

Quilombola

By

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Based on: The Impossible Place, Quilombo Dos Palmares

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FADE INTO:

DARKNESS.

WOMEN COLLECTIVE (V.O.) (B)  
Owner and elder of the crossroads.  
My father, my mother, remove all  
evil, for us to walk in peace,  
loss is no more, tragedy is no  
more, sickness is no more, death is  
no more, unforeseen evil is no  
more, in the name of all children  
in this house. I give you thanks,  
Exú-Aluvaiá.

MUSIC CUE: "Madres" by Dayme Arocena

EXT. FOREST OF OXÚM- DAY.

There is a young girl, COSMA, walking through a dense forest. It is the early hours of the morning, an end turning into a beginning. She is small, with dark brown skin and intricately braided hair.

MÃE-DE-SANTO (V.O.)(Y)  
I am going to tell you a story.

Everything is still for a beat. Even Cosma stops. Until the sound of a branch cracking.

MÃE-DE-SANTO CONT'D  
In the beginning there was  
Olodumare. He is the almighty and  
the creator. He sent a chosen few  
of his children, the Orixas, to  
create the world. Among them, the  
only woman was Oxúm. The male  
immortals began to create the world  
we now live in without her.

Cosma wanders and picks up a flower. She places it in her small sack and keeps walking. There are low drums now.

MÃE-DE-SANTO CONT'D  
They thought they possessed every  
power they could need to create all  
this vastness. In turn they failed.  
Their seeds would not take, their  
waters dried and their babes did  
not cry. They went back to their  
father with confusion and Olodumare  
laughed.

(CONTINUED)

A small chameleon follows behind Cosma as she continues to pick things from the forest floor and gather them up. She whispers to the plants and animals.

## MÃE-DE-SANTO CONT'D

He told them that nothing could be done without Oxúm; she was as much his creation as they. Anything they attempted to do without women would fail. The men hurried to beg Oxúm to join them. She agreed but she did not come alone. She brought the Iyami Aje, the divine mothers, with her. They held the secret of creation within them. They put life into the world and to this day they guide Olodumare in helping keep the laws of nature in place.

Cosma stops by a large tree with deep and sprawling roots. She sings a low prayer, forgetting some words along the way.

## COSMA

Epo nbe  
 Ewa nbe o  
 Epo nbe  
 Ewa nbe o  
 Aya mi oja  
 Oye  
 Ayami oja  
 Lati bi ibeji o  
 Epo nbe  
 Ewa nbe o

She breaks a seed she has collected on a rock and some oil comes out. She pours it over a small shrine of two figures, covered in moss and bugs and glowing things.

She looks up to see- MADEIRA standing barefoot before her.

Cut to:

INT. MADEIRA'S HOME (PALMARES)- EARLY MORNING.

Madeira lays sleeping restlessly on her cot. She is about 22, her skin tan and freckled and her black hair is long and curly. She is athletic and androgynous.

She wakes up with a jolt and it takes her a moment to remember where she is.

She puts her feet on the cool earth and it calms her. She pulls herself out of bed, and goes to her calabash. She splashes her face with water and begins to burn some herbs.

Her tattoos and scars are partially visible in the early morning. She goes outside to get some clean clothes, loose cotton garments in earth tones. She dresses like a ritual, her mind straying to other things.

EXT. MADEIRA'S GARDEN (PALMARES)-CONTINUOUS.

Madeira's small grass-roofed house is accompanied by a few others in this compound. Her garden is large and to others would look unorganized and full of weeds. But it is her method of growing her most valuable herbs.

She examines her herbs and spices, looking for the ones that are ready for picking. She picks a leaf from a small tree when she remembers--

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR. FOREST- DAY (DREAM).

Madeira grabs a leaf falling from a tree overhead.

Madeira and PAOLA, lie in a small clearing in a forest. Paola looks about the same age as Madeira, she is dark-skinned with large features and a bright scarf tied over her hair. She is at ease.

Madeira picks up a mango and hands it to Paola, they are sharing this dream. She picks one for herself and peels off the skin. Paola bites into hers.

PAOLA (P)

You don't like the skin?

MADEIRA

I think it's bitter. The sweetness is on the inside.

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA

No the skin is part of it. You have to eat the skin to get to the middle. It's not the same without.

MADEIRA

Suit yourself.

Madeira looks around. They are lying underneath mango trees in the forest. The ground is speckled with sunlight.

PAOLA

Where are we?

MADEIRA

I think we are near the *Rio Pirapama*. Close to Recife. Somewhere I was a long time ago. There were tall mango trees there once but then there was a fire. I'm sure they'd only be saplings by now.

PAOLA

Every time we meet it's a different place. What do you think that means?

MADEIRA

I don't think you can ask that in a dream.

A flock of BIRDS ruffle the quiet and--

END DREAM

CUT TO:

EXT. MADEIRA'S GARDEN (PALMARES)- CONTINUOUS.

The chirping of a bird brings Madeira out of her daze. She begins to gather her things in a leather sack and leaves her compound for the fields with a scythe slung over her back.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELDS (PALMARES)-DAY.

Madeira arrives in a large field full of women and some men bent over, tending to plants and picking a harvest. The rows are excellently kept and irrigated, the greens looking full of water.

(CONTINUED)

The people are leisurely as they work, talking, humming and singing as they go. Madeira goes over to the wheat and begins examining the stalks, smelling them and then beginning to cut them. She is joined by BAHARI, a man of about 26. He is muscular but still lean and not too tall, attractive.

BAHARI (P)

Mãe!

MADEIRA

Not this early Bahari.

BAHARI

(laughing)

Is today the day?

MADEIRA

*Fique quieto.*

He sits next to her in the field.

BAHARI

Bringing a beautiful new life into this world.

MADEIRA

It isn't Kena's time yet so just leave it. Why are you even up this early?

BAHARI

Lucky you. It's punishment for being late to patrol yesterday.

MADEIRA

Our fierce Bahari late to protect the people?

BAHARI

I'm not fierce until past noon.

They both laugh.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FIELDS (PALMARES)-CONTINUOUS.

After a few hours of early harvesting Madeira packs up her things and finishes adding her harvest to a large cart to be processed later. She climbs up a tree and cuts a *Jaca* fruit free, gathers it and leaves to market.

CUT TO:

EXT. COSMA'S MOCAMBO- DAY.

Cosma sits near a group of women who are sorting through a harvest. It is a different day. The women eat and talk as they split nuts, rinse fruit and pick leaves off of food that has been scavenged.

A WOMAN sits behind Cosma, taking out braids that are fuzzy now.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARKET (PALMARES)-DAY.

Madeira walks along a path until she reaches a bustling market. The people are colorful, both in skin tones and in dress. Here people are free to express themselves with what they have.

The market is a meeting place as much as it is a place of commerce. People trade stories along with food. It is sprawling and crowded with stalls. They are separated, one part is just for seafood where sellers sit behind baskets of dried and fresh fish, colorful crabs, shrimp and other creatures brought from the coast. There are areas with chickens, pigs and goats lazily wandering around, waiting to be bought.

Madeira makes her way through the maze-like paths, passing by stalls covered in dyed cloths and cotton. A few children run past her, chasing a dog.

She makes her way to a stall filled with dried herbs and medicines. Her master, SESE, sits perched at behind her goods, talking with JUJU. Sese has long white hair that is elaborately braided atop her head and she wears several gold bracelets on her thin wrists.

SESE(P)

The sun is hot this morning, you should wear something to cover your face.

MADEIRA

You don't wear anything.

SESE

Do you see how perfect this skin is? God wouldn't dare harm it.

MADEIRA

You know I use the ferns on it.

(CONTINUED)

SESE CONT'D

(to Juju)

Boil this in a tea and add some lemon and it should help with his sickness. Come back in a few days if he doesn't get better.

JUJU

I will. *Obrigada*.

Juju gives her a few coins and leaves.

SESE

You should have spoken to her, it's rude to just stand there.

MADEIRA

What do I have to say to Juju?

SESE

If you're going to take over for me you have to make people trust you. They won't get their medicine from someone they don't feel close to. They'll start saying you're a witch.

MADEIRA

Then they'd have to travel to the city for an herbalist. My herbs are good, the mix you just gave her I made three days ago. And you should have told her to add some honey.

SESE

If you're so clever you can take over for me for a bit. I need to go see Jorge about something.

Sese playfully throws her fan at Madeira and walks away. Madeira settles onto her stool and tends to the jars. She looks up around the market. A woman picks up some greens, examining them.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARKET (OLINDA)-DAY.

Paola picks up some greens in a crowded city market. She examines the leaves and places them in her basket, handing ADE a few coins and thanking her familiarly.

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA(B)  
How is Afonso?

ADE  
Not too well. The infection is strong, he fights it but he is still very weak.

PAOLA  
I'm sorry Ade. I will pray for him.

ADE  
Bless you. You better get going Paola.

PAOLA  
Yes, I'll see you tonight.

Paola walks on, through the market. There are Black and white people here, but mostly Black faces crowd the market. It is large but not quite as full as that of Palmares. There are soldiers patrolling the edges of the market, their presence putting pressure onto the people within. The people argue loudly, none wanting to be cheated and punished later.

Paola passes by a man, LUIS, who is a bit older than her. He smiles brightly when he sees her and moves toward her.

LUIS  
Paola *olá!*

PAOLA  
*Olá* Luis.

They smile at each other and she turns to walk away.

LUIS  
Paola wait , *um minuto.*

He walks over to her.

LUIS  
Are you in a rush?

PAOLA  
Always.

She gestures to the basket.

LUIS  
Okay. But you can talk for a moment right? *Como vai?*

PAOLA  
I'm fine Luis. Why are you worried?

LUIS  
I just haven't seen you lately.

She blushes.

PAOLA  
Come on. Walk me back.

They walk together through the streets, taking the longer way

The streets are dirty and the ground is visible through the cobblestones. The buildings they pass are bleached and pale. Some attempt to be grand, many are small shacks, haphazard in build.

LUIS  
How have you been sleeping?

PAOLA  
(shaking her head)  
You're foolish Luis.

LUIS  
(innocently)  
What? I mean your dreams.

PAOLA  
I had another one actually.

LUIS  
The same as the others?

PAOLA  
(laughing)  
We ate mangoes this time.

LUIS  
That's all?

PAOLA  
Yes. We just talk, it's so strange.  
I never used to dream and now I  
keep dreaming of her.

LUIS  
When my mother was pregnant with  
Luz she had the strangest dreams  
every night. She would even  
sleepwalk sometimes.

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA

Well I'm not pregnant Luis.

LUIS

I know I know.

PAOLA

I wish I could ask my mother about them but she'd just tell me to go pray.

LUIS

My mother prayed too, but they still came.

PAOLA

Jesus is her answer to everything.

LUIS

I'm a catholic too but there are some things that our people know about you know? Maybe Beah could help?

PAOLA

I'm sure she could, but they don't bother me. I don't think I would even want them to go away. It's kind of nice.

She reaches SENHORA'S HOME, a tall building, built connected to a row of similar homes. The roof is tiled with red clay and the walls are bleached white. There are ornate carvings lining the door and windows.

PAOLA

You don't usually walk this far with me.

Luis looks around, he was intent on what she was saying. He has no business in this part of the city and probably shouldn't be there.

LUIS

Ah, Eduardo will kill me. Will I see you tonight?

Paola nods at him. And waves.

PAOLA

*Tchau!*

INT.SENHORA'S HOME (OLINDA) CONTINUOUS.

Paola enters and walks up the stairs. There is a young girl, LUZ, in the kitchen cooking as SENHORA sits on the balcony. Luz is small and effervescent, always moving but containing herself around the masters.

PAOLA(P)  
Luz, I'm back.

LUZ  
Ola, how was the market?

PAOLA  
Busy as always, and this heat.

Paola fans herself with her handkerchief and begins taking out food from her basket and inspecting it.

LUZ  
Did they have *caldo de cana*?

PAOLA  
You mean like they always do? Every day? Yes they had it.

LUZ  
I was just wondering.

PAOLA  
I know what you were wondering.

Paola turns to Luz and takes the fish she is de-boning from her. Her knife moving effortlessly over the flesh of the fish.

PAOLA  
You like your sweets. Even though you know too much will rot your teeth.

LUZ  
My teeth are fine look.

Luz shows Paola a mouth full of unrotted teeth.

LUZ  
And we even brush our teeth with cane, how can it be bad for us?

PAOLA  
Why don't you just ask me if I saw him?

(CONTINUED)

Luz blushes and goes to unpack what's left of the food Paola has brought.

LUZ

I don't know what you mean.

Paola looks around making sure the mistress isn't within earshot.

PAOLA

(whispering)

Oh did you forget about Xango already? On to your next love?

LUZ

Shhh! Lola-ei. Stop playing. He's just a friend you know know that.

PAOLA

(pointing the knife at her)

Yes and twice your age, he should stay just a friend.

Paola squeezes some lemon and seasonings on the fish and places it in a bowl. She begins washing some collards.

LUZ

(with a sigh)

And twice my size. Ugh lola he's beautiful. What can I do?

PAOLA

You're hopeless Luz. You're not even 16 and running after grown men.

LUZ

Where I come from 16 is a woman, with children usually.

Paola pauses and shakes her head.

PAOLA

But you don't have to do that Luz. Being here- you have a chance. You don't have to just follow what others do. You could even-

The door opens from the balcony. The mistress walks in and the women look down.

SENHORA

You two chattering like pigeons.  
Did you get the sweet potatoes  
Paola?

Paola looks back at the basket quickly. Luz has finished emptying it and there are none in sight.

PAOLA

I'm so sorry Senhora I must have forgotten. I can go back and get some.

SENHORA

Honestly, such a simple request shouldn't be so hard. But you need to finish dinner. Luz- run to the market and get some. Hurry now before they all leave.

Luz grabs the basket and some outdoor slippers and runs out.

PAOLA

Apologies Senhora.

The mistress waves her hand. And walks over to survey her work.

SENHORA

Not too much spice, you know Senhor doesn't like that. And after this, Victor needs to be fetched from his lessons.

PAOLA

Yes Senhora.

Senhora leaves the room.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HEALING HOUSE (PALMARES)- DAY.

The afternoon is cooler on the dirt floor inside a long, thatched house. An OLDER WOMAN sits with a GIRL and cuts open a gourd and begins to take the seeds out, showing her to separate the seeds from the pulp. This is also a school of sorts. Near them is a small and deep pool dug into the floor of the hut for birthing.

(CONTINUED)

The house is part of the land around it and plants fill the room, growing in from the outside. There are large clay pots lining the walls, and a large wooden table- rippled with tree rings at the center. Cloth, needles and other materials are strewn over it.

Two YOUNG GIRLS sit in the corner, the older braiding the younger's hair. Some others lay resting or sick in makeshift beds.

Sese sits at the center, her hands placed along the stomach of KENA whose belly is full with child. Madeira sits to her right concentrating hard.

SESE

Put your hands here.

Sese reaches for Madeira who tenderly places her hands on Kena's brown stomach.

SESE

You won't break her come on. You need to feel what's going on.

Madeira presses her hands closer and places her ear to her stomach. Kena draws in a breath.

KENA

She's kicking.

SESE

They are.

MADEIRA

Twins?

SESE

At least. Do you see the size of her.

Sese gestures to the exhausted Kena.

SESE

But feel it, you cant tell there are a few different spirits in there.

Madeira straightens and gets some herbs from her bag.

SESE

Now the pain must be much on your back. Take some of-  
(to Madeira) yes I think that will be good-

take some of this when you need it  
but not more than twice a day. We  
need the babies awake.

MADEIRA

Don't stay in the sun for too long,  
you need to be drinking more water  
too.

Kena begins to sit up and rests a hand on her stomach.

KENA

Tell that to my husband. He's  
always worried we'll run out of  
food.

SESE

Felipe still isn't used to his  
freedom after all these years.

MADEIRA

After six children he should let  
you rest.

The women help Kena up.

KENA

I'll see you all tonight then, if  
I'm not asleep.

SESE

Ah! Just stay in bed Kena.

Kena laughs and gathers a basket of grain on top her head  
and the two girls walk behind her.

Sese turns to Madeira observing her as she crushes some  
garlic with an old mortar and pestle.

SESE

You have to get over this  
timidness. Never have I seen you  
timid Madeira.

Madeira pauses grinding as she speaks and resumes.

MADEIRA

I'm not timid.

SESE

I know. When I found you you were  
about the fiercest child I've ever  
seen. Pardon, when you found my  
mocambo and stole from my garden.

(CONTINUED)

Madeira breaks a smile.

MADEIRA

You had the best fruits.

SESE

Tell me child. What's holding you back?

MADEIRA

It's not about being fierce though Sese it's the opposite. Everything about children are delicate and breakable and soft. That's not me Sese. And birth-everything has to be perfect, if something were to go wrong.

SESE

Your job is about mothers. You will be an *agbẹbi*. And mothers are anything but delicate. Did you see that woman who just left?

Madeira looks out at the open doorway.

SESE

Kena works the fields by choice and tends for all her others at 8 months pregnant. I'll tell you something, birth is anything but perfect. It's messy, bloody, it's terrifying you are right about that. Death is always around the corner when a new life comes into the world.

MADEIRA

I've seen that. I know that.

SESE

Do you?

Beat.

SESE CONT'D

I have had others I trained but you are a warrior, you've always been. You know death and you don't fear. That's why I chose you for this job.

Madeira looks at Sese directly now.

(CONTINUED)

SESE CONT'D

You don't anoint gods like the others or keep all ways I'd like you to, but I accepted your way. And you've surpassed all the others.

Madeira softens at that.

SESE CONT'D

You know this thing. You don't have to be soft to heal. Scars are hard and the best way to know is to have felt for yourself. This is the land of scars here. Birth is another battle, and it's the most important one. That's why it was to be you.

Madeira looks down, a bit shamed but also out of deference.

MADEIRA

Thank you Sese.

Sese pats her face and pinches her. Madeira winces.

SESE

Go deliver these. When you get back you can rub my legs, I'm very stiff today.

MADEIRA

Okay Sese.

Madeira gathers some packages of herbs in her bag and saddles up her horse, a lean black male. Sese hums as she shells nuts.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COSMA'S MOCAMBO- DAY.

Cosma plays with a horse in her small compound. A few straw houses stand, with a fire pit dug at the center, a pot boils and a woman stirs a thick soup. A man sits sharpening a small pike for fishing. Cosma sucks on some wheat and the horse blows in her face. She giggles.

CUT TO:

EXT.ROAD TO MACACO (PALMARES)- EVENING.

Madeira rides through *Macaco*, the capital city of Palmares, through paths and off them. She passes through the center of the city.

