but, you
know... a DRAGON.

The three sisters chuckle.

AYABA (CONT'D)
What should I do?

OKANU
What do you want to do?

Ayaba shrugs.

SOGBO
Well, that's where you start.

AGADJA
All journeys start with a decision.

Ayaba nods in understanding.

OKANU
You have to believe in yourself,
regardless of your journey.

AYABA
I do. But nobody else seems to.

AGADJA
You've always believed in yourself.

SOGBO
Maybe too much.

Ayaba is puzzled.

OKANU
You need your friends. No one
achieves anything on their own.

SOGBO
We all need help.

AGADJA
Some more than others.

They all laugh. Sogbo throws a dish towel at Agadja, who ducks.

EXT. GBADU FOREST - LATER

Ayaba walks down the forest path. The only light is her starsword.

She takes several steps.

Something moves through the forest brush. She turns to look but sees nothing in the dark.

She starts to walk faster.

She turns and looks behind her.

In the distance, she sees a pinpoint of green light.

She turns and runs from it.

After a while, she looks back again.

This time the green light is bigger.

And closer.

She runs.

It gets closer.

Faster.

Closer.

She's panting now. She stumbles a little.

She gives up. Stops running. Turns and faces the light.

It's the Buluku.

BULUKU

Hi.

Ayaba bends over, panting.

AYABA

Wha... what do you want?

BULUKU

You need the Dagger of Neyluma.

AYABA
The what of what?

BULUKU
The only blade that can slay a
dragon.

Ayaba perks up.

AYABA
Oh yeah? And where might I find
this dragon-slaying blade.

BULUKU
Radin.

Ayaba doesn't understand at first, but it slowly dawns on
her.

AYABA
Wait, you mean Radin has this
dagger?

The Buluku buzzes up to her face.

BULUKU
No. His father does.

Ayaba turns towards the forest, exasperated.

AYABA
How am I supposed to get ANYTHING
from Radin or his dad?

She turns back towards the Buluku.

AYABA (CONT'D)
He's on lock....

The Buluku is gone.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, SAKPATA'S CHAMBER - LATER

From his dark room, Sakpata stares out into the black night.
A green light appears from below and starts to grow. The
Buluku floats upward, lighting up Sakpata's face, which
breaks into a smile.

BULUKU
Hi.

The Buluku floats in through the window and lands on Sakpata's finger. Its' green glow begins to fade and it turns back into the bat.

Sakpata gives the bat a non-magical treat.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, PASSAGE - DAY

Ayaba walks down the passage. She is NOT carrying her sword.

She slowly walks towards the front of Radin's family's chamber suite. Standing outside are four knights.

She quickly ducks out of sight.

She looks around and notices an open window.

She goes to the window and peers outside. A TINY ledge leads to Radin's room.

Ayaba takes a deep breath and steps out onto the ledge.

She's steady, but the ledge is small and she can barely hang on.

Dahomey the bat flies by. She loses her grip and almost falls, but catches herself.

She quickly makes her way over to the next window and hops inside.

Radin sits at the desk in his room, reading from a large book.

AYABA
Studying hard?

Radin jumps before looking up at her.

RADIN
Inquisition.

Ayaba nods knowingly.

AYABA
Haven't seen you in a while.

Radin frowns. He shuts the book.

RADIN
What are you doing here?

Beat.

AYABA

I... uh... I need a favor.

Radin leaps to his feet.

RADIN

You've got to be kidding me?

He starts pacing back and forth aggressively.

AYABA

I...

RADIN

You're the reason I'm on lockdown.

AYABA

I didn't mean...

RADIN

I don't want to hear it.

Ayaba blocks him and he stops pacing.

AYABA

It wasn't my fa...

RADIN

No.

She thinks about saying more, but chooses not to.

RADIN (CONT'D)

You need to leave before someone hears you. If my parents...

AYABA

I need the Dagger of Neyluma.

Radin laughs harshly.

RADIN

That's locked up in my father's PRIVATE collection.

AYABA

I need it.

RADIN

What for?

She turns and looks out the window.

AYABA
The dragon.

