

BECOS ACT III

Grandmother/

Martina: Get away from that window, girl! You wanna die or what?

Leleca/

Thainá: Grandma, this is the scariest clash I've ever seen!

TV Reporter: ... have seized a shotgun, a grenade, two handguns and a huge amount of drugs. The ONG Rede da Maré has told us that 1,000 children haven't had any classes because of the operation.

Leleca/

Thainá: How can this be happening on a Wednesday? At 4 pm, on the main street of Nova Holanda?

Grandmother: Leleca, get away from that window now!

Reporter: If you're driving, we advise you to avoid Brasil Ave, where traffic is in a standstill due to a massive operation by the Military Police. We're here broadcasting live...

Leleca/Thainá: This is such superficial reporting. A far cry from the end-of-world reality that has set in here in the Maré. We're on the third floor and we can still hear everything!

Reporter: ... five health units are closed...

Leleca/Thainá: Hang on... It's stopped! I can't hear anything now. Looks like it's over. Turn off the TV, grandma. No, it hasn't. It hasn't stopped at all! Grandma, those bodies are the same colour. They came from the same place. They're so alike they could be one family. Jesus! I feel like I'm in an alley, you know? Caught in the midst of the shootout. Helpless. And though none of this is my fault, I might still be to blame.

Grandmother: Listen, Leleca. For the last time, get away from that window now!

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Leleca/Thainá: But nothing silences this shower of bullets, the helicopter, the motorbikes, the dead bodies... No one can run away from what's happening.

Drika/ Thais: No! My son! No, not my son!

Grandmother/Mart: Oh my God, what just happened? What's going on?

Leleca/Thainá: I don't know. Everyone's out on the street. I can't see anything!

Drika/Thais: This can't be happening... My son! No, no...

Leleca/Thainá: Grandma, I have to go down there.

Grandmother/Mart: No, you're not leaving this apartment.

Leleca/Thainá: I have to go see what's happened.

Grandmother/Mart: Listen, can't you see the state the favela is in?

Leleca/Thainá: Please, Grandma. I need to go there. It's Dona Drika!

Grandmother/Mart: What? Drika?

Leleca/Thainá: That's right. Apparently, it's her son down there!

Grandmother/Mart: Oh God!

Leleca/Thainá: God! Is it Emanuel?

It's Emanuel down there! Something's happened!

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Francisco: Stop...

Martin: Easy there, calm down!

Francisco: There's another door over here. Come this way, it's much better.

PART 2

Martina: Ab-sence... Absence!

Matheus: Tension.

Carlos/Panta: Yes, this is the feeling that takes over our favela bodies and makes us alert. But even when this damn unfair life get us out of the witness box, it still won't let us be protagonists, we only get supporting roles. Yeah, man... It's amazing how our names can be so easily replaced with just a number.

Martin: Our names can be easily replaced with just a number.

Carlos/Panta: Emanuel has become a number.

Matheus: Emanuel has become a number.

Carlos/Panta: ... like those numbers he studied in his maths degree. That's right, that very Emanuel I bump into on the bus and who encouraged me to write, who made me take up rhyming again. To society, this fact is much more complex than any operation. In hours like these, anyone who doesn't know the law of this concrete jungle realizes that arithmetic isn't always logical. I thought that after all the stories I've seen and heard about our favela, I'd got used to the crying, the screaming, the pain... to the lament that has no time to end. But can you ever get used to this?

Others: Can you ever get used to this? ...

Martina: Can you ever get used to this?

"There's no victory when the fight isn't fair."

I'm here wondering, what goes on in the head of a mother who sees her son get dragged away in a police van? Whose son is removed from home and shoved into a helicopter by the police without his consent?

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Of a mother when she finds out her son has fallen nine floors. Of a mother who hears from the wounded son she's holding in her lap: "Mum, I got shot by guys in a police tank. Didn't they see I was wearing a school uniform?" Mothers. Mothers of May. Mothers of Manguinhos Favela. Mothers who cry all year long. They were 80, they were 111, they were numbers...