Men walk around and ride on horseback, patrolling and going about political and military business. The compounds Madeira passes are much larger with houses of mud and stone as well as straw ones.

She passes an open area under a thatched roof, where men train boys and dance capoeira. She passes women plucking fowl and scaling fish in preparation for the festivities that night.

Large pots boil, girls cut okra and onions. Sellers walk through town with bits of jewelry, shells, long strings of beads and gold bracelets.

CUT TO:

EXT. TERREIRO (PALMARES)-EVENING.

Finally she reaches the *terreiro*, the temple, it lies near the center of town, but in it's own compound. Shrines and figures surround the building, which itself is tall with many levels. The main house is where the priestesses and *Mães*, the leaders, live and work. The biggest section is an outdoor circle, covered with a straw roof. The ground is earth and flattened by many feet of dancers.

Madeira dismounts and leads her horse by the side of the building and ties him to graze near a patch of trees. Madeira whistles a bird call and waits farther down the path, concealed.

Shortly a woman, *EKUNDAYO*, walks out a side door dressed in a vivid blue, the color of her *orixa*. She is also known as 'DADA'. She looks young, somewhere around 20, with midnight skin, dark eyes and hair carefully wrapped. She is luminous and always smiling.

She walks to the patch where Madeira waits and taps her on the shoulder before wrapping her arms around her. They sit together.

MADEIRA(P)

I missed you.

DADA

You're late.

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA

Blame Sese. The woman doesn't stop working.

DADA

And last week I didn't see you at all because of the pox.

MADEIRA

Which thankfully wasn't pox.

DADA

Yes thank God.

MADEIRA

So I shouldn't heal people?

DADA

Oh hush. Let's walk, okay? Mãe is also in a fierce mood today.

The two get up and Madeira leads her horse down a path descending the hill. They walk through the forest.

MADEIRA

What's wrong?

DADA

Our laziness shames the *orixas*.

MADEIRA

(laughing)

Of course.

DADA

You would think we had no worries the way she is spending for tonight. The gods should be honored, I'm sure of it. But- I don't know.

MADEIRA

What?

DADA

I just don't see why things should be lavish. Do the gods care about our riches? And something about displays like this bother me.

Madeira strokes her cheek. They keep walking.

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA

You know I agree. The churches I've seen in the *branco* cities- I don't understand what gold and jewels have to do with the gods.

DADA

Where do you find them?

MADEIRA

Who?

DADA

The Gods.

MADEIRA

Here I think.

They cross a small stream and Madeira leads her horse through. They reach the other side and sit by the edge.

MADEIRA CONT'D

I see the gods in the earth. In the herbs I use to heal. Sese says thats how the people know these things, from the gods.

DADA

And you believe her?

MADEIRA

Yes. I think we have everything we need to survive in this world at our fingertips. But you have to speak in the language of the world. And I think only the gods can teach you that.

DADA

Because they created it.

MADEIRA

Yes.

DADA

I like that.

MADEIRA

Mae wouldn't.

DADA

Maybe not. But she is only one person.

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA

In this place she's a huge person  
though.

DADA

Yes.

MADEIRA

Just like you'll be one day.

DADA

We'll see Meda. There are many  
others who would take her place.

MADEIRA

But she likes you.

DADA

Then we will both be *Mães*.

Madeira laughs a bit darkly.

DADA

You said last time there was  
something you wanted to talk about.  
We didn't have time.

Madeira fiddles with some stones, Dada looks at her.

MADEIRA

I keep having the dreams.

DADA

(eagerly)  
With the woman?

MADEIRA

Yes.

DADA

They're troubling you?

MADEIRA

I just. I don't understand them,  
you know? Who is she? Whenever we  
meet it's like I forget all the  
questions I've had when I wake up.  
I can't help but feel like they're  
real.

DADA

It's better than the nightmares  
though right?

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA

Definitely. But I can't understand why they stopped and these started? Is she even real? Have I made her up?

DADA

Maybe she is an ancestor.

MADEIRA

I don't think so. She seems young, like me. She seems alive. Ugh-I don't know Dada.

DADA

When was the last one?

MADEIRA

Last night.

DADA

And what happened?

MADEIRA

We just travel. We go places I've been to in my childhood. Sometimes places I've never been. We were eating fruit. And just talking.

DADA

It sounds nice.

MADEIRA

It is. But when they end I always get this feeling like I need to ask her something. I always feel like something terrible is about to happen when I'm waking up.

DADA

It sounds like someone is trying to tell you something.

MADEIRA

Maybe.

DADA

I think you should talk to the *Ibeji*.

MADEIRA

Ah! Dada no.

(CONTINUED)

DADA  
Don't be scared.

MADEIRA  
I'm not scared. I just don't like them.

DADA  
They're just people like you and I.

MADEIRA  
You know that isn't true!

DADA  
Well they're not gods. They're just people with gifts. And they're especially good with dreams.

Madeira picks up Dada's hands and plays with it.

MADEIRA  
Are you using a new oil? Your hands are very soft today.

DADA  
Meda. Just think about it.

Madeira nibbles on her hand. Dada laughs and pushes her.

DADA  
I mean it! They don't seem to be going away.

MADEIRA  
Alright fine fine. Tell me about your day though, how are the preparations actually going?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT.TERREIRO (PALMARES)- EVENING.

Dada enters the terreiro. She is quickly set upon by other women. The few men inside are quickly shooed out of the temple.

PRIESTESS (Y)  
Ekundayo where have you been? We need help.

DADA  
Sorry sister. I needed some fresh air.

(CONTINUED)

PRIESTESS

You'll have plenty tonight. Mãe needs your help with the preparations.

DADA

I'll go find her. Tell Taiye I need my beads back, she still has them.

Dada begins to walk up a tall staircase to the top where Mãe-de-Santo is preparing.

On the other levels women in different colors and signifying garb hurry around making preparations.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SENHORA'S HOME (OLINDA)- EVENING.

Paola works cleaning up the remnants of the dinner she made. She notices that the son's plate still has half the fish left on it. She sucks her teeth and begins to dump it in a bucket for the dogs.

LUZ

Wait Lola! Can I have it?

PAOLA

Sure.

Paola hands her the fish and Luz eats it eagerly.

LUZ

Mmm! I wish my brother could make fish like this.

PAOLA

That boy doesn't seem to like it. He never finishes his food. Such a waste.

LUZ

He doesn't know how to eat around the bones.

Luz spits a few tiny bones into her hand.

PAOLA

Kids in our village learn that before they can walk.

(CONTINUED)

LUZ  
Some with only one hand too!

Paola smiles at Luz. A floorboard creaks above them and they quiet.

Senhora lurks around, supervising Paola and Luz before she retires for the evening.

SENHORA(P)  
Luz don't forget to brush the horses and bring them down to the stable before you leave.

LUZ  
Yes Senhora

SENHORA  
Paola come here

Paola stops scrubbing plates and walks over to where Senhora sits in her throne-like chair. She motions to SENHOR to come over and join her and he does reluctantly, a bit frustrated.

SENHORA  
I want to speak to you about something.

Paola looks down while she speaks to her, feigning attention but in reality drifting off to the night's festivities to come.

SENHORA  
You're reaching a certain age I believe. And Senhor and I think it would be nice to see you married. Well not married of course, but partnered with someone.

Paola's forehead furrows, slaves are not allowed to marry, not even allowed in the *branca* churches, what was this woman talking about?

SENHORA  
Some of my friends have mentioned that it makes their *negros*...calmer- to be paired with someone, less troublesome.

PAOLA  
Am I troublesome Senhora?

The question slipped from her mouth unconsciously. It wasn't a challenge but a genuine curiosity- what kind of *negra* am I?

SENHOR

No. You've always been the best help we've had.

Senhora looks sharply at her husband, feeling he is being too familiar.

SENHORA

Yes of course. You do as you're told.

Paola flinches.

SENHORA

However I do think it would be more appropriate and better for all of us. Senhora Da Silva has a young *negro* male about your age who she thinks needs someone as well. It's not good for the males to be left unattached, they'll get restless. Don't you think?

Senhor rolls his eyes. She looks at Paola expecting agreement and Paola nods stiffly.

SENHORA

So I think we should introduce the both of you and we'll proceed from there. I should expect you to be excited. This way your offspring will have guaranteed work in our houses and you all can stay together.

Paola swallows and nods again.

PAOLA

If I don't like him?

Senhora pauses, a bit surprised.

SENHORA

He's healthy- what should be the problem?

SENHOR

We won't force you into anything Paola. This is just an option.

(CONTINUED)

Paola looks at him, what is meaning to be reassuring is not and she doesn't return his attempt at warmth because it only looks like possession to her.

SENHORA

Well that's all. Go back to finishing your chores. We'll be off to bed.

Paola walks slowly to the kitchen and keeps cleaning with a knot in her stomach and a ringing in her ears.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET (OLINDA)- NIGHT.

Paola walks out onto the street on her way home for the night. She leaves the *branco* part of Olinda for the smaller, crowded *negro* district.

EXT. STREET (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)- CONTINUOUS.

As she walks the city changes. The streets are dirt instead of stone, and the large ornate churches become smaller, crooked buildings with stark wooden crosses.

Only Africans walk these streets, people pass with baskets, children run around holding smaller children. A man passes driving a cart pulled by an old mule.

Everyone is returning from work of some kind, and the smell of food is in the air. People are tired but there is an air of community, people speak their first languages here.

Many houses are mostly wood and straw, there are some long houses made from stone that house several families.

Paola reaches her house, which is small and a bit isolated as her mother likes it.

INT. PAOLA'S HOME (NEGRO DISTRICT)- CONTINUOUS.

Paola walks in, her mother, PALMIRA, is boiling something over a simple stove. She is a short woman, round, with dark blue hands from dyeing with indigo. Her eyes are cloudy and have a little blue around them. The house is sparse but there is a small statue of Virgin Mary and a few plants.

PALMIRA (B)

Ola, daughter.

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA  
Mama, how are you?

Paola goes over to her mother and kisses her cheek. She smells the stew she is cooking.

PAOLA CONT'D  
The *fejoada* smells good.

PALMIRA  
It will be okay. There wasn't much sausage today so it's more tongue like you like.

PAOLA  
Mmmm. Come let me stir a bit, sit down Mama.

Paola takes the spoon from her mother and she sits on her small bed lifting her feet up, clearly very tired.

PAOLA CONT'D  
How was your day?

PALMIRA  
The same as most. Hot water, dye, wringing. Nothing special. *Meu Deus*. How was yours?

PAOLA  
The baby is a devil.

PALMIRA  
You cannot call that boy a baby any longer how old is he now?

PAOLA  
Doesn't matter he behaves like one. Crying all the time.

PALMIRA  
(laughing)  
It's living in this city. The children don't have to get their hands dirty. They just play music and read all day long.

Paola pauses for a moment while stirring. She adds something to the stew.

PAOLA  
Senhora said something about me finding a man.

(CONTINUED)

Her mother stiffens a bit lying down.

PAOLA CONT'D  
She said it would keep me happy.

PALMIRA  
(snorting)  
She's so considerate.

Paola looks up from the stew.

PAOLA  
They want my children..to work for  
them...she said.

PALMIRA  
(concerned)  
What did she say exactly?

PAOLA  
Her friend has a man, a male she  
said, that is alone and she wants  
to give him a woman so he'll be  
calm and settle. Like a wild horse.

PALMIRA  
*Meu Deus.*

PAOLA  
Mama what does that mean? Will they  
force me to-

Palmira sits up.

PALMIRA  
No. Listen, I don't think they  
would. Maybe in the country, but  
here they don't do that as much.

She walks over to Paola.

PALMIRA CONT'D  
Say you'll meet him but you can  
always say no. She wouldn't be  
happy about it but what can she do?  
There is no marriage for us anyway.  
And if they want a child so badly  
there are plenty running around to  
choose from.

Paola flinches at her mother's bluntness.

PAOLA  
Senhor said I could choose.

PALMIRA  
I don't trust him. But that's a  
good thing.

Paola does not relax.

PALMIRA  
*Branços* have more to be concerned  
about than your womb. I've heard  
they think a raid is coming.  
They're preparing for some kind of  
uprising.

PAOLA  
A raid from the hills?

PALMIRA  
*Sim*, the women say they are  
bringing in more soldiers. To fight  
the Dutch and the rebels.

Paola turns the stove down and sets out their plates. Her  
mother sits down.

PALMIRA  
I don't want you going out tonight  
Paola.

Paola looks up at her between spoonfuls of the steaming  
stew. Her first meal today.

PAOLA  
Mama please let's not argue  
tonight.

PALMIRA  
We're not arguing because I'm  
telling you you're not going. It's  
too dangerous!

PAOLA  
Ah! Mama please. It's always  
dangerous. What's so wrong though,  
it's only dancing?

PALMIRA  
And voodoo. And chanting and all  
that nonsense.

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA

It's not voodoo Mama! It's important to me. I can't just go to work for them every day and come home and sleep. I'm not like you.

PALMIRA

It's easy for me then?

PAOLA

That's not what I'm saying. I just mean.

PALMIRA

What?

PAOLA

(beginning to cry)

I'm scared mother! Every day I go there and have them look at me like I'm a dog off the streets. And I come home and realize I've seen scared all day. Not even of whipping or them killing me because I saw enough of that on the plantation that it doesn't scare me anymore. I'm afraid to look at them, I'm afraid of the way they see me!

Palmira bites her lip, emotional as well but stifling it.

PAOLA CONT'D

It's like every time they do they take off all my clothes and examine me. Like when they first bought me. And today- they talk about giving me to some man I've never met. And my babies. They talk of my unborn.

Paola takes a shaky breath. Palmira looks down.

PAOLA CONT'D

I just want to be with people who look at me like I'm whole. And I want to dance and be free for a night.

Paola stops talking and holds her head in her hands. She is used to closing off these thoughts and feelings but they overflow so unexpectedly.

Her mother comes over to her and tries to comfort her. Paola cries into her for a moment and then gets up.

(CONTINUED)

PALMIRA

Paola, love-

PAOLA

You can be mad at me but I'm going.  
I need to get this devil off of me  
tonight.

Paola walks outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. TERREIRO (MACACO, PALMARES)- NIGHT.

Madeira sits with with a group of other women, cutting and washing okra and collards and other foods. They sit in

Women and a few men sit in a circle. They are surrounded by food. Greens and fish, some fruit. Nearby a group of men roast a pig on a spit, painting it with oil and spices as it turns.

As they work drums play lazily in the background. There are lots of men drumming, dressed in regalia. The warriors laugh and drink together, picking at some meat and telling stories.

Madeira sits down next to Bahari.

At some point a SMALL GIRL in white runs up to the the LEAD DRUMMER and the drums become more in sync, stronger. People begin to sing.

The priestesses emerge from the *terreiro*, walking in a long line, dressed in different colors signifying their positions and roles.

The drums quicken. The women at the center are revealed and dressed in all blue: Dada, the MÃE-DE-SANTO and the HEAD PREISTESS at the center. They carry offerings to *Yemoja*: woven baskets of flowers, fish, shells, milk, and some coins.

The people sing as they come to the center, clapping in a practiced rhythm. Madeira looks at Dada, especially beautiful that night, but enclosed by the women and the people. Bahari notices and pinches her. He gets her up and they dance.

The priestesses dance as well, at the center. In the center it's only women, the men stand around them and drum and clap, keeping the rhythm that the women move to. Mãe sings the loudest, leading the song. Her voice is pure power, it

(CONTINUED)

carries the voice of many before her. This part is for *Exu*, before the ceremony is started, to appease him and allow the rest of the night to go on.

CUT TO:

INT. PAOLA'S HOME (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)-NIGHT.

Paola looks in on her mother, asleep in her small room. She leaves to her part of the house.

She takes her hair out, untwisting it into a full, textured afro. She pulls a few gold bands from a box under her bed and puts them on her ankles. She covers her head and face before leaving and she slips out of the house quietly.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD (NEGRO DISTRICT)-NIGHT.

Paola reaches a dirt field near a small shack. This is her church. It has been rebuilt many times after different colonial forces destroyed it for fear of their gatherings leading to revolt, or simply out of spite or boredom. The buildings have come and gone but the field itself is more important. It has been a gathering place for Africans in the *Serra da Barriga* for many years.

There are many people already gathered and drums play. Children dance and compete with each other for the best footwork, this they have never lost and never will no matter how many years or miles separated from home.

Paola greets some of them and moves to the center, which is lit by a few candles and torches. She approaches ADE and another WOMAN and greets them.

PAOLA(B)

Good evening. How are you?

ADE

Paola, you look so beautiful. It's good to see you.

WOMAN

How is your mother?

PAOLA

She wasn't feeling well tonight.

WOMAN

I'd never expect to see her here but tell her we will pray for her okay?

(CONTINUED)

ADE

Does she want our prayers?

PAOLA

She would love any prayers you offer. Thank you Auntie.

ADE

Does she know you are here?

PAOLA

She knows but she is not happy with me.

Paola smiles at Ade and waves as she walks to a group of younger women. ESI, YAGA, and KAMEKE come from different parts of the area. They sit together chatting and eating.

PAOLA

*Olá*, How are you?

ESI

*Boa note*. I'm alright, not complaining I suppose. But this heat is so much-

The women laugh.

KAMEKE

Ah, it's always something with you Esi.

ESI

I swear it is getting hotter in the *Serra da Barriga*, every summer. And these mosquitoes.

YAGA

Enough Esi, we are all hot. Did you get some food?

ESI

No not yet.

YAGA

Go get some, there's yucca and pepper.

ESI

Alright.

Esi walks away, limping slightly.

(CONTINUED)

YAGA

She has been out in the fields all day you can't blame her. And with her leg.

Paola sucks her teeth.

PAOLA

Her master is so cruel. The way he treated her and Beah.

KAMEKE

She shouldn't have helped that man.

PAOLA

The father of her son you mean.

KAMEKE

He was a troublemaker. Always talking of rising up, all that nonsense. There's no cure for that kind of trouble. It just builds until it overflows.

PAOLA

Beah is a good woman and so is Esi.

YAGA

He wanted them to be free. Do you really blame him for it?

KAMEKE

Free where? There is no freedom here. And we can't sail back to Guinea.

PAOLA

You know there is a place. In the hills.

KAMEKE

(scoffing)

That place? The hills? Probably a bunch of *negros* starving in the forest.

YAGA

Not what I've heard. You know the whites fear them. Their warriors. And their King.

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA

Zumba. They say he is immortal.

KAMEKE

No Black man is immortal. All I see is them dying. If anything it's the whites that live forever. They just keep coming and coming.

Esi returns with a plate of food.

ESI

You're still talking that nonsense? Why don't you go get yourself a white man for a husband then- ah! All your children are black like us.

KAMEKE

I don't want one! But this place is theirs now and we have to survive here.