Now Radin is angry. He holds it in as much as he can.

RADIN
No.

She turns to look at him.

AYABA
What?

RADIN
I'm not stealing from my father for
you. I'm in enough trouble as it
is.

AYABA
But...

RADIN
No. Leave now or I will call the
guards myself.

Beat.

AYABA
So that's that?

RADIN
It would seem so.

Beat.

She climbs back out the window.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, THRONE ROOM - DAY

Xevioso sits on his throne reading from a book. The throne
room is otherwise empty.

Legba walks in. Behind him are six men in black and white
robes, the ACOLYTES.

LEGBA
My king, if I may have your
attention.

Xevioso looks up.

XEVIOSO
Of course you...

He sees the men.

XEVIOSO (CONT'D)
Who are your friends. I do not
recognize them.

LEGBA
(grinning deviously)
Wait, I have one more.

He holds up a hand to welcome Sakpata to the room.

XEVIOSO
Sakpata.

SAKPATA
(with venom)
Father.

Xevioso rolls his eyes.

XEVIOSO
What is this all about? I'm busy.

Sakpata laughs.

SAKPATA
Busy with your BOOKS?

XEVIOSO
I don't think I approve of your
tone.

Sakpata laughs again.

SAKPATA
I don't think I care.

XEVIOSO
How dare you...?

The acolytes pull starswords and flank the king.

Sakpata and Legba step up towards each other. They pull out
their amulets and take them off.

They transform back into their true selves.

Just then, Ayaba walks into the chamber. She sees Sakpata and
Legba transforming and quickly ducks out of site in the front
passage.

Sakpata and Legba finish transforming.

XEVIOSO (CONT'D)
What is happening?

SAKPATA
Well, FATHER, I'm taking you
hostage.

LEGBA
On behalf of the Dogbari!

Xevioso stands up, enraged, but the acolytes have him surrounded.

Ayaba looks in with growing fear.

Legba ties Xevioso's hands together.

SAKPATA
Now our plans will come to full
fruition and Egberun will be ours!

Evil laugh. The other Dogbari laugh as well.

Ayaba takes off running down the passage.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, ARMORY - MOMENTS LATER

Sakpata leads the acolytes into the castle's armory. Xevioso is blindfolded and pulled along by the rope tied around his wrists.

The armory is filled with starswords, ceek armor and other more advanced weapons--lances, crossbows and unidentifiable things. In the center of the room are six suits of unique armor. Made of ceek metal, these suits are fully-contained, almost like Iron Man armor.

SAKPATA
Friends! Don your new armor.

The acolytes quickly begin putting on the advanced armor.

Legba walks in carrying a large bottle of glowing red liquid.

SAKPATA (CONT'D)
Is that it?

Legba holds up the bottle.

LEGBA
Yes. 100% pure swampfire.

She hands the bottle to Sakpata.

SAKPATA

And it even burns ceek?

LEGBA

It'll burn enough to make it unusable.

SAKPATA

It won't burn down the castle, will it? I kinda like this place. Thinking of keeping it.

LEGBA

It may damage this room, but it'll evaporate before it gets much further.

Sakpata smiles. He opens the bottle and recoils from the smell.

He pours a little bit of the swampfire onto a stack of starswords. They burst into flame and start to sizzle and melt.

SAKPATA

Amazing.

LEGBA

Dangerous. Let's get out of here.

Sakpata waves a hand and the newly-armored acolytes march out of the armory, pulling Xevioso with them.

Sakpata tosses the bottle into the middle of the room and it explodes flames across the floor, starting to burn everything.

Sakpata and Legba hurry out.

GLETI (O.S.)

Halt. Stand your ground or we run you through.

Sakpata and Legba look up to see Gleti, Gu and a dozen knights.

SAKPATA

No, MOTHER, I don't think I will.

She's frozen for a second, recognizing her "son."

LEGBA

Let's go.

They turn and run.

GU
After them!

Gleti, Gu and the knights rush forward.

They only move forward a few steps before the swampfire explodes out of the room, slamming Gleti and Gu into the wall.