Martin: They were 80, they were 111, they were numbers.

Matheus: By now you must be wondering what happened. What happened to Emanuel? To the police? The answer is simple and straightforward: nothing! That's right: nothing! Because nothing ever happens to those who follow the protocol of killing a black man.

Drika/ Thaís: My son!

Leleca/Thainá: It's Dona Drika!

Drika/ Thaís: Today I'm an enemy of the State! The State is murderous. The State is the devil's child. It's here to kill, steal and destroy. This is what they're doing to us. I prayed that my eyes were lying to me, that my body was playing tricks on me, that I would wake up from this bad dream. Only, no... No! In my head I hear the muffled voices of all those who ran around and who are only empty shoes now. And no matter how many voices I hear, I am still silence. No matter how many people I remember, I am still forgotten.

Matheus: A head, a calabash, Kavungo.

Drika/Thaís: My eyes are like the waterfalls of a powerful stream. I can hardly see the present moment. It's like there's a white veil covering my sight. And what falls from my eyes... what falls from my eyes tastes like the sea of my female ancestors.

Panta: A reflecting pool.

Drika/Thaís: My chest is a torn drum. Even if it pulsed to the beat of Alujá, it still wouldn't bring you back, my son. "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." So where is my God now? Where is my God? Where is my God. Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. And unto Xangô... Xangô himself takes the things that are his!

Rodrigo: My chest is a quarry.

Drika/Thaís: Even though my backbone supports me it constantly shivers from the cold of getting hit from behind, they didn't even ask my name. I am

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everyone, but my name is No-one. And even though I'm looked at and not seen, I still feel the burden of carrying the world on my back.

Martina: A back bent by the weight of the birch.
It's a back bent by the weight of the birch.

Drika/Thaís: My hands are gale winds. No matter how sore they are, they can still kill for you, my son.

Matheus: I am movement.

Drika/Thaís: My feet... My feet get from the ground the strength to walk. People say he who walks too much is in want of rest. I believe the path is made by walking. And in *Opanijé*, the Earth's God covered me with courage.

Panta: *Opanijé*: "He kills to eat".

Drika/Thaís: My womb... Every time a black child dies, my womb hurts. Have you ever felt this pain? The pain of losing a child? The pain of being skinned alive? The pain of being breathless? The pain of having your womb yanked out. Have you ever felt this pain?

But at that moment, I remembered the day you were born, my son. I remembered the moment I brought you to the world. I remembered the strength, the crying, the happiness, the fear, the love, the courage... And then you arrived. And if you can't see me now, it's because I have died. But apparently the dead of this place are staging an uprising. I am the uprising you didn't expect.

No... Not my son... No...

Leleca/Thainá: Dona Drika grabs a machete from behind the counter.

Matheus: A gesture.

Leleca/Thainá: And points it at the last policemen who are still in the favela.

Rodrigo: A thought.

Leleca/Thainá: It looks like at this moment, she's being dressed in the power of all her ancestors. It looks like at this moment, I am being dressed in the power of all my ancestors. Here, on Pati Street, I see the birth of a female warrior, as if forged from the iron of Ogun. I can see the armour she's wearing. It looks like my dream is coming true: the black mother is bulletproof.

Everyone: The black mother was bullet proof.

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Leleca/Thainá: Drika has enlisted in the cavalry and I am happy because I am also in her company. She is dressed in the gear and arms of Ogun. So that although they have feet, their enemies cannot catch her. So that although they have hands, her enemies cannot reach her or touch her. So that although they have eyes, her enemies cannot see her. And not even in thought can they harm her. Firearms won't hit her body. May knives and spears fall without touching her body. May ropes and chains break without binding her body. For I am dressed in the gear and arms of Drika.

Martin: I see, I see a heroine turn pain into fighting before me. It's so anguishing to see strength spring forth from the most extreme sadness. Still, I will contemplate that image every day before going to bed or after getting up, like a prayer. A prayer for justice. It was she, Dona Drika, who made me understand that doing justice also involves giving another meaning to life.

Everyone and Martin: I'm here. I'm here. I'm here...