PAOLA

I don't believe that. My mother said this place looks like Africa, like home. You know where they come from isn't like this, the way they get sick and burn in the sun. I don't believe the land has given up as quickly as you.

Another woman, BEAH, walks over to them.

BEAH

She's right you know.

The women jump- not having noticed her approach. Kameke looks uncomfortable, she gets up and walks away.

PAOLA

You scared me Beah.

BEAH

Not just you.

Beah hugs her.

YAGA

Let's not talk about them anymore. Not when we don't have to. They should hurry and play the music. We shouldn't be out too late. They are patrolling more than ever.

(CONTINUED)

Paola looks around, considering her mothers words. She sees her community around her, enjoying themselves but the older people not as relaxed as they sometimes are. She knows this haven is always temporary and she considers that place in the hills.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TERREIRO (MACACO-PALMARES)- NIGHT.

Madeira sits with a bowl of food she finishes with her hands. She is a bit drunk on palm wine as are others. They are laughing and talking around the fire they have built. Bahari challenges a MAN to wrestle and they go at it. He is playful, but the man is serious about defending his manhood against the young champion.

People are still dancing and drumming as they will all night, there is something about the boldness of this that speaks to the power of Palmares at the time, they did not see a real threat to their strength.

The priestesses sit, they hold a kind of court during the celebration, accepting offerings, giving blessings and prayers as well as advice and some herbal mixtures.

Near them the IBEJI sit, two women side by side, one wearing red and one blue. They are both of dark color, with thick gauzy hair that curls in every direction. They are adorned with gold and coral. A few people come up to them for advice as well. TAIWO speaks to them with warmth and reaches out to people, while KEHINDE, the other, sits more distantly, rarely speaking.

Dada leaves the priestesses and approaches Madeira. She taps her and motions that she join her.

MADEIRA(P)

What?

DADA

We're going to talk to them.

Dada grabs her hand and begins pulling her towards them.

MADEIRA

Ekundayo please.

DADA

(laughing)

Ei, my full name! She must be serious.

Dada is still pulling Madeira towards them.

(CONTINUED)

DADA

Listen. You are brave. You will be fine, just tell them what you've seen. What's the worst that could happen?

MADEIRA

They think I'm cursed and banish me from the city.

DADA

That almost never happens.

MADEIRA

Dada!

DADA

Go!

Dada pushes her up to the TAIWO and KEHINDE who do not look that much older than Dada and Madeira physically but seem much older in demeanor.

Madeira stumbles a bit approaching them, unusual for her. They look at her, curious and open.

TAIWO

Olá Madeira.

MADEIRA

Olá *Ibeji*.

TAIWO

(laughing)

You may call me Taiwo.

MADEIRA

Sim.

TAIWO

Ekundayo has told us that you've been having dreams that you may need guidance about.

MADEIRA

Yes.

TAIWO

Come. It's loud here, let's walk a bit.

The three get up and walk away from the festivities, Madeira shoots a glance back at Dada who waves at her and keeps laughing.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)- NIGHT.

Paola watches some men, old and young, practicing their capoeira before the celebration begins. They dance around each other, impossibly agile, slipping in and out of grasps, landing blows softly for play and flipping and bending like acrobats. But it is a common thing to them, not one of wonder.

Luis spots Paola, and with a smile walks over to where she stands. Women behind Paola giggle as they look on.

Paola smiles at first but the thought of Senhora's plan comes into her mind and it falters.

LUIS(P)

Ola Paola.

PAOLA

Luis.

LUIS

Come to watch me win?

PAOLA

Against these little boys and old men?

LUIS

Teach then. Will you finally let me teach you something?

PAOLA

This sport is for men. I can't flip and jump around like you do.

LUIS

Sure you can, with practice.

PAOLA

I don't need it.

LUIS

You should learn how to defend yourself.

She gets annoyed. Was she just a target for people?

PAOLA

Have you seen me gut a pig? Or break the neck of a chicken? I can

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA (cont'd)  
use a knife. And a machete too.  
Cane isn't easy to cut.

She is steaming suddenly. Luis is a bit confused at her aggression.

LUIS  
Sorry Paola.

She looks at his face and sees he is hurt.

PAOLA  
No I-I'm sorry Luis. I'm just  
feeling off.

He gets closer to her.

LUIS  
Are you okay? After...

PAOLA  
(sharply)  
Yes. I'm not a child Luis, please.

LUIS  
You've been pushing me away since  
the other night.

PAOLA  
No I haven't. I've just been busy,  
and tired okay?

Luis begins to rebut but a man calls to him.

PAOLA  
You should go Luis, I'm sorry I  
snapped at you.

LUIS  
Don't be. We'll talk later.

He touches her cheek and runs back to the boys.

CUT TO:

EXT. FESTIVAL (MACACO, PALMARES)- NIGHT.

The women are seated in a grassy area away from the main fire. Taiwo looks at Madeira as an older sister might. Kehinde is colder. When she looks at Madeira it is with a ferocity that surprises Madeira but does not frighten her.

(CONTINUED)

She remembers the story of the Ibeji, how the twin that comes first is said to be the younger, announcing the arrival of the eldest, and making sure it is time to come into the world.

Dada emerges behind them and sits beside Madeira, she grabs her hand.

TAIWO

So tell us about this dream.

KEHINDE

No. Tell us about the others. The nightmares.

Madeira is hesitant. Not so much because of her fear of the women, but because she never speaks of these dreams.

TAIWO

We will not judge, we do not judge.  
This is only for us to help you.

MADEIRA

Sim.

KEHINDE

You know this dream means something  
or you would not have told  
Ekundayo. She believes it is  
important and I believe she is  
right. I'm sure you do too.

They sit back, somehow it is clear they know what Madeira and Dada have. Madeira breathes and closes her eyes.

MADEIRA

My dreams are like beasts. Ever  
since I was a child. After my  
father died. I've had them every  
night-

KEHINDE

How did he die?

MADEIRA

(calm)

Soldiers killed him. *Os brancos*.

TAIWO

What happened?

## MADEIRA

We worked on a sugar plantation in the west. My father was *índio-Tupí*, but he was captured by *brancos* and taken to a mill. My mother is from Guinea, they met there. We tried to escape, all of us and my sister. But we got separated on the way to this place—a smaller *mocambo*— and my mother and sister died on the plantation.

Dada squeezes her hand. Taiwo looks empathetic. Kehinde's expression doesn't change.

## MADEIRA CONT'D

My father managed to bring me to the edge of a *mocambo* and gave me to some Tupí he knew. But the *brancos* caught up with us. In those metal suits, on their horses they whip to insanity. Their guns caught up with us and I remember seeing the holes in his chest as those iron balls poured through him.

Kehinde's eyes widen.

## MADEIRA CONT'D

He couldn't go any further. He made them take me from him. I fought and screamed, I watched him dying there. They couldn't keep me with them for long, they even tied me up. But I got out and spent days searching for his body. All I found was his knife, and my mother's necklace here. I ripped it from her when we were separated.

Madeira pauses, touching the gold crucifix on her neck. Dada rubs her back. She's not emotional but tired, digging up the old memories.

## KEHINDE

The dreams are memories of this?

## MADEIRA

Yes...almost every night...of him dying. Sometimes it's just the sound of the soldiers and their hooves. Sometimes the blood and the bullets. Sometimes I dream of him

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA (cont'd)  
being swallowed by earth, or myself  
walking around looking for pieces  
of his body.

TAIWO  
Until now..

MADEIRA  
Yes. A few weeks ago these started.  
I met this woman. And we traveled  
around this place, into the forest,  
the hills, the sea. And we spoke.  
And it was so different.

DADA  
And she is in bondage.

MADEIRA  
Yes.

TAIWO  
If you see your dreams as the sea,  
there is a normal rhythm to the  
waves. These new ones are a  
disturbance-

KEHINDE  
A change in the current.

TAIWO  
Even though they are more peaceful.

KEHINDE  
Come.

The women outstretch their hands and each takes one of  
Madeira's

KEHINDE  
Close your eyes.

Madeira looks at Dada and closes them.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. FIELD (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)- NIGHT.

The Ibeji hum lowly.

Paola is running in the street. Gunfire sounds in the background. People are screaming.

Dogs are running, chasing after people. Madeira smells blood. The sound of chains.

She sees flashes of Paola running from men, she hears gunfire, she sees dogs and horses running, she sees chains. She smells blood.

CUT TO:

EXT. TERREIRO (MACACO, PALMARES)- NIGHT.

At the festival the drums quicken, the women sing louder, people dance and their feet move so fast you can't see when they touch the ground. Women become "possessed" and "ridden" by their gods.

They move as the spirits would, giving themselves over to their power. The other women around them make sure they don't harm themselves as they move with force and without awareness of where they are. Warriors whoop and cry. The fire blazes. It's as though the Ibeji are drawing from the ceremony or the other way around. The dancers blend into--

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)- NIGHT.

Paola and other women dance around small lights and candles. The drummers beat with abandon, that is not something that can be done quietly, and you cannot have ceremony without drums.

Paola starts out dancing reluctantly but soon she cannot help herself. She looks incredibly happy as she moves, throwing her head back, laughing and singing. Luis dances as well, with her and near her, often engaging with her and watching how she moves. She is in her own world. She doesn't think much about the way she moves but others watch her grace and skill.

CUT TO:

EXT. FESTIVAL (MACACO, PALMARES)- NIGHT.

The drums are still beating in the background.

KEHINDE  
She's in danger.

TAIWO  
Grave.

MADEIRA  
I saw it too. What will happen to her?

Taiwo closes her eyes.

TAIWO  
It's not decided yet. She may survive this but things are changing. She cannot stay where she is much longer.

KEHINDE  
There are many paths laid out before us. We can see the possibilities but nothing is certain. Except that tonight there will be violence.

TAIWO  
I think she will survive it. But she has to leave soon. Her masters or the soldiers will take her. She won't go back to a plantation alive...

MADEIRA  
No I don't think she would. What can I do? I need to help her.

DADA  
Holy ones, can you see where the woman is?

IBEJI (BOTH)  
She is close.

TAIWO  
Olinda.

Madeira is winded. How could she have been so close for so long- Olinda is the nearest large city, she had even been on it's borders to trade with townspeople occasionally.

(CONTINUED)

KEHINDE  
You will go?

MADEIRA  
Yes.

Dada looks at her with some worry but does not say anything.

KEHINDE  
Who is she?

MADEIRA  
You don't know?

KEHINDE  
I do. But you don't?

MADEIRA  
I don't understand-

Taiwo looks at Kehinde, cautioning her to stop talking.

TAIWO  
Kehinde.

Kehinde smiles, strangely but stops.

TAIWO  
You should bring her here. If she  
wants a new life she should come.

Madeira still doesn't trust them and especially Kehinde, but she believes this. It becomes clear the reading is over, their time is up.

DADA  
Thank you holy ones.

Dada hands them some beads as offering. Different ones to each.

KEHINDE  
Bring some herbs to our compound  
before you go Madeira. Dada will  
tell you which ones. You will have  
our blessings.

MADEIRA  
Thank you.

Dada and Madeira leave together. The Ibeji walk into the forest.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOREST OF OXUM - NIGHT.

Cosma walks into the forest, mimicking the movement of the Ibeji. It is night time here as well and she is out by herself. Her landscape does not look so different from Madeira's.

She walks through the forest, bare feet on the cool earth. Again a small chameleon follows her. She carries a small bowl, filled with dark palm oil. She reaches a large stone, near a small pond. She pours the liquid onto it, anointing it, and rubs it into the cracks of the stone.

Then--

The sound of horse hooves, moving leaves, steel. Cosma drops her clay bow, it shatters.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)- NIGHT.

Paola and Luis are dancing furiously, the drums in all places are beating loudly. Luis looks at her, passion in his eyes and she smiles back. The women and men are talking, laughing, some sleeping, children still full with energy. Feet are pounding the earth.

Until--the sound of a gunshot. People are screaming. Soldiers are upon them. Horses flood the small clearing.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST OF OXUM - NIGHT

Cosma runs through the forest. She is back in her compound and the houses are burning down. Her vision is blurred with smoke. Wings of flame. Horses on fire. Someone picks her up and runs with her.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)-NIGHT.

Luis grabs Paola's hand and they run. Everyone runs, in all directions, down alleys, into the bush. Some go home, others know they cannot return to where they have left now- so they choose the forest. Soldiers follow them everywhere. It is chaos, but not graphic, it is swift and scattered.

EXT. STREET (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)- NIGHT. CONTINUOUS.

Paola and Luis run down a side street, a few soldiers follow them on foot. Paola is panicked for a moment she sees--

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. SUGAR PLANTATION- NIGHT.

A young Paola and her mother run through the forest. Her mother carries her in her arms. Tears run down both their faces, but they are quiet. Her mother puts a hand to her neck touching the bare collarbone. She turns her head at the sound of horses approaching behind her.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. MADEIRA'S HOME (PALMARES)-NIGHT.

Madeira asleep on her floor rolls fitfully. She mouths the word "run".

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)-NIGHT.

Paola and Luis turn a corner. They stop and Luis holds a finger to his mouth.

LUIS  
I think we lost them.

They look around, the street seems empty, they begin to walk hesitantly.

Just as they turn out of the alley a soldier walks right past. He tries to grab Luis and they struggle.

LUIS  
(to Paola)  
Run! Go!

PAOLA  
Luis No!

MADEIRA(V.O.)  
Run!

Luis looks at her, knowing she doesn't want to leave him he breaks free from the soldier and kicks him hard, forcing him to follow.

(CONTINUED)

Paola looks around and runs. She hears another gunshot, and a man yelling. Tearfully, but still silent as when she was a girl, she keeps running home.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COSMA'S MOCAMBO-DAYBREAK.

It is the earliest hours of the morning. The air is a little hazy with smoke from the night's fires.

Cosma sits in the lap of an OLDER WOMAN. She stares at a fire, tears dried on her face, hiccuping, looking like a child. There are only a few people remaining from the attack. They pass around what little food they have and have muffled discussions of where to go next.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CANE FIELDS- DAY. (DREAM)

Madeira is small. She is being held by a woman with dark skin and cracked hands and joy in her voice. She is singing softly. Things are blurry.

MOTHER  
(singing)  
Utima Wange Ukukwetele yona,  
  
Utima Wange Ukululumbila  
  
A Ñgala suku yange,  
  
A Ñgala suku yange

Madeira is laying back and smiling. She reaches for the woman's face with her small hands.

end of dream

CUT TO:

INT. MADEIRA'S HOME (PALMARES)- DAYBREAK.

Madeira sits on the edge of her bed. Her hands are in her head. She is crying softly.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)- EARLY MORNING.

Paola rides to work as the sun comes up, in a small cart with some other women. No one speaks, the air is still tense from the night before. As they ride there are people being led away in chains by soldiers. Paola looks around for Luis but she does not see him.

She gets off the cart and walks a bit further to her masters' home.

INT. SENHORA'S HOME (OLINDA)- CONTINUOUS.

Paola walks in and a door closes sharply. Senhora is standing in the hall waiting for her.

PAOLA(P)  
(surprised)  
Olá Senhora.

The woman is never up when she arrives.

SENHORA  
Paola. Come.

She does.

SENHORA  
I'm sure you've heard about what happened last night.

She pauses. Paola says nothing.

SENHORA  
Well a group of rowdy *negros* were planning a revolt. They were doing all sorts of rituals and voodoo in preparation.

Senhora looks Paola over. She sits, Paola stands in front of her.

SENHORA CONT'D  
Senhor was very upset to hear that you were seen there.

Paola knows she should apologize but she can't find the words to.

PAOLA  
It was a dance Senhora. Nothing dangerous. Just music.

(CONTINUED)

SENHORA

I knew it was true. Even after we saved you from that sugar mill. You're still ungrateful.

Senhora stands. Paola looks at the floor.

SENHORA

Senhor is waiting for you outside. He's going to take you somewhere. And if it were up to me you wouldn't come back. At least that foolish girl is gone.

Paola looks at her for the first time.

PAOLA

Luz?!

SENHORA

Go outside and go with Senhor. Now girl.

As she dismisses her she holds the cross at her neck as though it protects her from whatever misfortune Paola brings. Paola looks at her. For a moment she thinks about smashing the woman's face in with one of her heavy pewter dishes. She flexes her hand and gets up to leave.

EXT. SENHORA'S HOME (OLINDA)- CONTINUOUS.

Paola gets into the carriage next to Senhor. This is a bit unusual, but clearly they have something to discuss. Paola is uncomfortable being this close to the man. He smells clean and isn't bad looking, but something about him makes her stomach turn. She usually doesn't look at him for too long, knowing he is usually looking back.

SENHOR(P)

(to driver)

*Vamos*

They drive for a while. Leaving the city, the area becoming increasingly rural, going over many hills. Paola is stiff and her nerves begin to rise.

SENHOR

I'm taking you to a sugar mill.

She looks at him, heart stopping.

(CONTINUED)

SENHOR

My wife would very much like to  
sell you.

Senhor looks at Paola for a reaction and she looks away.

She wants to vomit. She balls her hands. But he isn't being friendly- his tone is harsh and blunt.

SENHOR

I'm more concerned with this revolt  
business. I do not allow trouble  
into my home and you know that.  
We're kind to you. You *negros* in  
the city have things easy, I hope  
you haven't forgotten that.

She tries not to look bewildered when he says "everything you could want". Does he even know *negros* can want?

She waits until he stops talking and looks out the window.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUGAR MILL (OUTSIDE OLINDA)- DAY.

They walk, Paola behind Senhor, through the plantation. It is made up of the fields, the *engenho*- the mill, the *Casa Grande* where the masters live and the *senzala*, where the enslaved live.

Looking down from the hill, everything Paola can see is CANE. The plant is tall, with long white stalks and thin green leaves. They grow much taller than the people cutting them down. They are planted in uniform rows for miles.

The smell makes Paola sick and she tries to cover her nose with a rag.

They reach the *Casa Grande*. The house is not very grand, it looks like it was planned to be a great beauty but it fell short. It is startlingly white. It is trimmed with orange and a red tiled roof. It has a large wrapping porch and open windows.

The heat is unfriendly. As Paola looks up at it she gets dizzy and the house looks distorted as though it might fall on her. A man, CARDOZA, comes out to greet them.

CARDOZA

Olá, Raul. I'm glad you were able  
to come.

(CONTINUED)

SENHOR

Good morning Alfonse. Thank you for having me.

CARDOZA

Please come in. How was your ride?

The men talking become muted as they enter the house. Paola has not stepped up any of the stairs to the door. her vision continues to blur. The house is atop a hill and she looks out upon the rows and rows of cane. She can't look at it for long. She walks around the house, to the garden in the back fanning herself in the heat.