No one is seriously hurt, but they are all knocked to the ground.

Sakpata looks back one last time and grins.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, THRONE ROOM - LATER

Gleti, Gu the other councilmembers and knights stand around the map table. They are heavily armed and armored.

Gu points at a section of the map marked with a road through the mountains.

GU
This road provides the only passage through the mountains. It is treacherous, obviously, and making our way through the mountains will be a challenge.

Gleti nods.

GLETI
Is everyone ready?

Nods and affirmations.

GU
We are ready.

GLETI
Then let's...

OKANU (O.S.)
You're going to need our help.

Gleti turns around to see Okanu, Sogbo and Agadja standing there.

GLETI
Why are you here?

Okanu takes a deep breath.

OKANU
We're here to help.

GLETI
I don't need any...

SOGBO
Please stop.

AGADJA
It's been a long time and Egberun
Castle is in danger. It's our home,
too.

Gleti looks down at the map.

GLETI
I... okay.

Okanu hugs Gleti. Gleti doesn't accept at first but eventually yields.

Sogbo and Agadja join the hug.

OKANU
I'll watch over the castle and
city.

AGADJA
We'll come with you.

Sogbo nods.

OKANU
You still have the messenger hawks?

GLETI
Of course. They were always my
favorites.

SOGBO
We know.

Gleti returns Sogbo's smile.

OKANU
If anything happens, I'll send a
hawk.

GLETI
Thank you.

OKANU
You're welcome.

They turn and leave.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, AYABA'S CHAMBER - LATER

Ayaba paces back and forth. Zinsu, Perdita and Agasu sit around the room.

AYABA
I can't just stay here.

PERDITA
What else can you do?

AYABA
I don't know. Something just doesn't seem right.

She paces some more.

PERDITA
Didn't you say you saw Sakpata last night?

AYABA
I did.

She stops pacing.

ZINSU
What did he say?

AGASU
Whatever he said, I'm going to pound him good.

She smacks her fist into her palm.

Ayaba starts pacing again.

AYABA
What DID he say again?

Agasu shrugs.

AYABA (CONT'D)
He told me some dumb story.
Something about a fight between a boy and a girl.

PERDITA
Is that it?

Ayaba rubs her chin.

AYABA
He said something about the story
taking place "where dangerous
creatures dwell."

ZINSU
Where dangerous creatures dwell?
Where's that?

AGASU
The forest?

PERDITA
The mountains?

Ayaba shakes her head.

AYABA
The castle.

PERDITA
Agreed.

AGASU
What?

PERDITA
It's a trick. D... dangerous...
dragon.

ZINSU
They're in Castle Tado.

Perdita nods.

AYABA
Time to save dad.

They walk out of the chamber.

TITLE CARD: Castle Tado

EXT. CASTLE TADO - DAY

Ayaba and her friends arrive at the last castle. Ayaba and Agasu lead the way with lit starswords. Zinsu and Perdita carry steel short swords.

The castle itself is the same basic size and shape as Egberun Castle and is also made of Ceek. It is well-kept.

The gate opens.

From within comes the guardian, LARUS, a large red spider. It towers over the kids with muscular, hairless legs. It peers down at them with eight yellow eyes and a mouth filled with razor-sharp teeth. It speaks with an otherworldly voice.

LARUS

I am Larus. You shall not enter.

Ayaba steps forward.

AYABA

We need to meet the dragon.

LARUS

No one meets the dragon.

Ayaba looks back at her friends.

AYABA

What if we were to give you a gift?

LARUS

What kind of gift?

Ayaba pulls out the coin and holds it up.

AYABA

A dragon coin.

Larus rears up on its hind legs, as if to strike. Then it settles back onto the ground.

LARUS

Place the coin in my mouth.

Ayaba's eyes grow huge.

PERDITA

Don't do it.

Agasu steps forward.

AGASU

I'll do it.

Ayaba shakes her head.

AGASU (CONT'D)

Let me. I can do it for you.

AYABA

Thank you, but I've already put you
in too much trouble.

Agasu nods and steps back.

Ayaba walks up to Larus. The beast leans down, mouth open,
slime dripping from its razor-sharp teeth.