EXT. GARDEN (SUGAR MILL)- CONTINUOUS.

Paola walks around the house to the garden. She finds a bucket of water and splashes it on her face, head spinning. When was the last time she drank? She takes a large gulp. Her mind drifts to--

BEGIN FLASHBACK.

EXT. SUGAR PLANTATION (MEMORY)- DAY.

Paola is young. She is standing in a cane field next to her mother, who is younger too and can see her. They are both sweating in the beating sun.

YOUNG PAOLA(B)

Mama how much longer?

PALMIRA

You remember what I said. When the sun is that high we only have a little longer to go. And then we can get some water and wait for the sun to go down a bit.

YOUNG PAOLA

I'm tired mama.

PALMIRA

I know baby. But you have to keep cutting okay. Sing the song with me.

Young Paola begins to sing "Mo juba ocha", Palmira takes up the leading part and Paola the response.

END OF FLASHBACK.

CUT TO:

EXT. GARDEN (SUGAR MILL, OUTSIDE OLINDA)-DAY.

Paola wakes, softly finishing the song from her memory. There is a woman standing near her she offers her some more water.

PAOLA (P)

Brigada.

The woman nods.

WOMAN

You came with that branco man?

PAOLA

Sim. From the city.

WOMAN

Your name?

PAOLA

Paola. What is yours?

WOMAN

Just Auntie.

PAOLA

Can you sit?

The woman looks around and sits near Paola in the shade. She fans herself.

PAOLA

The heat is angry today.

WOMAN

I remember days like this when I was a girl in Yorubaland. We would never be out working in such heat.

PAOLA

How old were you when they took you?

WOMAN

Too young.

She smiles sadly at Paola.

WOMAN

Come, the women are preparing some food. You should eat something.

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA  
Thank you Auntie.

They walk to a building with smoke coming out the top.

INT. KITCHEN (SUGAR MILL)-CONTINUOUS.

In the kitchen women move around, some fanning coals on an open stove, some moving water, some plucking chickens. They look up when Paola and Auntie enter.

AUNTIE  
This is Paola, she came with the branco.

The women look at her, some with distaste, some curiosity. The head cook bridges the silence.

COOK  
Come help us then. You can cook?

PAOLA  
Sim! Yes Auntie.

Paola moves into the kitchen and begins plucking the chickens that remain. The air relaxes a bit.

CUT TO:

INT. ENGENHO (SUGAR MILL)-DAY.

Senhor stands next to Cardoza, Paola stands behind him. They are all inside the mill room. The large mechanism taking up space and several *negros* lined up in front of the *branco* men, for inspection.

SENHOR  
(to Paola)  
What do you think?

Senhor is looking at a young boy, OTAIKU, sizing him up but avoiding touching him. Paola is struck.

PAOLA  
I-I.

SENHOR  
Could he be helpful to you in the house?

Paola gulps.

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA

No-no one we've seen would be right.

Senhor gives her a look. Considers the boy. Paola looks around, the men are all her age or younger, they do not grow old in this place. She catches the eye of one of the women who had been in the kitchen, who hadn't spoke to her. She nods at Paola and looks at the boy.

PAOLA

I- Actually. No, he'll do.

She thinks about how thin the boy looks. Maybe she could help him.

SENHOR

I think so too. I'll take him.

Paola looks down. She is so unsure if there is a way to help the boy other than to throw him into the air and pray he grows wings. He looks back at Senhor with a blankness.

CARDOZA

Bom! Let's work out the details inside over some food.

Paola and Otaiku look at each other, both lost. Paola reaches out her hand to him.

PAOLA

Come on. Tell me your name pequenino.

Otaiku takes her hand hesitantly.

OTAIKU

Otaiku.

The two walk out of the mill, Paola looks back at the woman who nodded at her. The woman is staring at Otaiku, she turns to a woman next to her and starts to sob.

Paola turns back quickly, fighting her own tears.

PAOLA

My name is Paola.

EXT. MILITARY POST (MACACO, PALMARES)- DAY.

Madeira sits in an open area with a grass roof. Around her men, fresh from battle, roam around. Some are bloodied but most are talking jovially, recapping their victory. Weapons are scattered about and horses are watering and eating.

Madeira is healing a man of about 40, JUMA, with a gash in his leg. There are other men about, she is the only woman in the hut, one of the few who passes into these spaces.

She works cleaning out Juma's wound with a cloth. She begins to spread some *aroeira* water over it. He does not wince.

JUMA(P)

I didn't think I'd see the day when  
my own people attacked me.

Madeira continues working.

JUMA

Boys that could be my son's age  
coming at us as though we were the  
Portuguese or the Dutch.

MADEIRA

What do they call you?

JUMA

My name is Juma.

MADEIRA

I'm Madeira. The soldiers don't  
tell us what's going on, it's as  
though Zumba has sworn you to  
secrecy.

JUMA

They tell the women on the council  
everything.

MADEIRA

They don't much like me I don't  
think.

JUMA

It's Zumbi. He believes his uncle  
is trying to betray us. And his men  
follow him as though he is God  
himself.

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA

I've heard stories of Zumbi but I never believed them.

Madeira makes him straighten out his leg a bit.

JUMA

He is fierce. He was not there today but I've seen him fight before. He is young too, he might be stronger than Zumba.

MADEIRA

The men wouldn't want you to say that.

JUMA

It is the truth.

MADEIRA

Do you believe in our king?

JUMA

Yes. He is the reason I am free today.

Madeira says nothing, she begins to stitch his flesh back together.

JUMA

You do not?

MADEIRA

I just never understood why we should have a king in this place.

JUMA

Our people have always had kings. Even in Guinea.

MADEIRA

Our people are not perfect. We are our people and we ended up here after all.

He considers her.

JUMA

You should also not be speaking like this. Especially to a general. If I was a different person...

She looks him in the eye for the first time.

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA  
(laughing)  
I should fear speaking what I  
believe? Aren't we free here?

He is silent for a bit, flinching now as she sews his leg. A man, DIEGO, comes up to them eating a piece of food, spitting a bit.

DIEGO  
How long will this take to heal?

MADEIRA  
A few weeks, it's deep and he needs  
to stay off it while it heals.

He sucks his teeth.

DIEGO  
It needs to be faster.

MADEIRA  
You want me to make him a new leg?

He glares at her. They have never met.

JUMA  
I heal fast you know that Diego.

DIEGO  
You better old man. We are going to  
Olinda on the new moon and we need  
you with us.

JUMA  
I'll be fine by then.

DIEGO  
I hope so. Those savages. Next time  
I'll take one's head off for you.

Juma looks like he wants to respond but someone calls Diego away. He leaves with a last look at Madeira, part confusion, part hostility.

MADEIRA  
The new moon is next week. I can  
almost see bone in your leg.

JUMA  
I do heal fast.

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA

You must be important to them.

JUMA

I know where the stores are. I worked in a mill for 10 years and after some time they sent me into town for things. They would loan me out to work there sometimes.

MADEIRA

(with respect)

10 years. *Meu Deus*. Most people don't-

JUMA

(darkly)

Last so long? Yeah I was special I guess.

MADEIRA

What is your language?

JUMA

I was born speaking *Umbundu* but I lost it young.

MADEIRA

Sorry.

JUMA

I just remember little things my mother would say.

MADEIRA

Mine taught me too. That's all she would speak to me in.

Madeira cuts the thread with her knife and ties up the neat stitch. She covers the wound with some cloth.

Madeira gets up and pours out her basin of dirty water before her next patient.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAUNDRY (OLINDA)- EVENING.

Paola sits outside, scrubbing white sheets with a group of women, Esi, Yaga and Kameke are among them. A YOUNG GIRL runs between the well and the women scrubbing, bringing clean water for them to use. Women beat clothes with stones, scrub with brushes and white suds and rolled up sleeves are everywhere. Gossip floats by with the dust.

(CONTINUED)

ESI(B)

I think they'll do more raids.  
Maybe even come to our quarters.  
They used to do that.

YAGA

But why? They got who they wanted  
didn't they?

ESI

Who knows who they wanted?

KAMEKE

I think they were planning a  
revolt. Those new men from Guinea  
they brought in last month. Why  
else would all this be happening?

PAOLA

For fun.

The women look at her, surprised she is finally talking to them.

YAGA

I thought you were lost in those  
dreams Paola.

Paola shakes her head and goes back to washing. Yaga walks over to sit by her.

YAGA

(softly)

I heard they took Luis into the  
army. He's not dead you know.

Paola keeps scrubbing.

KAMEKE

He may be soon the way they treat  
those men.

ESI

Boys. Luis was barely a man  
himself.

PAOLA

What about Luz?

YAGA

The mills.

Paola finally stops cleaning and looks down.

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA

Why?

YAGA

She's young, maybe she'll be okay.

Paola gets up and walks away from them. She pours out her soapy bucket and sits. Otaiku comes up to sit by her. She brought him with her that day.

PAOLA(Y)

How long were you at that mill?

OTAIKU

As long as I can remember.

PAOLA

That can't be too long. What do you think of it here?

OTAIKU

It smells. And my mama cooks better than you.

Paola laughs at his honesty.

OTAIKU

I'm not so tired though, and there haven't been any whippings yet. I don't miss the cane.

PAOLA

I didn't either when I left. I can't eat the stuff, sometimes even the smell is too much.

OTAIKU

Will I have to go back?

PAOLA

I don't know. I hope not. I'm sorry Ota.

OTAIKU

My mama's gone now so it don't matter too much where I am.

Paola looks at him, wanting to ask but knowing it could only be a few different painful answers. She rubs his head.

CUT TO:

EXT. YARD (SENHORA'S HOME, OLINDA)-EVENING.

Paola works outside, collecting the laundry that has been dried from the hot sun.

PAOLA  
Otaiku! Come please.

Otaiku comes over from sweeping the patio with a straw broom.

PAOLA  
Here take this end.

They work together and fold the large sheets up. They place them in a large basket.

PAOLA  
Thank you. I'm sure Senhora can't have more for you to do today. Why don't you go tend to the horses.

Otaiku smiles, briefly and nods at her.

OTAIKU  
Okay Paola.

He runs off and Paola laughs, surprised.

INT. SENHORA'S HOME (OLINDA)- CONTINUOUS.

Paola goes inside with the basket and makes the beds in the house, putting the extra sheets in a closet. When she finishes she comes downstairs and Senhora is waiting in the kitchen.

PAOLA  
Olá Senhora.

SENHORA  
Olá. How is the boy doing?

PAOLA  
He works very hard. He's quiet but I think it's just his way.

SENHORA  
I thought Senhor would bring back a girl.

PAOLA  
There were no girls that I saw. This way he can help more with the horses.

(CONTINUED)

SENHORA

Yes I suppose.

Paola places the basket away and begins to put up some dishes.

SENHORA

Senhor didn't tell me much about your trip but I assume you understand why he brought you.

She looks at Paola who says nothing. Paola's hand begins to shake a bit. The feeling of uneasiness rising.

SENHORA

If you're going to stay here I want you settled. I'll be taking you to Senhora DaSilva's to arrange things with her boy.

Paola nods. Things get blurry, muffled as though cotton is stuck in her ear. She reaches to see if something is stuck there.

SENHORA

Bom?

PAOLA

Bom.

SENHORA

Good. That's all for the day, we'll be sleeping early so you can go home now.

Senhora walks upstairs and Paola places the last dish away. Paola begins to breath hard, unevenly.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DYEING CENTER (OLINDA)- NIGHT.

Paola walks by her mother's workplace, the end of a long day for both of them as usual. Paola greets the women leaving the center. She waits until her mother comes out.

PALMIRA

*Olá minha filha.*

PAOLA

*Olá mama. How was your day?*

The two begin walking.

(CONTINUED)

PALMIRA

I'm tired child. But it was okay.  
Maria is expecting. It's such a  
blessing.

PAOLA

That's wonderful. Is Bernardo  
excited?

PALMIRA

He's already named her Milagro.

PAOLA

(laughing)

He's sure it's a girl, eh?

PALMIRA

He'll spoil her I'm sure of it.

They turn a corner and a few children run by playing with a  
ball.

PAOLA

Mama, Senhora keeps bringing up the  
man. She wants me to go meet him.  
She's saying it like it's this or  
they sell me.

PALMIRA

She wouldn't do that. Well- Senhor  
wouldn't. He's had a softness for  
you since you were young.

PAOLA

It's not softness at all Mama. And  
that could go away when I take a  
man.

They reach a small stand selling food.

PALMIRA

*Olá, bom dia.*

COOK

*Bom dia.*

PALMIRA

Two soups.

The cook nods and they go to sit down at an unsteady table.  
She brings over two large bowls of soup.

(CONTINUED)

PALMIRA

We'll pray about it when we go home  
alright? I'm sure God will find a  
way for us.

PAOLA

Mama I don't want this man.

PALMIRA

You haven't even met him yet.

Paola pauses.

PAOLA

What are you talking about met him?  
I don't want to meet him I don't  
want anything to do with him.

PALMIRA

You do want children don't you?  
This way your family could have  
protections.

Paola scoffs and stirs her soup with her hand.

PALMIRA

*Filha*, I know about these things.

PAOLA

About selling yourself to a man?

PALMIRA

(sternly)

Ah, who are you talking to?

She looks at Paola sternly.

PALMIRA CONT'D

You have to be realistic about this  
Paola.

PAOLA

You're always telling me that. Be  
realistic.

(beat)

I just want myself. I want my own  
body at the very least. Why isn't  
that realistic?

(CONTINUED)

PALMIRA

Because you are a slave.

Paola looks up as though she's been slapped. her mother continues eating.

PALMIRA

You forget sometimes Paola. It is not fair but it is real. There are some things that you must just accept. Things that you were never going to be able to choose.

PAOLA

You used to tell me about the people who grew wings and flew away from the plantations. And you would have killed any man who came near me.

PALMIRA

You're not a child anymore Paola. And you haven't felt the whip in years so maybe you forget. But I can show you my back if you want to remember what happens when you forget what you are. In fact just look at my eyes.

Paola looks at the deep lines in her mother's face, the scar near her cloudy eyes, thinking of all she had been through and wondering if the mother she knew was truly gone. She looks down, feeling numb.

PALMIRA

I love you Paola. And I want you to be happy. But you cannot eat happiness. It won't protect you from them and I can't anymore. There are ways to make the best out of this.

PAOLA

They took more than your sight when they killed Papa and Andr-

PALMIRA

Ah! Enough Paola.

PAOLA

I'm not going to just roll on my back for them.

Paola gets up and walks away from her mother.

(CONTINUED)

PALMIRA

Paola!

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)-NIGHT.

It has started to rain. Paola walks through the quarters quickly, not greeting anyone. The longer she walks the more she becomes overcome with emotion. She reaches a small shanty house and by this time she is crying and shaking. She knocks on the door. BEAH answers the door.

BEAH

Paola! What's wrong?

INT. BEAH'S HOUSE (NEGRO DISTRICT) CONTINUOUS.

Beah hands Paola a steaming cup of tea. Paola sits wrapped in a blanket and takes the cup. Beah's house is small, but well lit and warm. It feels like a home, with fabrics draped all around.

PAOLA

Obrigada.

BEAH

of course.

Two young boys come into the room wrestling with each other. Beah gives them a stern get yo ass in bed look.

BEAH

Boys!

The boys pout and walk out, pushing each other. Beah looks at Paola.

BEAH

What do you need Paola?

PAOLA

Do you know where Luis is?

BEAH

I'm not sure.

PAOLA

Do you think there's any chance he made it to a *mocambo*?

(CONTINUED)

BEAH

I don't know. I've heard they are forcing people into the army, you know the *brancos* are fighting with each other now. It's difficult to escape military- a plantation would have been easier for him to slip away.

Paola is quiet, she sips the tea.

BEAH

What are you thinking Paola? Talk to me.

PAOLA

I need to leave. Senhora is pushing me as far as she can so I'll slip up and they can sell me. She wants me to live with this man her friend has.

BEAH

Evil woman. But where Paola? You mean escape?

PAOLA

Yes. I thought if I could find Luis maybe we could...

BEAH

This is not something to talk about lightly.

PAOLA

I've thought about it for years really, but I always had reasons to stay. Now...

BEAH

What about your mother?

PAOLA

I'll never convince her to come. And I cannot stay Beah. I keep having these dreams, these feelings.

BEAH

About what?

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA

(voice shaking)

If I stay here I'm going to die.  
It's like sometimes when I'm  
working I'll just feel like I'm  
choking and I can't breathe. I  
don't know if they'll kill me or  
sell me or if I'll just stop  
breathing one day.

Beah grabs her hand.

BEAH

Shh Paola okay. You know we have a  
name for this?

PAOLA

What?

BEAH

It happens, especially to women,  
especially your age. It is called  
*selvamento*.

Paola looks at her confused.

PAOLA

Selvamento...?

BEAH

The problem is that you've been  
taught you are something you are  
not.

PAOLA &amp; PALMIRA (V.O.)

(softly)

A slave.

BEAH

And this last step- when they talk  
of your children, of a marriage,  
this part will not take inside you.

Beah gets up and starts mixing some herbs together into a pulp.

BEAH

Some people do take it. But not  
most. Most people can't. Even if it  
means death.

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA  
So what's the cure?

BEAH  
Look at your mother. She had it  
once too. She is cured now.

Beah hands her a dark purple liquid. Paola drinks it- it  
tastes bitter.

PAOLA  
I don't want that.

BEAH  
I know.

Beah takes a breath, examining Paola's stage of *selvamento*.

BEAH  
There is a village, a *mocambo* very  
close to Olinda. The smaller raids  
and thefts we get usually come from  
there. I trade my mixtures and  
weaving with them sometimes. I  
think they would take you in, maybe  
could help you to get to the main  
city. You'll need to go much  
farther to be safe when they go  
looking for you.

PAOLA  
Thank you Beah.

BEAH  
I'm not sure you understand the  
weight of this Paola. If you're  
caught you die. I could die. If you  
get there I can't guarantee how  
they treat newcomers. You'll know  
no one.

PAOLA  
I don't even know myself Beah.

BEAH  
Living with the *quilombolas* might  
be difficult as well. They keep  
different ways then we do.

PAOLA  
I'll learn then. Or maybe I'll keep  
my own ways.

Beah sighs, she isn't convinced by Paola.

(CONTINUED)

BEAH

It's not so simple Paola. It's dangerous, you work in a rich house- do you know of danger?

PAOLA

Beah when I was a girl I lived on a huge plantation. It was back breaking work and people died every day. Death was never a stranger to me, he was my playmate in the cane fields. You could turn a corner and find someone lying dead from the work and the heat.

BEAH

It happened to me too.

PAOLA

My mother, as you say, caught this disease, maybe she was pregnant again, maybe it was finding a good man, maybe it was just her spirit. When we tried to escape they killed my sister and her father. They blinded my mother and beat her back to a pulp. She almost died. They burnt me and made me watch.

BEAH

They could do more than hurt you. They could hurt you mother too, hurt me even.

PAOLA

I've lost everything a few times over. I've seen *brancos* and *negros* do things I thought only the devil capable of. But I've seen my mother survive everything until that night. So much of her died with them...I won't do that. I know I still have life in me and that is sacred to me.

BEAH

*Ashe.*

PAOLA

I would gladly die to save what I have left.

Beah looks at her with softer eyes. She nods.

(CONTINUED)

BEAH

I'll arrange a meeting. They'll send someone and you'll bring them some goods from me. You can speak with them. I don't know if they will take you that day or if they'll take you at all. But it's a chance.

PAOLA

I'll take it.

BEAH

Alright. It's late and my boys wake me with the sun so-

Paola gets up.

PAOLA

Thank you Beah. I know this is dangerous for you.

BEAH

I can only help those who ask for it. I'm glad you are here, but I'm scared for you as well.

PAOLA

Don't be.

Paola walks to the back door, covers her head, and leaves.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MADEIRA'S GARDEN (PALMARES)- DAY.

Madeira and Dada walk in Madeira's garden. It is a work day and no one is around the compound, Dada has managed to leave the temple. They pick herbs together.

DADA

Your violets are blooming.

MADEIRA

It's early isn't it?

DADA

Yes. But this season has been hot and there has been rain.

MADEIRA

When I first came here it was the rainiest season we've ever had.

(CONTINUED)

DADA

Really?

Dada puts some herbs in Madeira's bag.

MADEIRA

Yes. That's what they say at least. The Tupí were scared of me because I came with the floods. The Africans thought it was a sign from Oya.

DADA

Coming with the dead and the storms.

Dada stumbles a bit. Madeira catches her arm.

MADEIRA

Do you have to fast Dada? It's too hot?

DADA

Well we're supposed to stay in the terreiro when we do.

Madeira smiles guiltily.

MADEIRA

I just think Mãe will get tired of seeing my face at her door without offerings.

The two walk inside Madeira's home.

INT. MADEIRA'S HOME—CONTINUOUS.

They lay the spices out on the floor. Madeira gets a mortar and pestle and Dada grabs a clay jar.

DADA

(offhandedly)  
Maybe they know.

MADEIRA

What?

DADA

I mean isn't it obvious?

MADEIRA

I hope not.

(CONTINUED)

DADA

I don't know sometimes I get tired  
of this.

MADEIRA

If you say you want to leave the  
terreiro you know I'd gladly ride  
away with you anywhere love.

Dada smiles at her, her brightness returning.

MADEIRA

But you always said this was your  
calling. What you were meant to do,  
and I know you have a love for the  
gods that is strong. I'm sure it's  
why your skin is so perfect.

Dada laughs. She begins to mix some herbs together and grind  
them.

DADA

(softly)  
I'm sorry Meda.

MADEIRA

Don't be. It is who you are. And I  
don't believe the gods disapprove  
of us.

DADA

I don't either.

MADEIRA

But people are simple you know?  
They can only understand so much.

DADA

They could try.

MADEIRA

I don't want to risk your life on  
the chance they will.

Madeira moves to taste the mixture. She adds something and  
they mix together silently for a moment.

DADA

You still want to go on the raid  
with them?

Madeira sighs.

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA

Yes.

Dada drops the pestle and walks away. She rubs her head, aching from fasting.

MADEIRA

Dada. It's the perfect opportunity. When the soldier mentioned it I knew it made sense.

DADA

Sense? What sense are you talking about? You sneaking into the biggest slave city in the *Serra da Barriga* to find a woman who you've never met?

MADEIRA

You told me to speak to the Ibeji! And you heard what they said.

DADA

You could die Madeira!

MADEIRA

I won't. I'll be careful.

Dada shakes her head.

MADEIRA CONT'D

I spoke to Bahari and-

DADA

So you've already decided?

MADEIRA

The raid is soon I had to make a decision.

DADA

Does what I think matter?

Madeira moves closer to Dada.

MADEIRA

You're the reason I want to do this so badly. You believe in these dreams, you know you do. It's almost like you can see her too. And you can't help your compassion, you want her to be free too.

Dada sighs and glares at her.

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA CONT'D

Bahari wasn't excited but I said I'd go alone if he didn't take me so he agreed. He said it might be funny for him.

DADA

Tell him I hate him.

Madeira kisses Dada and they embrace.

DADA

If you don't come back I'll leave the temple and take a husband.

MADEIRA

What??

DADA

Will you come back?

MADEIRA

*Você é louco.*

DADA

Promise me.

Madeira looks her in the eye.

MADEIRA

I'm leaving at the new moon. I promise I will find my way back to you before it is half full again.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TRAIL (OUTSIDE MACACO, PALMARES)- NIGHT.

Madeira looks up at the moonless sky. She is on horseback, towards the back of a large raiding party. Her hair is braided back and she wears men's clothes. She is surrounded by men on horseback. They are silent as they ride through invisible trails through forest and clearings. Bahari leads her group, Juma rides at the front with more men.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPSITE (ROAD TO OLINDA)- NIGHT.

The raiding party rides up a steep hill and stops to make camp. Bahari leads Madeira to a spot a bit farther from the group.

BAHARI

It'll be better if you don't sleep near them.

MADEIRA

They seemed excited to see me.

BAHARI

I just told the it made sense to bring a healer since there are more soldiers now.

MADEIRA

Men are always so strange around me.

BAHARI

(laughing)

It is because they know you don't want them.

MADEIRA

Some just act like I'm one of them. And then others it's like I'm some alien.

They are in a wooded area, well hidden. The men are putting their horses to graze. They roll out blankets and pull out food from their packs. It's too risky to make a fire. Madeira rolls out her blanket near Bahari and chews on some smoked meat, laying on her back. Bahari eats some yucca.

She looks up at the stars.

MADEIRA

How many raids have you been on Bahari?

BAHARI

I don't keep a count. But many.

MADEIRA

Do you get nervous?

BAHARI

No.

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA

Why not?

BAHARI

What's there to fear?

MADEIRA

Death?

BAHARI

(laughing)

Why should I fear that?

MADEIRA

I didn't realize you were immortal.

Bahari takes out his knife and begins to sharpen it on a stone.

BAHARI (CONT'D)

*Everyone shall taste death.* What is there to fear? I think Allah is the only one who has truly shown me love in this life. For me, for who I am. Death is just what is next in his plan.

MADEIRA

You sound so ready.

BAHARI

Oh no, I have much more living to do. Look at me.

Madeira snorts.

BAHARI (CONT'D)

But I don't think I'll have regrets when it happens.

MADEIRA

How did you become so free?

BAHARI

(laughing)

Oh years of punishing myself.

She rolls over to look at him.

BAHARI

I realized if people were going to hate me that wasn't something I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BAHARI (cont'd)  
could stop even if I pretended to  
be someone completely different. So  
I stopped trying.

MADEIRA  
And they accepted you?

BAHARI  
Not most, but now I can protect  
myself if they don't.

Madeira sits up. She puts the knife she brought near her  
blanket. She pulls the pouch Sese gave her out and holds it.

BAHARI  
You're preparing for a fight?

MADEIRA  
I'm still a woman aren't I. Even if  
I'm not what they would want. Don't  
you sleep with yours anyway?

BAHARI  
I do.

She rolls the pouch in her hands.

BAHARI  
You're nervous.

Madeira rubs her forehead.

MADEIRA  
Things just feel different. Like,  
she's always been easy for me to  
find- in my head. But now it's like  
there's a haze.

BAHARI  
It's probably just because you're  
worried. It's blocking things.

He lies back as well. They face each other.

MADEIRA  
Am I being foolish? I mean what am  
I doing here Bahari?

BAHARI  
At first I thought the same things.  
But I don't think so Madeira.  
You've always had good instincts.

MADEIRA

I'm here chasing a dream.

BAHARI

When you think about it it's not so strange.

MADEIRA

(laughing)

It's completely strange!

BAHARI

Well what is this place? It's a dream isn't it. It's impossible. We have a king and an army and more food than we even need. A mecca here in this new world and it's ours. If we thought of the world as the *brancos* do we'd never have built this place because we wouldn't know we were capable of it.

MADEIRA

What do you think will happen to this place?

BAHARI

I think it will be here forever.

MADEIRA

Their guns keep getting louder and bigger.

BAHARI

But they'll never understand the forest. It's a mystery to them. Just like us.

MADEIRA

I hope you're right Bahari.

BAHARI

You should try to get some sleep Meda. It'll be a long day.

Madeira nods and rolls over. She doubts she will be able to sleep.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPSITE (ROAD TO OLINDA)-CONTINUOUS.

Madeira lays on her back, awake, looking at the sky. Bahari and the rest of the camp sleep. Madeira turns over, tired and frustrated, then sits up.

A noise makes her look up. She hears a rustling in the bush. She leans over to Bahari and pushes him.

MADEIRA  
(whispering)  
Bahari. Wake up. Bahari

He rolls over and mumbles something. Madeira picks up her knife and gets up silently. She steps through the sleeping camp, her feet bare. When she reaches the bush on the edge of the campsite she hears a voice, small and faint. Madeira walks farther into the forest.

EXT. FOREST OF OXUM- CONTINUOUS.

Madeira hears the voice behind a tree- singing-

COSMA (V.O.)  
Epo nbe  
Ewa nbe o  
Epo nbe

She turns quickly to see-

Paola standing in the forest with her. She jumps back, expecting a child.

MADEIRA  
You!

PAOLA  
What is this place?

Paola looks around, a bit frightened at the menacing feeling of the forest.

Madeira looks around, things begin to spin, she loses her footing. She is at the banks of a rushing river. She turns-

Paola gets up and looks around to the star-filled sky of a huge open field. A fire burns in the distance. She turns and faster now-

(CONTINUED)

Madeira is running through a cane field, she finds a machete with blood on it, a woman with clear brown eyes and a bright wrap on her head stands before her, a young Palmira. Madeira reaches for it when-

Paola stands at the top of a huge hill. Below is the *Serra da Barriga* spread out like a map before her.

Madeira is on another ridge across from her. They look up to each other and things are still. Madeira looks down at the treacherous fall. They yell to each other-

MADEIRA

Where are you?

PAOLA

What is this place?

They cannot hear each other. Madeira can't find a way to Paola, things become blurry.

The ground shifts beneath Paola, she is slipping.

MADEIRA(B)

Run!

PAOLA

Help me!

Paola isn't fast enough and the hill begins to disintegrate- the dream collapsing violently. She holds onto a rock with her hands, dangling off the edge.

MADEIRA

Tell me where I can find you! Wait!

Paola slips and Madeira jumps off her ledge they both scream. But then-

They are a flutter of birds flying towards the heavens. And--

END OF DREAM.

EXT. CAMPSITE (ROAD TO OLINDA)- EARLY MORNING.

Madeira jumps awake. Covered in sweat and gasping for breath.

The moon is still up, the forest is waking. Men stir around the campsite, gathering up supplies and loading horses. Bahari is sitting up, sharpening his sword.

(CONTINUED)

BAHARI  
Bad dreams?

Madeira holds her crucifix.

MADEIRA  
(out of breath)  
Sim. *Meu Deus*.

BAHARI  
I was about to wake you. It's time  
to go.

CUT TO:

INT. PAOLA'S HOME (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)-MORNING.

Paola takes a small purse of gold coins from a hidden crevice in her room. She carries a sack over her bag full of her few and precious possessions.

Paola stands over her mother who is asleep. She bends down to kiss her cheek and then she leaves the room quietly.

EXT. PAOLA'S HOME- EARLY MORNING. CONTINUOUS.

Paola closes her door, her head and face covered in a dark indigo scarf. There is early morning mist. She walks quickly through the *negro* district until she reaches a MAN driving a small cart full of people, hay, and some sheep.

She slips him a few coins and gets in. There are a few others inside. No one speaks.

DRIVER  
(to Paola)  
Once we leave here cover yourself  
with the hay and blankets.

Paola nods at him and briefly looks at a few people in the cart. A YOUNG WOMAN with a SMALL BOY. His eyes still tired with sleep, unaware of the journey ahead.

An OLD MAN sits with a walking stick.

And a MAN, about Paola's age, who looked healthy. His eyes red as though he hadn't slept, but alert and moving. She wondered if he could be that man Senhora had wanted her to be with so badly.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD (OUTSKIRTS OF OLINDA)- EARLY MORNING.

The raiding party rides to a small glen in the forest. Some tie their horses up, these will be the men traveling with Bahari and a few other captains to secure supplies. Others stay on horseback, their faces painted in bright colors—some with intention, others simply a decoration meant to enhance the distraction. There are Black and a few Indian warriors in the party. Bahari gathers his men and Madeira together.

BAHARI(P)

Gatherers. You know our strategy. Today is a *missão do gato*. We go into the city in a cart delivering supplies, we go in quiet. Once we reach the armory the others will be in place. When the bell rings they will start the distraction.

As he speaks Madeira's eye catches a young woman, YEWANDE. Her hair cropped short to her scalp, her face serious and alert upon Bahari. She was one of them.

BAHARI

This will draw most of the guard out. Then we go in—take out the rest and get the goods. We are focus on os mosquetes this time, we need fire power. They just restocked so there should be plenty for the taking. Clear?

The men, and woman, nod and in unison—

MEN

*Sim* captain!

BAHARI

*Bom*. You four focus on the guns, you three on the bullets, you on the powder and the bayonets. *Sim*?

MEN

*Sim*!

BAHARI

*Bom*.

BAHARI

(to Juma)

Ready sir?

(CONTINUED)

A nod from the leader. Bahari walks over to him to ask something. Juma waves him away angrily, Madeira looks on curiously.

Bahari mounts his horse, nodding to Madeira.

BAHARI

(to Madeira)

Stay hidden while we travel. We can't handle the full guard on our own. When I whistle it means you can get out.

MADEIRA

*Sim.*

BAHARI

Stay close to me. Don't get in the way.

Madeira glares at him, it is strange to have their dynamic reversed but she knows he is right and she is inexperienced. Fighting her way through the forest was different than fighting an army.

She whispers to her horse and joins the men in loading into a cart, covered in woven blankets, baskets, and some dried food.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET (OLINDA)- MORNING.

The cart makes its way into the city just waking up. The same driver who took Paola earlier passes by and nods to the man driving Madeira's cart. Madeira fights the urge to look outside.

The cart stops, too early for where the armory was said to be. The muffled conversation of the DRIVER speaking to a SOLDIER. Bahari rides next to the driver, dressed in tatters, his apprentice maybe. He says nothing.

SOLDIER

What are you transporting?

DRIVER

Just some goods for market, from the south sir.

SOLDIER

It's a Sunday you know trade is not allowed on this day.

(CONTINUED)

DRIVER

Si. I have just been traveling so long and this was the closest place to rest and find some food.

The soldier looks at Bahari with suspicion.

SOLDIER

We have been on high alert in this city. Lots of rumors of rebellion.

DRIVER

Please inspect my goods if you like.

The soldier walks to the back of the cart. moving around some blankets.

SOLDIER

This is fine work.

He jabs at the bundles with the tip of his musket. The men under the blankets grasp their knives, tensing.

DRIVER

Please take something. For your wife maybe?

SOLDIER

Yes. This I'll take it. A tax of sorts.

The soldier picks up a few gold bracelets, shoving them in his pockets. Bahari looks calm.

SOLDIER

Be on your way boy. You look suspicious out here. Don't stop in the city- get to the negro district and stay the night there. Okay?

DRIVER

Yes. Apologies Senhor.

The cart keeps moving. Those under the blankets don't let out their breaths.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARMORY (OLINDA)- MORNING.

The warriors dismount the cart, all dressed in *esclavo* clothes. They pick up brooms and buckets from the cart and begin sweeping up an alley, out of sight.

Madeira wraps a scarf around her face and rolls down her sleeves. She sits in a shadowed part of the alley.

Bahari looks up to the sun, checking the hour. He whispers something to Yewande. She nods and communicates it to the men. They listen attentively.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD (OUTSIDE OLINDA)- MORNING.

Paola is sitting up in the cart now. Exposed with the few others. The boy is more awake now and sucking on some hay in the cart, his mother dozes- relaxing for a moment. Paola looks forward. They are approaching a small village.

PAOLA  
(motioning to the blankets)  
Sir, should we?

DRIVER  
No here is okay to be out.

The driver pulls over and separates his horse from the cart.

DRIVER  
From here we must walk okay.

They all nod and get out.

EXT. FOREST (ROAD TO MOCAMBO)- CONTINUOUS.

The driver pushes the cart into a dip in the brush, obscuring it. The party walks on an almost unnoticeable path into the forest. The mother holds the boys hand as they walk and the young man walks quickly behind the guide. Paola stays behind near the older man, helping him if need be.

They cross a stream and take so many turns Paola soon realizes she could never make it out on her own. She wants to take her scarf off but she also wants to keep her face hidden in case someone among them cannot be trusted.

The little boy strays from his mother at some point. The guide shouts-

(CONTINUED)

DRIVER

Boy! Stop.

He walks over to him and snatches him up. His mother protests. But the driver picks up a stone and throws it a few feet away from the boy. The stone falls into a pit obscured by brush a moment ago. They look down into a pit full of sharpened spikes. The mother gasps and grabs her son.

DRIVER

(pointing)

Over there is a snake den. And there more traps. Stay behind me and follow the path. You cannot stray. You do not know this forest.

Paola looks around wondering how to follow an invisible path. There is nothing but forest around her.

In the distance the sound of church bell ringing-

CUT TO:

EXT.ARMORY (OLINDA)- MORNING.

Madeira looks up to the sound of the bells ringing. Bahari nods to the men.

CUT TO:

EXT. PAOLA'S HOME (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)- MORNING.

Palmira holds her crucifix. She sits near Paola's empty bed counting the beads and whispering prayers to herself. Her hands shake. At the sound of the bells she gets up and gathers her shawl to leave her house.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET (OLINDA)-MORNING.

The raiding party storms the streets whooping war cries and firing bows and a few gun shots into the air.

The men covered in paint fill the early morning with terror. They ride their horses with skill, bareback, some shooting from atop their mounts. They exaggerate- speaking unknown languages, riding among the early morning churchgoers of Olinda. The brancas scream in terror at their holy day being disrupted by the devil himself on horseback. Men run to find soldiers.

(CONTINUED)

The riders strike down a few *brancos* in the street. Other groups in disguise break off feigning terror and escaping with other supplies.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARMORY (OLINDA)-MORNING.

The soldiers rush out of the armory responding to calls from the main street.