It slowly closes its mouth down on Ayaba's hand. The teeth
clamp onto the coin. Ayaba pulls her hand back.

Larus swallows the coin.

LARUS

You may enter.

Larus steps out of the way of the gate and climbs up the side
of the castle and out of site.

ZINSU

Now, that was bonzo.

PERDITA

I don't think I'm enjoying this at
all.

Agasu pushes her forward.

AGASU

This is the most fun we've had in
years!

Perdita shakes her head as they enter the castle.

INT. CASTLE TADO, AIDO'S CHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER

They step into the entry chamber. Waiting for them is
Sakpata.

SAKPATA

Attack!

The six acolytes rush forward, wielding lit starswords.

AYABA

Let's go.

ZINSU

Wait, we can't defeat them. There's
too many.

Ayaba and Agasu rush forward and match starswords with the first two acolytes. The swords bounce off of each other as the energy fields repel them.

ZINSU (CONT'D)
Perdita, help me!

Zinsu puts her backpack on the ground and opens it. Perdita joins her.

Ayaba spins around and her sword connects with the ceek armor worn by the acolyte. It doesn't do any damage.

Agasu also lands a blow on one of the acolytes. Same result.

AGASU
Uh... we might be in trouble.

Zinsu and Perdita lift Zinsu's invention out of the backpack and set it on the ground.

ZINSU
Ayaba! Agasu! Back away, we've got this!

They try, but the knights have them surrounded.

PERDITA
They can't get out of the way.

ZINSU
It SHOULD be fine. It should only affect the ceek.

PERDITA
Should?

Zinsu shrugs.

PERDITA (CONT'D)
Duck!

Ayaba and Agasu drop to the ground.

Zinsu pushes a button. Nothing.

PERDITA (CONT'D)
It didn't work.

AYABA
Hurry.

The acolytes bear down on Ayaba and Agasu.

Zinsu starts to sing.

ZINSU

A tale from long ago/From the land
where rivers flow/There lived four
young warrior women/Who raised up
and saved their village.

As she sings, the invention sucks in the sound waves and emits a wave of energy. The wave blasts forward and hits the acolytes.

As soon as it hits them, the armor freezes solid. The acolytes can't move.

Zinsu turns the invention off.

Ayaba slowly stands up.

AYABA

That was amazing.

ZINSU

I tried to tell you.

AYABA

Thank you.

Ayaba very carefully pokes one of the acolytes and jumps back. The acolyte doesn't move. None of them move.

AGASU

Help me up!

Agasu is pinned to the ground. Zinsu and Perdita slowly help her up.

Ayaba heads deeper into the castle. The others follow, helping Agasu move.

INT. CASTLE TADO, AIDO'S CHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER

Ayaba and her friends run into a large, ornate chamber. The walls are covered in gold ornamentation and silk curtains. Piles of gold and other treasures (but no weapons) fill the room. Gems, jewels, chests.

Standing at the front of the room are Sakpata and Legba. Each holds a lit starsword, ready to strike Xevioso.

AYABA

Let him go, Sakpata. You've already
lost.

Sakpata smiles.

SAKPATA

It would appear that you are wrong.

He pushes the starsword closer toward Xevioso.

ZINSU

We already know about the Dogbari plans.

Sakpata frowns.

SAKPATA

That's not possible.

PERDITA

Digging through the mountains.

AYABA

Your people didn't invent spying, you know.

Sakpata gets angry.

SAKPATA

Then that would mean that I have nothing left to lose.

He raises up the sword to strike Xevioso down.

LARUS (O.S.)

Not in my house.

Larus walks in and Sakpata stops. Legba backs away in fear.

SAKPATA

Who or what are you?

LARUS

I am Larus, known long ago as Aido.

Sakpata steps back.

SAKPATA

Aido?

LARUS

Aido. The dragon.

Larus begins to transform. The red skin grows and turns scaly. The arms turn into wings. A long tail with a club at the end grows from the back. This is Aido and Aido is a big red scary dragon.

AIDO (LARUS)

You have been found unworthy.