They don't notice the men sweeping up the street and begging outside the building.

Bahari whistles. They grab their arms from under the blankets in the truck and at his command silently enter the armory. Madeira follows at the end of the party.

INT. ARMORY (OLINDA)-CONTINUOUS.

Bahari and the men walk through the armory. They hear voices and Bahari signals them to stop. Yewande walks forward unarmed. Madeira watches her.

She turns the corner, crying and limping. The men tense, reaching for their weapons.

SOLDIERS

Stop!

YEWANDE

Please..P-please help! I'm hurt- my baby too. Th-the rebels. They-

She collapses on the ground.

YEWANDE CONT'D

Help. The soldiers- they need help. The devils are here. *Meu Deus!*

A soldier goes over to her side to examine her. The others look over at her, hands almost off their weapons.

SOLDIER

I don't see blood. Where are you hurt girl?

CONT'D

Do you see it now?

She grabs a knife from her side and slits his throat with it. The man yells.

(CONTINUED)

Bahari and his men come out from all sides. Bahari stands behind the captain and snaps his neck.

The soldiers yell. One tries to shoot the woman. She uses the other soldier's body for a shield until the other palmaristas kill him. The warriors fight the soldiers, some hand to hand, some with machetes.

Madeira stays concealed. One young warrior is killed, another with a deep wound. Bahari grapples with a large soldier, not playfully as before but with precision and kills him.

He nods to the others to move to the downstairs. Madeira comes out looking at the scene. Bahari looks at her intently, breathing hard.

BAHARI

Too much blood for you?

MADEIRA

No. I'm okay.

BAHARI

Good. Let's move. I doubt they signaled to anyone but we have to move quickly in case.

They move to the downstairs.

INT.STORE ROOM (ARMORY, OLINDA)- CONTINUOUS.

Two men stand at the door keeping watch. One man sits trying to tend to his wound. Madeira walks over to him, ripping a cloth with her teeth and pulling a mixture out of her satchel.

MADEIRA

Let me.

MAN

Thank you healer.

Madeira looks at him surprised at his gratitude. She nods and sets to work quickly.

Bahari oversees the others working to pull out the guns and carry them out to the truck as quietly as possible.

BAHARI

Take them to the back and keep them separate. Don't forget to keep it covered.

CUT TO:

INT.CHURCH (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)-MORNING.

Palmira sits in her small pew in the black church. The white preacher who volunteers to spread the word to the *negros* speaks before them.

She nods and holds a bible in her blue hands. She does not read it but caresses the pages and whispers the words along with the preacher.

PREACHER

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

She nods and tears come down her face.

A young boy runs into the church bursting the door open and ringing a small bell.

BOY

*Ataque! Ataque!*

The preacher stops immediately and runs out of the church swearing under his breath.

The churchgoers all get up and run out, mothers grabbing children.

Palmira is left alone. She walks up to the crucifix at the front of the church and strokes the feet of Jesus.

CUT TO:

INT. STORE ROOM (ARMORY, OLIDNA)-MORNING.

The men are almost done with the weapons. Madeira finishes binding the wound.

MADEIRA

I forgot my aloe maybe there is some here.

Madeira gets up and walks around a corner into an empty room.

INT. EMPTY ROOM (ARMORY)- CONTINUOUS.

She rummages through a cabinet.

Behind her a soldier emerges, she only just sees him through a reflection and dodges his grasp. He lunges for her and she dodges again. She pulls out her knife. He looks a bit afraid but still advances at her.

INT. STORE ROOM (ARMORY)-CONTINUOUS.

Bahari looks around for Madeira.

BAHARI

Madeira?

INT. EMPTY ROOM (ARMORY)-CONTINUOUS.

Madeira plunges her knife into his stomach and the man staggers backward. She is breathing hard.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. FOREST-NIGHT.

Madeira is a child in the forest. Hands covered in blood. Bodies of two soldiers lie on the grass before her.

YOUNG MADEIRA

Papa!

END OF FLASHBACK.

CUT TO:

INT. EMPTY ROOM (ARMORY)-MORNING.

The man gurgles loudly. Bahari and two others rush into the room and look at the dying man. Bahari goes to Madeira.

BAHARI

Why didn't you call for help?!

MADEIRA

I'm fine Bahari. He's dead.

She takes the knife from the man's stomach.

INT. STORE ROOM (ARMORY)-MORNING.

Madeira crouches before the wounded man, wipes her knife on her dark shirt, and cuts the stitch with it. The men behind watch her. She finishes tying the wound.

Bahari chastises the men for not checking the room first.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)- MORNING.

Palmira walks slowly along the street. People are running by her, there is yelling, smoke in the streets. *Palmaristas* ride through the streets. Some grabbing women and putting them onto horses to take them back with them.

A YOUNG MAN stops in front of her.

YOUNG MAN

*Tia* please you must get inside now!  
Come with me.

PALMIRA

No. I'm going home.

YOUNG MAN

*Tia* it's not safe!

He pulls on her arm. She pulls away.

PALMIRA

Run home now. I'm not going with  
you.

Palmira clutches her invisible bible to her chest, praying all the way through the street.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOCAMBO

Paola sits with the others in the center of a small *mocambo*. Most of the people living there are *indios*. The driver speaks with some of the people.

Paola looks around at the woman who is rocking her son in her lap, the young man who is pacing and refuses to sit down and the old man who is humming to himself.

(CONTINUED)

Then a group of three *palmaristas* ride into the town. Led by a woman on a horse followed by two men. They ride across the camp, Paola staring up at them and them not looking back. They dismount, take some bags from their horses and enter a grass-roofed house without a word.

DRIVER

Those are the *quilombolas*. You'll all need to speak with them. They are trading now and after they are through you'll get your chance with them.

Paola looks at the dark house. She rolls a stone over in her hands nervously.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD (OUTSIDE OLINDA)- DAY.

Bahari drives the cart behind a mound where they left the horses and the warriors all get out. The body of the warrior who was killed lies in the cart, covered with a blanket. He will be buried in Palmares.

The men start loading the weapons into packs on their horses, disassembling the guns, strapping some over their shoulders.

Bahari talks with Yewande.

BAHARI

Take these to the meeting point and wait until sundown. The whole party will be meeting there and then we ride back for Macaco. If anyone is not back by then you must still go.

YEWANDE

Yes sir.

Bahari turns to Madeira who is stroking her horse.

BAHARI

Let's go find your girl. We have only a few hours.

MADEIRA

Thank you. You know the way?

BAHARI

I can take you to the *negro* district. I imagine she'll be home taking cover.

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA

Let's go.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOCAMBO- DAY.

Paola and the young man from the cart sit, still waiting to be called into the meeting house. The driver sits near them, dozing off.

YOUNG MAN

(softly)

I don't trust them.

PAOLA

Who?

YOUNG MAN

The indios. You know some of them sell blacks to the portuguese? They're like mercenaries.

PAOLA

If they are helping us now I doubt they are the same people.

He looks at her a bit annoyed at the challenge.

DRIVER

Some of them are.

They both looks at him surprised he could hear.

YOUNG MAN

See.

DRIVER

Well used to be. But they realized that the money they got from the Portuguese wouldn't protect their lands. Some of them are ex soldiers. They know the forest better than even the people you're looking for. And that place wouldn't exist without their help.

PAOLA

But they don't live with them?

DRIVER

Some do. Most don't. They like to have their own communities if they

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DRIVER (cont'd)  
can. But that place is strong and  
the *indios* need the defense. They  
usually live on the edges.

PAOLA  
And they work together?

YOUNG MAN  
I don't believe that. I've seen  
them kill *negros* before. In  
horrible ways too.

DRIVER  
They saw us as invaders too at  
first. Think about it. From a  
distance it might look like that.

YOUNG MAN  
They look as dark as some of us.

PAOLA  
It's easy to see another as below  
you if it makes you feel safer.

The young man scoffs at her.

DRIVER  
All you need to know is that these  
people, they are Tupi, they help  
us. And they would not work with  
the *brancos*.

He gives the man a stern look and the young man gets up and  
paces some more.

DRIVER  
(to Paola)  
It's your turn.

PAOLA  
M-me?

He nods towards the house, the doorway open for her. Heart  
racing she gets up and enters.

INT.MEETING HOUSE (MOCAMBO)- CONTINUOUS.

Paola enters the small grass covered house. The three  
*palmaristas* sit on one side. A Tupi man sits on the other  
side. He motions to Paola to sit.

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA(T)

Thank you.

DANDARA (P)

You speak Tupí?

Paola looks Dandara in the eye for the first time. She is athletic and strong looking, with long braided hair, beads at the ends and adornments along her body, a knife at her side. Her features are a bit different, she looks as though her ancestors lived in a different part of the continent. The men sit behind her and clearly defer to her authority.

PAOLA

No, not much. A man I once knew taught me.

DANDARA

You've known many indio men?

PAOLA

No. Not closely, this one I did. When I worked on a mill.

DANDARA

I worked there once too.

She looks over Paola.

DANDARA

I am Dandara of the hills. I'm here to see who you are and what you can offer us.

PAOLA

Offer?

DANDARA

You coming of your own will shows bravery but it could also mean you are a spy. If after we speak it seems the latter is true you won't be permitted to leave this meeting place.

Dandara draws her knife, long and curved and places it between her and Paola.

PAOLA

I understand.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)- EVENING.

Madeira and Bahari walk around the shanty town, Madeira unsure exactly what she is looking for. They walk calmly, trying to blend in as much as possible. They get stares but no trouble. They pass people bringing in food and clothes from outside and closing their doors, women grabbing children and bringing them inside, and a few men with makeshift arms. One MAN comes up to them.

MAN

You're one of them. Take me with you. Please.

Madeira looks at him a bit alarmed at the attention.

BAHARI

Leave us.

MAN

I'm strong and I'll fight. Just take me with you.

Bahari looks at him, considering his prospects.

BAHARI

We take those who are not expecting it and those who find us. If you are strong you can find your way to us.

They leave him. Madeira looks at Bahari.

BAHARI

We can't just take people who beg us, that's what a traitor would do.

MADEIRA

I know.

BAHARI

But?

MADEIRA

What are we doing?

He shakes his head.

BAHARI

You are looking for your dream woman. And I'm your foolish friend

They come across a door with a simple cross hung above it. Madeira stops. Something in the air changes.

(CONTINUED)

BAHARI

What is it?

MADEIRA

I don't know. I-I just...Something about this place.

Bahari examines the house, unimpressed.

BAHARI

All this *macumba* stuff is foreign to me so you'll have to do this on your own.

Madeira, frustrated, takes a breath. She thinks of Dada. She approaches the door.

MADEIRA

Keep watch.

Bahari nods.

BAHARI

I'll signal when we need to leave. You don't have too long.

Madeira enters quickly, machete ready and face covered.

CUT TO:

INT. MEETING HOUSE (MOCAMBO)- DAY.

DANDARA

Who do you serve?

PAOLA

Senhora Acosta.

DANDARA

Doing what?

PAOLA

I'm a domestic.

DANDARA

You do domestic labor.

PAOLA

Yes.

DANDARA

Do they beat you?

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA

No. Not in a long time. I've been with them since I became a woman.

DANDARA

Since you bled?

PAOLA

Just after.

DANDARA

What can you offer us?

PAOLA

I can cook. Bantu and Portuguese food, Senhora used to loan me out to others because people would ask about my food. Until she got jealous. And I can sew. My mother worked with dyes and I've seen her doing the work. I could probably pick it up.

DANDARA

Well most of us can cook. Delicious food is not exactly a necessity.

PAOLA

What do you need there?

DANDARA

Why do you need us?

Paola looks down. She sounded so useless, so desperate. Who were these people? She takes a breath. Touches her stomach.

PAOLA

I want a future that I can make for myself. Senhora started to talk about pairing me with some man. Wild she called him. I was supposed to calm him down. Meanwhile I feel like a wildfire is burning me from the inside.

Dandara listens intently.

PAOLA

I almost threw a crystal dish at her while she was talking to me. I just looked up and it was in my hand.

Another breath.

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA

If I stay there I die. They kill me  
or I burn from the inside.

DANDARA

You know our lives are not promised  
there. We could be killed at any  
time if our defenses fail.

PAOLA

But you get to defend something.  
Living with them if you try to  
defend yourself or your family they  
kill you in the square. And they  
leave the body up for weeks.  
Meanwhile all you can protect is a  
house if you're lucky, a few cots,  
what little food we have.

DANDARA

I see.

Dandara puts her knife away. Paola relaxes a bit.

DANDARA

We need women.

A beat.

DANDARA

Men find us more easily and we  
don't have enough women. We need to  
keep our people growing, we need  
more healers and advisors for the  
council. Our women even have  
multiple husbands if they choose.

Paola looks at her.

DANDARA

Can you have children?

PAOLA

What?

DANDARA

If you can I know there is a place  
for you, and a good one.

PAOLA

(softly)  
Children?

(CONTINUED)

DANDARA  
Have you been pregnant before?

PAOLA  
(numb)  
No.

DANDARA  
You've been with a man?

Paola just looks at her, confused, disconnected, a bit betrayed. Was this any different from Senhora?

A man comes into the house and whispers to Dandara.

DANDARA  
(to the men behind her)  
The raid is in progress. He says  
it's going well.

PAOLA  
Raid?

DANDARA  
Today, in your town.

PAOLA  
Olinda?

DANDARA  
You seem unsure about this. We  
cannot accept anyone with doubts.  
You should return. If you are  
missing when they look for you it  
will be suspicious.

PAOLA  
My mother. *Meu Deus. Sim* I have to  
go.

Paola gets up to leave.

DANDARA  
You look afraid.

PAOLA  
Your people leave *branca* and  
*negra* dead when they leave.

DANDARA  
(prickly)  
If they die it is because they are  
defending a master.

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA

Soldiers come through after you leave and round up fathers and sons. They send them away or kill them.

Dandara looks down.

PAOLA

You don't understand.

DANDARA

No. You don't understand. Freedom comes with sacrifice and blood. There is no peaceful way to do this. I don't think you want your freedom.

Dandara prepares to leave herself.

DANDARA

Goodbye.

EXT. MOCAMBO- CONTINUOUS.

Dandara leaves out the back door, flanked by the men she came with and they ride away on their horses.

Paola walks to meet the driver. The young man watches the *palmaristas* ride off angrily.

CUT TO:

INT. PAOLA'S HOME (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)-DAY.

Paola's mother stands near the table, knife in hand, ready for trouble.

PALMIRA(P)

What do you want?

MADEIRA

I'm looking for someone.

PALMIRA

Well it is just me here so unless you want this old woman you should go.

MADEIRA

She has to be here. She's young, she wears a bright scarf on her head. She loves to dance.

(CONTINUED)

PALMIRA

You're a woman. Why are you coming in with the men to hurt us?

MADEIRA

We aren't here to hurt you. We need supplies and we take some of you to our place. To free you.

PALMIRA

(laughing)

I've seen your men take women like animals. I've seen them kill young men who've been forced to fight for their masters.

(beat)

What's your name girl?

MADEIRA

I'm not a girl.

PALMIRA

Really?

MADEIRA

I know you know the woman I'm looking for. I want to help her, she's in danger.

PALMIRA

Danger how?

MADEIRA

I can't be sure but I've had these dreams where-

PALMIRA

I don't believe in that.

MADEIRA

I've never met an old woman who doesn't trust her dreams.

PALMIRA

If you want to stay here I won't force you to go but I can't help you.

MADEIRA

What is your name?

(CONTINUED)

PALMIRA

Palmira.

MADEIRA (B)

Do you speak Umbundu?

PALMIRA

Yes.

MADEIRA

You look familiar to me. Have you ever been free?

PALMIRA

No. I've never been to where you come from and I don't wish to.

Madeira glances at her hands.

MADEIRA

You use indigo?

PALMIRA

*Sim.* Every day.

The women are close now. Madeira reaches out for her hands, uncharacteristically. Palmira backs away.

PALMIRA

Your people chose the lord's day to do this. It's shameful.

MADEIRA

Your lord isn't the only one that my people listen to. You think he chose this life for you?

PALMIRA

You should leave.

As she speaks a bell rings and gunshots are heard. There is call to the *palmaristas* to gather. Madeira moves to the door.

MADEIRA

Sorry to have disturbed you. Tell her I came, I'm sorry I couldn't help her.

Palmira looks away. When Madeira closes the door she grips the edge of the a chair and covers her face. She knows, on some level, but at the same time does not want to know. There is so much she has pushed out of her mind and her heart to survive that is threatening to overflow in that moment.

EXT.STREET (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)- EVENING.

Paola walks through Olinda, there are small fires. People in the streets injured, a few dead. This was a bad raid. There are police and soldiers everywhere, they have people in chains, of course blaming those left behind for the tornado that came through. Esi walks through the street, limping a little, carrying a child on her hip.

ESI

Paola! Thank god. We were so afraid you were dead or that they took you.

PAOLA

Esi! No I was- on the way to Recife on an errand. Have you seen my mother?

ESI

No. I asked of her but I was on the other side of town and I had to stay where I was when everything started.

PAOLA

Oh. I have to hurry home then.

ESI

Yes go! Be careful Paola.

Something suggested that she knew she was not on an errand. Paola waves to her. As she leaves she begins to jog then run her heart pounding. Thinking of her mother.

CUT TO:

INT. PAOLA'S HOME (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)-NIGHT.

Paola bursts into her home. On the way there she felt as though everyone was looking at her and whispering. She opens the door to an empty house. Her stomach drops.

PAOLA

Mama!

(CONTINUED)

She looks around quickly. Praying her mother will come out to scold her.

PAOLA  
Mama!! Where are you? Mama!

She looks at the empty bed, the empty kitchen, at the knife on the table.

PAOLA  
No, no, no.

Tears fall from her face and she runs out the door, still focused.

CUT TO:

EXT.TRAIL (OUTSIDE OLINDA)- NIGHT.

Madeira pauses before getting onto her horse. The party is back together ready to start the journey back.

BAHARI  
Come on Madeira, we have to leave.

MADEIRA  
(emotional)  
How could she not have been there?

BAHARI  
It must not have been the right time.

Madeira shakes her head and angrily gets on her horse.

CUT TO:

EXT.STREET (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)- NIGHT.

Paola runs to the dyeing plant her mother works. The place is closed, there are a few women around sweeping, talking of the raid.

PAOLA  
*Olá*, aunties please have you seen my mother?

The women shake their heads.

WOMAN  
Not today child. You haven't seen her?

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA

I was gone during the raid. She is not home now and she'd never go out after a raid.

WOMAN

I'm sure she is okay.

WOMAN2

Maybe they made her tend to the soldiers. Or at the market helping the women?

PAOLA

Yes. Maybe. I'll go there.

EXT. MARKET (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)-CONTINUOUS.

People are cleaning up their stalls, some having been overturned or stolen from. But mostly the place is empty, Sunday is not a market day.

Paola comes up to a fruit seller she knows.

PAOLA

*Olá* auntie.

SELLER

Ah Paola, I'm glad you are okay. DO you see what they did to my fruits.

She sucks her teeth.

PAOLA

Please, have you seen my mother?

SELLER

Your mother? No, not in a few weeks. You know she doesn't like the market.

PAOLA

Yes. But not at all today? Have you heard of her?

SELLER

No dear, I'm sorry. You can't find her?

PAOLA

(choking)

No, I-I can't find her anywhere. If she was dead she would have been somewhere but-

(CONTINUED)

SELLER

Ah Paola, it's alright. If you can't find her she is somewhere okay. You'll find her.

(to someone else)

Cristiano come here!

PAOLA

(softly)

This is my fault.

SELLER

What?

A MAN a bit older than Paola approaches.

CRISTIANO

Yes mama.

SELLER

Ah- son. You know Paola. Her mother is missing. You and the other boys have to help her look.

CRISTIANO

Her mother?

SELLER

Yes you know her, she dyes indigo and she's blind. She has gray eyes.

CRISTIANO

Ah *sim*.

He looks at her.

CRISTIANO

We'll help you find her okay. We'll look. Sometimes people get moved around in the trouble. The palamaristas don't care much about us here. We have to take care of each other.

Paola just nods. She is exhausted.

PAOLA

*Brigada*.

He nods and walks off.

CUT TO:

INT. PAOLA'S HOME (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)-NIGHT.

Paola walks into her home. Feet caked in dirt and dust. She has been looking all night. She sits down on her mother's cot and cries.

She turns and sinks to her knees. She begins to pray.

BEGIN DREAM.

CUT TO:

EXT. MADEIRA'S GARDEN (PALMARES)- EVENING.

The two women sit in Madeira's garden. Paola is crying.

MADEIRA

What happened?

PAOLA

My mother they took my mother!

MADEIRA

Took her where?

Madeira holds her face in her hands, trying to comfort her. Paola is inconsolable.

MADEIRA

Where did they take her? You have to tell me.

PAOLA

They said they were going to sell her. But she is blind and I don't know who will buy her at her age. They might send her back to the sugar fields.

MADEIRA

When did they take her?

PAOLA

Last night. Soldiers came for her and some others, at night ,I-I wasn't there and I should have been.

MADEIRA

They are cowards to take old women, that's why they come in the dark.

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA

What do I do? I have to find her I have to stop them, she's all I have left. What can I do? If they sell her I'll never find her again.

MADEIRA

We'll find her, we will. Listen there must be a place they have taken her for now- a prison or dungeon- do you know where it is?

Paola begins to slip away, the dream is collapsing. They move through different locations.

MADEIRA

Listen find that place, think of that place- I'm sure she will be there. When you find it come back here and let me know.

PAOLA

I'll try.

MADEIRA

Good luck.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LAGO SAGRADO (PALMARES)- DAY.

Madeira climbs up a tree overlooking the lake. She sits in the branches for a moment and dozes. When she looks down she sees Dada resting beneath the tree, apparently not seeing her.

Madeira crouches down and lifts a strand of Dada's hair. She turns quickly and snatches it back, laughing as she sees Madeira lying above her.

DADA

How long have you been there my love?

MADEIRA

An hour or two I think, I fell asleep.

DADA

Come down here, you're like a little monkey.

(CONTINUED)

Madeira climbs down from the tree and hugs Dada. They look around quickly, making sure no one is around and Dada returns the embrace, nuzzling her a bit and sitting between Madeira's legs.

DADA

I feel like I haven't seen you in weeks

Madeira looks down and puts her face in Dada's shoulder

MADEIRA

I know, I missed you. There has been so much I wanted to talk to you about.

DADA

I thought something may have happened.

MADEIRA

I had to avoid this area for a little. Some of the soldiers weren't happy I came along.

DADA

I'm glad you're back. I prayed for you.

MADEIRA

I know.

DADA

So what happened?

MADEIRA

I didn't find her.

DADA

I thought as much. I'm sorry.

MADEIRA

I think I was in the right place, but she was gone when I got there. I feel like it was a waste. Or the wrong time.

DADA

Maybe she's not in danger anymore?

MADEIRA

Dada I think I have to go back.

(CONTINUED)

DADA

What?

Dada turns around to look at her, she's anxious.

DADA

You can't actually be thinking of going back. It's more dangerous after a raid.

MADEIRA

They are too busy fighting each other to be too concerned with us right now. You know more people have been coming here and to the other *mocambos* than ever. They aren't paying attention

DADA

So you'll just fight them? Since they're weak?

Madeira looks at her with a little surprise at her sharpness. Dada was soft in all the best places.

MADEIRA

No, Dada ah- take a breath. I'll be smart about it. I'll go as one of them, just slip past them. If it's just me and not a raid no one will question it.

DADA

But if they do- you don't have papers. You don't look like them and your face- it's memorable.

MADEIRA

I could wrap my face again.

Dada sighs and turns around again. Madeira reaches for her.

MADEIRA

Dada I'll be careful.

DADA

Why is this so important to you?

MADEIRA

I want to help her.

(CONTINUED)

DADA  
How? Bringing her here?

MADEIRA  
I thought so.. But now I don't  
know.

They move. Dada is behind Madeira now.

MADEIRA  
Her mother is has been taken

DADA  
The woman with the eyes?

MADEIRA  
Yes. They want to sell her.

DADA  
Oh my.

MADEIRA  
She's all she has left Dada, I feel  
like there has to be a way I can  
help.

Madeira squeezes her hand over her chest.

DADA  
My Aqualtune.

Madeira laughs.

DADA  
You're sure this is the place for  
her?

MADEIRA  
It has to be better than Olinda.

DADA  
Things can change my love.

MADEIRA  
Aqualtune didn't know what was out  
here but she still made a life  
here.

From nothing.

DADA  
Nothing? Do you see nothing.

There is everything here- so much the whites never could see.

Madeira lays down near the water and Dada unbraids her hair, playing with the strands.

MADEIRA

Will you tell me the story?

DADA

What story?

MADEIRA

Why is this lake sacred? Tell me about Aqualtune.

DADA

But you know it all love

MADEIRA

No I don't remember it. Tell me again Dada

Dada giggles.

DADA

Okay then, I'll tell you the story of the warrior queen from Guinea.

They shift to get comfortable. Madeira looking up at Dada, for once looking more childlike than Dada.

DADA CONT'D

Okay then, I'll tell you the story of the warrior queen from Guinea.

She is our mother. She gave birth to this place and Zumba himself. She is our *Asantehemaa* as the Northerners I've heard of might say. She was born to Bantu royalty in the land called *Ndongo*, what the whites call Angola. She was raised a princess and then she became a general.

Madeira rubs her arm.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TENT (COSMA'S MOCAMBO)- DAY.

Cosma sits by the side of a woman, her MOTHER, in a small tent filled with steam. Her mother is sweating heavily, laying back and clearly sick. There is another woman above her, fanning a circle of steaming rocks. Cosma hold her mother's face, nudging her with her head.

At the same time-

DADA V.O.

There was a war in and she was captured. They sold her, people Black like herself, sold her to the Portuguese and she was brought here. She was made to work the land for *açúcar* like many of us but she escaped. Some say she had soldiers who came with her, willing to die for her in a moment, others say she ran away on her own. She ended up here in the *Serra da Barriga*, not yet a woman but carrying a child herself.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAGO SAGRADO (PALMARES, PAST)- EVENING.

Cosma walks down a large hill towards a lake. The waters are dark.

DADA V.O.

They say she came to this very lake, she bathed here and found shelter. That is why we feel these waters are sacred. She gathered others, or they came to her, feeling her strength and her ability to create life. Her son was born free. Not with papers but free by her sword and her milk.

Cosma dips her fingers into the lake's waters. She fills up a small leather bag with the water.

CUT TO:

INT. TENT (COSMA'S MOCAMBO)- NIGHT.

Cosma pours the water in her mother's mouth.

DADA V.O

She taught the people how to fight, taught them what she knew of the forest, and she spoke with the *indios*, learning their ways of survival here. They all worked together to build this place. And the son she carried made us strong and protects us. He wins victories over the Portuguese and now the Dutch as well. Her blood makes him strong.

She coughs a bit at first but drinks it. She opens her eyes, Cosma climbs into her arms.

MOTHER

Cosma.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAGO SAGRADO (PALMARES)- DAY.

Madeira looks up at Dada.

MADEIRA

And that is all?

Dada laughs again and looks down at Madeira. She plays with her hair.

DADA

Well you know the people say many things.

MADEIRA

What do the people say?

Dada pauses, something stirs. She is a true storyteller, her feathers ruffle a bit and her eyes widen. Her voice carries a different pitch. Many voices at once.

DADA

The people say she will live forever....That she is not of the *orixas* as we call them but of gods even older than them. She keeps the first ways and does not believe in the saints. The people say she has

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DADA (cont'd)  
 killed a hundred white men with  
 only a look and a few words, though  
 she carries a machete too, one she  
 stole from the cane fields and has  
 never forgotten. They say at night  
 when the moon is pregnant and full  
 she uses the stars as a stairway  
 and sits in the sky watching over  
 us and looking back to her beloved  
*Ndongo*.

That is what the people say. But  
 the people are all *tolos*.

Both of the women laugh.

MADEIRA  
 I think that was the best version  
 yet.

Madeira pulls Dada down to kiss her.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET (OLINDA)- DAY.

Paola walks blankly through the streets. People pass by her  
 and she appears not to see them. A MAN bumps into her and  
 she hazily turns to apologize but does not really form  
 words.

CUT TO:

INT. SENHORA'S HOME (OLINDA)-DAY.

Paola stands at the sink numbly scrubbing dishes. She gazes  
 in the distance. In the background Senhora approaches her,  
 begins to yell actually, but Paola cannot hear her.

Otaiku comes up to her and pulls on her skirt. She looks  
 down at him, then Senhora.

PAOLA (P)  
 What?

SENHORA  
 What? Did you say what?

PAOLA  
 I didn't hear you.

Senhora stands, mouth agape.

(CONTINUED)

SENHORA

I said you have been washing that  
for an hour.

PAOLA

I don't think it's been that long.

As Senhora yells her voice becomes more and more distant. Paola begins to hear her mother's voice. When she looks down she sees the soapy knife in her hand has risen and Senhora is screaming.

Paola drops it and runs out of the house.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAH'S HOME (NEGRO DISTRICT, OLINDA)- NIGHT.

Paola sits on the floor of Beah's house, wrapped in a blanket with a sleeping child in her lap.

PAOLA

She looked at me like I was going  
to kill her.

BEAH

Good.

PAOLA

There's no way I can go back. And  
I'm no closer to finding my mother.  
I don't know where to go.

BEAH

We'll figure something out Paola. I  
can get you somewhere far away.  
With a little time.

PAOLA

But not to my mother?

BEAH

That place is far. And so dangerous  
there's no way you could get there.  
Plus haven't you heard these  
*brancos* lately?

PAOLA

I haven't been hearing much.

BEAH

They keep talking about devils and  
spirits roaming at night. They

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BEAH (cont'd)  
think the rebels are demons now.  
They keep shooting people out at  
night thinking they are *o diabo*.

PAOLA  
I didn't think it took war paint to  
do that.

BEAH  
Get some sleep Paola. We'll talk  
more in the morning.

Beah carries her son to bed with her. Paola lays down on the  
floor and stares at the ceiling.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MADEIRA'S HOME (PALMARES)- DAY.

Madeira, Juma and Dada sit on the dirt floor. Before them  
are homemade maps spread out.

DADA  
You're both mad.

BAHARI  
I'll keep her safe Dada I promise.

MADEIRA  
I don't need to be kept safe.

DADA  
Why are you arguing with him?

BAHARI  
Yes why?

MADEIRA  
Lord. Just keep going who else did  
you recruit?

BAHARI  
Juma.

MADEIRA  
Juma? The general I sewed up? Why?

BAHARI  
His wife was visiting some of her  
family in a *mocambo* nearby and she  
ran into a military party. She was  
captured.

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA

*Meu Deus, No!*

DADA

He came to the temple every day for a week after. He kept trying to give offerings. We stopped accepting them and just prayed with him. Tried to give him something for his sleep.

BAHARI

He has been distraught. The woman is his life. He thinks she may be there. It's good actually, he may have gone on his own if we weren't already going. The leaders have been trying to reign him in since it happened.

MADEIRA

The poor man. I'm glad he is with us but I hope his family will be okay. Who else?

BAHARI

Yewande.

MADEIRA

Who is that?

BAHARI

She was at the raid with us. My second.

MADEIRA

Oh her! Bahari who is she?

DADA

The woman you told me about?

BAHARI

(laughing)

You're interested?

MADEIRA

Shut up! No I just, how have I never known of her before?

BAHARI

She doesn't like ceremony or people very much, kind of like you.

Madeira scoffs. Dada laughs.

(CONTINUED)

DADA

She sounded deadly so I like her.

BAHARI

There are a few men who would go with me wherever I asked. Some who are a bit like Juma, and then some who...

DADA

What?

MADEIRA

Is this about Zumba?

BAHARI

They disagree with how he accepts people, or that he barely does anymore. We could always use more people and he's getting more and more restrictive. They want to do something like this to show him what they believe.

MADEIRA

Interesting. I'll take it either way.

DADA

Will this cause problems with your superiors?

BAHARI

Oh certainly. But I can't let your *louco* woman go alone. Besides we may have war within in some time and this is a decidedly easier issue to chose a side in.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. IBEJI'S HOME (MACACO, PALMARES)- DAY.

Madeira and Dada stand outside a small thatched house. There is a small shrine outside the door that is overflowing with tribute and dripping in palm oil.

Madeira fidgets with a bag of herbs she is carrying.

MADEIRA

You're sure these are the right ones?

(CONTINUED)

DADA

Yes. Their favorites. Let's go.

INT. IBEJI'S HOME- CONTINUOUS.

Madeira and Dada sit across from Taiwo and Kehinde, the bag of herbs between them.

TAIWO

Thank you for these.

MADEIRA

Of course.

DADA

We hoped you may be able to offer some more help.

KEHINDE

She's dying.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET (OLINDA)- DAY.

Paola walks along a street carrying a basket. She looks gaunt and tired. Her eyes are out of focus and her skin is dull.

CUT TO:

INT. IBEJI'S HOME- DAY.

MADEIRA

What do you mean?

KEHINDE

She will not last very much longer like this.

TAIWO

Her mother is gone?

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET (OLINDA)- DAY.

Paola looks and sees a young BOY being grabbed by a white SOLDIER. She begins to walk over.

MADEIRA V.O.

Yes they took her. We think we know where but we have no way of telling her.

(CONTINUED)

TAIWO V.O.

There's not enough time for you to try to find her.

KEHINDE V.O.

No it has to be quick.

Paola passes by a cart loaded with cane stalks. There is an old machete laying on it, she looks at it.

The soldier begins to drag the boy away, his SISTER comes out and tries to hit the soldier. Paola reaches for the machete.

KEHINDE V.O.

She won't last much longer.

Paola starts to walk forward when Beah appears by her side. She grabs her wrist.

BEAH

Paola! What are you doing?

Beah looks at the soldier wrestling with the children. The machete slips from her hands and Paola collapses.

CUT TO:

INT. IBEJI'S HOME (PALMARES)- DAY.

The four women sit.

KEHINDE (Y)

(to Taiwo)

The flower.

Taiwo gets up and goes to a corner of the dark house. She picks a flower from a plant and comes back.

TAIWO

Do you know this?

She hands Madeira the small white flower.

MADEIRA

No, I've never seen it before- what plant is this?

KEHINDE

It's called white ways.

(CONTINUED)

TAIWO

Take the root and make a tea. It will be strong and bitter, but it will give your dreams the strength they need. If you are meant to succeed you will be able to find her again.

KEHINDE

You may find others as well.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST OF OXUM- DAY.

The voice is singing, it's the small voice of a child.

MADEIRA

Hello? Is someone there? Child?

The forest is thick and dark, the moonlight is the only thing that illuminates where she walks. But the sounds continue and she follows what she thinks is a person retreating into the forest. A chameleon follows behind her.

COSMA (V.O.)

(whispering)

Epo nbe

Ewa nbe o

Epo nbe

Come with me

Ewa nbe o

Aya mi oja

Oye

Come to the river

Ayami oja

Lati bi ibeji o

Epo nbe

Ewa nbe o

Cosma emerges from the brush.

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA

Hello wise one.

COSMA

This way.

Cosma keeps singing and she leads Madeira through the forest.

They reach a river. The waters are rushing quickly and the wind picks up. Madeira can vaguely see the forms of three women on the river bank in the darkness and moonlight. Yemaya, Oshun, Oya, the mothers of the Ibeji and the Iyami Aje.

They are singing. Their hands raise. For a moment-Palmira is there too, at the edge of the river standing in front of Madeira and Paola.

The wind rises and there are many voices joining the rushing sounds of the river.

They both reach out to Palmira but then- she is gone.

Paola and Madeira walk together. They join hands as the women sing and drums beat. A strike of thunder and-

EXT. FIELD (NEAR PRISON)-CONTINUOUS.

It is evening. The sun is setting. The two women stand in a field holding hands still, eyes closed. It is no longer a dream. Slowly the others they have brought emerge behind them, being transported as well.

CUT TO:

INT.PRISON CELL (OUTSIDE OLINDA)-DUSK.

Palmira wakes with a jolt. She reaches to her empty collarbone. She is sitting in a small cell that is dark. There are many other women around her, sleeping or crying or murmuring to themselves.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD (NEAR PRISON)- DUSK.

Paola squeezes Madeira's hands.

PAOLA

Wait. How-is this real?

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA

I-I don't know. I think...so?

Paola reaches out to touch Madeira's face. She does not disappear, her skin feels like it has been in the sun. They both laugh. A gunshot rings out in the distance.

MADEIRA

We have to go. Now.

PAOLA

We're close?

MADEIRA

Yes. Bahari!

Bahari looks around, dazed, murmuring to himself in Arabic.

MADEIRA

We're in that valley you spoke of right, not too far from the prison camp.

BAHARI

Y-yes, I think.

He looks around, gathering himself.

BAHARI

Yes we're a few leagues off now.

PAOLA

Then we're on schedule.

MADEIRA

Let's go.

EXT. WOODED AREA (PATH TO PRISON)- NIGHT.

Madeira and Paola ride on Madeira's horse together. They ride alongside Bahari and their small party follows behind them. In all they are about 10.

INT. PRISON CELL (OUTSIDE OLINDA)- NIGHT.