Aido swings their clubbed tail and smashes into Sakpata and Legba, knocking them into the nearby wall. They fall to the ground, unconscious.

AIDO (CONT'D)

The rest of you are free to go.

Ayaba runs to her father and unties him.

Perdita steps up towards Aido.

PERDITA

I thought dragons didn't take sides?

AIDO

You and your friends were found to be worthy.

ZINSU

Why didn't you help us earlier.

The dragon whips its head around and takes a closer look at Zinsu.

AIDO

I wanted to see who would win.

Zinsu is scared at the dragon's proximity.

AIDO (CONT'D)

I liked your singing.

Zinsu smiles.

AYABA

These two are from outside our kingdom. They're here to take over the valley.

Aido walks slowly towards the unconscious Dogbari spies.

AIDO

Not my valley.

Ayaba and Agasu exchange a smile.

AIDO (CONT'D)

As long as I live, I will protect my worthy allies from the valley.

Ayaba and Zinsu hug.

INT. EGBERUN CASTLE, THRONE ROOM - DAY

The throne room is full. Everyone is in their finest robes, perfectly clean and highly presentable.

Gleti and Xevioso sit on their thrones.

Before them stands Perdita.

Gleti raises her hand, palm down, and gestures towards Perdita.

GLETI

May the Voice of the Throne speak
the creed.

Perdita steps forward and clears her throat.

PERDITA

On the first day, Mawu created the
world.

The assembled crowd nods and responds: "Vodu!"

Ayaba and Zinsu stand at the front near the council.

AYABA

(quietly)

What happened with Radin? He didn't
get chosen?

ZINSU

They said he wasn't ready. He
didn't stand by his friends in a
time of need. The council values
loyalty.

Ayaba is shocked.

ZINSU (CONT'D)

They said he could try again next
year.

Ayaba nods.

PERDITA

On the second day, Mawu created
women and men.

ALL

Vodu!

Perdita turns towards the windows and waves at the grasslands that surround the castle.

PERDITA

On the third day, Mawu made the lands and the beasts that roam them.

Perdita turns back towards the queen and king.

PERDITA (CONT'D)

On the fourth day, Mawu gave women and men the gift of technology.

ALL

Vodu!

Perdita gestures towards Agasu, the newest member of the knights. Gu stands near the king and queen, now a full member of the council.

Agasu steps forward and pulls a starsword from its scabbard. She holds it aloft.

ALL (CONT'D)

Vodu! Vodun! Vodzu!

A green energy field surrounds the blade.

The audience all kneel, except for the queen and king, Perdita and Agasu.

Agasu points the glowing starsword at a different large boulder placed at the opposite end of the throne room.

GU

Vodzu!

A blast of green energy emerges from the starsword and blasts the boulder into many pieces.

Quickly, various knights, both men and women, gather the pieces of the boulder and carry them out of the room.

The rest of the audience rises.

PERDITA

From Mawu to Mawu-Lisa to the ancestry to the present, the power of the realm rests upon Queen Gleti and King Xevioso, long may they live!

As the crowd responds, the green energy disappears from Agasu's starsword.

ALL
Vodu! Vodun! Vodzu!

Agasu puts the starsword back in its scabbard.

PERDITA
My queen, the floor is yours.

Gletti stands up and steps forward.

GLETTI
Thank you all for joining us again on this day. It makes me proud to welcome the four newest junior members of the council.

Agasu and Perdita step up and Gletti places the council gold and ceek necklaces on them.

Zinsu steps up next to the others and Gletti smiles as she places a council necklace on her.

Ayaba steps up next. Gletti places the council necklace on her. They hug.

The audience applauds.

Xevioso joins the hug.

Gletti steps away and quiets the audience with a hand.

GLETTI (CONT'D)
And our returning council members...

She gestures towards the doorway.

In walk Okanu, Sogbo and Agadja. The audience breaks into applause as Gletti places council necklaces around each of their necks.

EXT. EGERUN CASTLE - CONTINUOUS

High above the castle, Aido flies in a circle around the castle as the sun goes down.

FADE OUT.