Palmira sits in her cell. it is dark, with only a small window letting some light in. She holds a bible in her blue hands. She whispers prayers.

PALMIRA

Avé Maria, cheia de graça, o Senhor é convosco. Bendita sois Vós entre as mulheres; bendito é o fruto do

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PALMIRA (cont'd)  
Vosso ventre, Jesus.Santa Maria,  
mãe de Deus, rogai por nós,  
pecadores, agora e na hora da nossa  
m-morte.

She begins to falter, her voice shaking she begins to cry.  
There is blood on her feet.

PALMIRA  
P-Paola. Minhas filhas. Minhas  
filhas. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODED AREA (NEAR PRISON)- NIGHT.

The group waits in a small outgrowth of trees. Paola is drinking some water from a canteen. Madeira walks over to the group with Bahari.

MADEIRA  
Our plan is similar to the raid. At sunset the soldiers will be coming back from exercises, they'll be hot and tired. The others we placed to the east will set off an explosion at this time as a distraction.

BAHARI  
If everything goes to plan this should go off and draw out at least half the guard. The rest as Madeira said should be tired.

PAOLA  
That's when these come in.

Paola steps forward with a bag. She unfolds the contents showing masks, skirts, some powders and stones.

PAOLA  
The people of the city fear you all. Since the last raid there are stories of devils and spirits roaming through town at night. If we use it to our advantage we'll scare them so bad they'll probably run or panic.

MAN  
We are outnumbered still.

(CONTINUED)

## MADEIRA

This is how we counter being outnumbered. And you're right, we are. Badly. But you all saw the miracle that brought us to this place. I believe we all have a reason for being here.

## PAOLA

This woman is my mother. I do not know you, I barely even know Madeira. But I'm sure you all had mothers. And I'm sure more than one of you lost her. She was taken, or sold, or beaten, or her spirit crushed to the point where you couldn't recognize her anymore. My mother tried to come to you home once before, when I was a girl. And we lost half our family because of it. I want to give her that freedom if I can. For me it is that or death.

Madeira looks at her when she speaks of family, it stirs a memory.

## BAHARI

This is the largest prison in the *Serra da Barriga*. I asked many of you to come because I know you are also missing family and they could be here. Today is not sanctioned by Zumba or Zumbi if you follow him. But if you find a lost one you are free to set them free yourself. We will face the councils when we return.

## MADEIRA

Still. If you are unsure, you do not have to come with us. Because today we must be fearless. Today if when you are invoking these spirits they choose to ride you, you should let them.

The sound of an explosion. Smoke can be seen rising over a distant hill. Horns start to blow for help.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN HALL (PRISON)- NIGHT.

Soldiers rush out of the prison, gearing up and moving out in large groups. The building is huge, with cells upon cells of iron bars, not even yet rusted with age.

A wind blows in through the windows and torches are extinguished. The sound of a drum, the soldiers cock their weapons and murmur to each other.

Cries and chanting can be heard and then-

A flame, a masked face appears and screams. The soldiers shout and fire weapons, the bullets bounce around. The flame is extinguished and the face is gone. Prisoners begin to scream, some to sing, some pray.

In the dim light the *palmaristas* work, they move through the prison in darkness, going easily through the soldiers until one sets a large barrel on fire and there is light-

They yell and whoop louder. Some soldiers do run but many stay. Some of the *palmaristas* begin to be ridden by gods. They are low to the ground or leaping across the room with ease, the spirits pushing them forward. The edges of things blur, the *branca* soldiers are sure this is the devil come for them.

CUT TO:

INT. TERREIRO (MACACO, PALMARES)- NIGHT.

Dada sits with all the other priestesses and the *Ibeji*. They are lit by candles and they join hands. They are singing a prayer. Dada's eyes close emphatically. The song rises.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN HALL (PRISON)- NIGHT.

Juma yells the loudest and charges, others following behind and flooding the halls, banging on the iron doors. Bahari fights with a soldier who holds the keys. He manages to grab them and throws them to Madeira before another soldier attacks him from behind.

MADEIRA

Bahari!

Madeira gives the keys to Paola who is close and rushes to help Bahari. Paola shouts through her mask-

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA  
I'm going to find her!

INT. HALLWAY (PRISON)-NIGHT.

Paola leaves the main hallway and turns a corner. The halls are filled with the cries of prisoners. As she walks someone reaches out to grab her.

MAN  
Help!

Paola jumps back.

PAOLA  
I'll come back for you, okay? Where are the women?

MAN  
Help! Please! Help!

Paola starts to run, she turns corner after corner. She cannot find her mother.

CUT TO:

INT. PALMIRA'S PRISON CELL -CONTINUOUS.

Palmira sits up in her cell, listening to the sounds of crashing, of gunfire. She thinks it is the end of things for her.

Down the hall a soldier staggers through the prison. He is bleeding, scared and angry. He holds a bottle of alcohol and a rag in his hand.

SOLDIER  
You'll be with your devils soon enough. They can have you!

He lights the makeshift bomb and throws it, the hallway ignites and people begin screaming and coughing.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY (PRISON)-CONTINUOUS.

Paola begins to cough, she smells the smoke.

PAOLA  
(yelling)  
Fire! Fire!

She runs faster, taking off her mask and coughing.

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA  
Mother! Mother!!

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN HALL (PRISON)-CONTINUOUS.

The blast of a gun- Yewande shoots a man behind Madeira. Madeira nods at her and turns to see Juma walk into the room, carrying a woman.

BAHARI  
We need to move out. I smell smoke.

MADEIRA  
Where is she?

They look around, not seeing Paola. Other *palmaristas* come in, leading people out of the prison.

MADEIRA  
I don't see her Bahari. I'll go find her, you start moving people out.

BAHARI  
I'll wait here for you.

Madeira looks around, several from their side are dead, many faces covered in the masks. Many young men. Bahari himself is bleeding and one of Yewande's eyes is swollen shut. Madeira is walking with a limp. She hands Bahari the pouch from Sese.

MADEIRA  
Put this in your wound, try to stop the bleeding. Use this for the ones that will not make it- it'll help with the pain.

He nods.

BAHARI  
Go- we don't have much time.

CUT TO:

INT. PALMIRA'S CELL (PRISON)-CONTINUOUS.

Palmira holds her bible until she hears a voice-

COSMA(B)  
Come with me mama.

PALMIRA  
What? W-who are you? How did you  
get here?

COSMA  
Follow me mama and you will leave  
this place.

PALMIRA  
An angel?

Palmira gets up slowly, reaches for the girl's hand and grasps it- a solid thing.

INT. HALLWAY (PRISON)- CONTINUOUS.

Cosma leads Palmira out into the smoky hallway. As she touches the cells they pass the doors open and other women come out, mouths covered and coughing. They follow Palmira and Cosma out a back doorway and into the dark night, just before the fire consumes the hall.

CUT TO:

INT. OTHER HALLS (PRISON)-CONTINUOUS.

Other people begin to use anything they can to break open their cells. Other *palmaristas* come running down the halls breaking open doors. People flood out of the cells and run out, into the open air. They sing and yell and cry as they go.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY (PRISON)-NIGHT.

Paola and Madeira both turn corners and almost run into each other.

MADEIRA  
Where is she?

PAOLA  
(crying)  
I can't find her anywhere!

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA

*Merda!*

Then something catches Madeira's eye, she thinks she sees Cosma for a moment, turning a corner.

MADEIRA

Did you see that?

PAOLA

What? See what?

MADEIRA

I think we have to go- please trust me. If we are here when the soldiers return none of us will make it out of here.

PAOLA

I cannot leave without her!

MADEIRA

She can't be this way look at the smoke. You'll suffocate before you find anyone. Come on- we can try another way.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE OF PRISON- NIGHT.

Bahari looks ahead, a horn sounds- there is smoke rising from the prison now. He yells to the warriors left.

BAHARI

Hurry! Load up the prisoners and wounded you can. We must leave soon.

Yewande looks at him as she helps prisoners onto horses, she is concerned.

Juma stands with his wife in his arms, they are both crying now. The warriors that remain, though battered look happy and revitalized.

CUT TO:

INT.MAIN HALL (PRISON)-NIGHT.

Paola and Madeira run back into the main hall, the whole room filling with smoke. They are both choking- tears streaming from their faces. Paola tries to go back but Madeira pulls her away, shaking her head.

MADEIRA

I'm not letting you die too!

EXT. OUTSIDE OF PRISON-CONTINUOUS.

They both run out of the burning prison into the huge crowd of prisoners now free. Paola runs to her mother.

PAOLA

Mama! You are safe. Thank god!  
Thank god!

Madeira lets out a huge breath of relief and begins to cry as well. Bahari walk over to hug her. She sinks to her knees.

PALMIRA

My Paola, my daughter.

They embrace and kiss until--

The sound of hooves and bullets.

BAHARI

Get onto the horses now! Go! Go!

Madeira helps Palmira onto a horse and Paola rides behind her. Madeira gets onto her own mount and they begin to ride. Madeira looks behind her to see that Yewande and Bahari have turned around. She rides to meet them.

MADEIRA

Bahari what are you doing?

BAHARI

We'll go to meet them and pull some of them off of you. Draw them away.

MADEIRA

What? No Bahari-

YEWANDE

If they follow you it'll be impossible to lose them- you don't have enough of a lead. We'll draw them away and lose them in the forest.

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA  
It's too dangerous!

BAHARI  
(laughing)  
You'll stop us?

Madeira looks at him, tears in her eyes.

MADEIRA  
Please don't.

BAHARI  
You can thank me in the next life  
Meda.

Shots ring out much closer to them. Ahead of them Paola cries out. Madeira looks around, Palmira is slumping on her horse.

YEWANDE  
Go now healer! Good luck.

MADEIRA  
Thank you.

She grabs Bahari's arm for a moment and then turns to catch up to Paola. In the distance she can hear Bahari and Yewande whooping.

PAOLA  
She's been shot!

MADEIRA  
Where? try to stifle the bleeding  
until we can stop.

Paola wraps some cloth near her mother's side and they keep riding.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD TO PALMARES- EARLY MORNING.

The party rides through forest in the early morning. Paola leans over to try to wake her mother who stirs.

They sit for a moment on the edge of an open clearing in the afternoon, watching alertly to anyone following them. The party is a long trail of people on horses and walking. Madeira is healing Palmira, she looks concerned.

(CONTINUED)

It is dark again and they are riding up a steep hill. They stop and look out onto the *Serra da Barriga*, it is empty save a few lights in the distance.

PAOLA

Do you think they followed us?

MADEIRA

I thought they would but we should be able to see a party from here and I see nothing.

PAOLA

Your friend was very brave to do that.

MADEIRA

He is brave. He's one of the best riders I know too so maybe...

Paola puts her hand on Madeira's shoulder.

MADEIRA

Your mother, I don't know if..

PAOLA

I know. I see how she is fading. If we can get her to that place before she goes then I will be okay I think.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT.TERREIRO (MACACO,PALMARES)- DAY.

Dada lies on the floor of the prayer room asleep, candles burning around her. She has not left since the party did. Mãe-de-Santo comes up to wake her.

MÃE-DE-SANTO

Ekundayo...Ekundayo..

Dada stirs. Then jumps awake.

MÃE-DE-SANTO

They are back.

DADA

Really?

MÃE-DE-SANTO

Not all of them. I'm not sure who returned.

Dada gets up and bolts out the door, dropping the beads she had in her hands.

EXT. TERREIRO (PALMARES)-CONTINUOUS.

Dada jumps onto one of the horses tied outside the terreiro. A man yells out to her but she is off.

CUT TO:

INT. HEALING HOUSE (PALMARES)-DAY.

Madeira lays Palmira down on a cot in the healing hut. Paola watches, terrified. Sese is not here it is Madeira who is the master healer now.

PAOLA

Will-will she be okay Madeira?

Madeira works mixing herbs quickly, sucking on some in her mouth before pounding them up.

MADEIRA

Get me some clean water Paola. From there. And that palm wine there.

Paola hurries to fill a calabash with some water from the stream running through the pool.

Madeira takes the cork out of the bottle with her teeth and pours it over the wounds on mother. She does not wake. She begins to look for the bullet to fish out.

PAOLA

I've seen her survive worse.

MADEIRA

When?

PAOLA

When I was a girl. We lived on a lumber mill when I was very young. The masters were horrible there and my father too had a temper. They always talked of getting out some day, and one day he did, but he didn't take us.

MADEIRA

How did you get to the city?

(CONTINUED)

PAOLA

We were sold to a sugar mill near here. She met another man there, a Tupí man. He was like a father to me for a while.

The bullet drops to the floor.

Madeira looks up at her, stops working. She sees--

BEGIN FLASHBACK

CUT TO:

EXT. CANE FIELDS- DAY.

A young Madeira runs through the cane fields giggling. She shouts to someone behind her.

MADEIRA

Lola! Lola come on!

END FLASHBACK

INT. HEALING HOUSE (PALMARES)- DAY.

MADEIRA

What happened to him?

PAOLA

They had my little sister together. But they couldn't live with us because he was *indío* and they didn't want people to know we were a family.

Madeira shakily cleans out the wounds with the water and baths them with the herb mixtures. She begins to wrap the wound.

PAOLA

When we tried to escape they killed him and my sister. They blinded my mother, and worse. She wanted to be free so badly.

MADEIRA

What was your sister's name?

PALMIRA

(softly)

Andromeda

Madeira stops breathing. Paola jumps up to her side.

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA

W-what?

PALMIRA (B)

Andromeda. My Meda.

MADEIRA (B)

H-How..?

Madeira looks bewildered. Mother passes her hands over Madeira's face, then to the necklace on Madeira's neck.

PAOLA

Meu Deus. Where did you get that?

MADEIRA

My m-mother. Before she died.

PALMIRA

You are mine.

Mother takes Madeira into an embrace, tears in her cloudy eyes.

MADEIRA

I don't understand.

PAOLA

Meda?

MADEIRA

No. Y-you both died. I mean, my mother and sister. I couldn't even remember her name...

PAOLA

Lola! You called me Lola when we were young.

Madeira looks at her.

MADEIRA

I did! Meu Deus! It is you!

Paola grabs Madeira into a hug. They are both crying heavily.

PAOLA

We thought you both died. They told us you did. We stayed there for years, it was torture.

(CONTINUED)

MADEIRA

My god. I'm so sorry. I should have-

PALMIRA

It is my fault. I knew you were still out there. I saw you sometimes, in my dreams. Your father is gone isn't he?

Madeira nods, tears in her eyes. Paola reaches for her hands.

PAOLA

I'm so sorry Meda. I'm so sorry.

MADEIRA

It was horrible. I saw him-

PALMIRA

Shh. Love. We are together now.

Dada walks into the hut. Madeira looks up and Dada runs to her, embracing her also.

DADA

Meda! You're alright- I was so scared.

MADEIRA

Dada, this- this is my mother. And my sister.

DADA

What?!

MADEIRA

They were right.

DADA

(in disbelief)

*Mi ɔlɔrun ni oniyi. My god is awesome.*

Palmira reaches out for their hands.

PALMIRA

She is beautiful.

MADEIRA

Thank you mama.

(CONTINUED)

PALMIRA

Thank you my daughters. Thank you  
for this. You have set my heart  
free.

Her eyes begin to close.

MADEIRA

Mama please don't go.

PALMIRA

I'm so sorry baby. I'm sorry to  
both of you I couldn't be more for  
you. But you have each other now.

Palmira joins their hands together over her chest.

PALMIRA

I love you both. It is time for me  
to grow those wings Paola.

Paola smiles a little, tears running across everyone's face.  
All hands joined in the moment.

Madeira looks up and sees Cosma standing in the doorway, a  
small chameleon at her side. Then she is gone.

Madeira looks at Paola suddenly, something instinctive. She  
presses her hand on Paola's stomach, and then her head.

PAOLA

Meda-wh?

MADEIRA

You're pregnant.

Paola pauses, looking at Madeira.

PAOLA

Yes.

Dada gasps. The two sisters look at each other, Paola begins  
to smile. A mixture of laughter and tears, immense pain and  
joy crashing together inside her.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOREST OF OXUM- EARLY EVENING.

Cosma sits by a stream, there are wooden statues carved into and around the trees around her. She plays with a rock, her feet submerged in water.

She walks across a log to the other side. She looks at herself in the water.

Her reflection in the river becomes two, and her sister, also Cosma, the girl we have seen, is sitting by her side. They get up and walk together, hand in hand through the forest. Their chameleon follows them.

As they walk they grow into the Ibeji, hand in hand, and then back into the Cosmas, two small girls.

The sound of wings then--

FADE TO BLACK.

FMS 0029  
Senior Colloquium

# *Quilombola* (Everything Else)

By Jessica Howard  
Spring 2016

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## Statement of Purpose

I originally began this script my sophomore year of college. This was before I had taken any courses in screenwriting and looking back the form was completely invented, what I thought a script should or might look like. Admittedly it's still something I struggle with at times. The story, really the details of the story, can be consuming. While writing this current script, which is it's own entirely, I never re-read that first version. But reading it now I notice continuous threads that weave through both.

Since first learning about Palmares I've been fascinated by it's history. I've always seen three major pillars of its existence. Nature, revolt and spirituality. In *Quilombola* I tried to intertwine those elements, but I also added one. That of kinship and family, and love really. One of the principles of the Transatlantic Slave Trade was to dismantle the Black family, and we still see the effects of that endeavor today. At the center of this story isn't necessarily the political fate of Palmares itself, but the fate of a few women who are tied together in different ways, and whose reunion is one of generational healing. Or hopes to be.

My first version of this story was more fragmented through time and involved more characters. But while I was writing I started to realize that I wanted to focus on Madeira and Paola. I really wanted to focus on women. When I travelled to Brazil I was still torn about structuring the story, but while I was there I learned about Aqualtune. She is the founder of Palmares and somehow a figure I had not encountered in my research until I got to Brazil. There was an etching of her in the restaurant of the hotel I was staying at. When I asked who she was a woman named Ellie told me she was the leader of the Zumbi people. Zumbi was the last king and most revered leader of Palmares, and Aqualtune was his aunt. Once I learned about her story, I felt like I should let the story go where I had been drawn to for some time.

Writing was easier after I made that decision and I could focus on developing the themes further. One of the first things I did was change the name to *Quilombola (A Song for Aqualtune)*. Going to Brazil also made me feel like there was so much history I didn't know, and made me realize that I wasn't trying to tell an exact history of Palmares. There were countless *quilombos* and this change allowed me to not feel like I was completely bound by the story of this one place. Palmares is also a name that came after that place was destroyed and the people at the time did not necessarily call it that, which is why the name is never spoken in the film. Lastly *quilombola* is someone who lives in a *quilombo* and it is also a feminine word, which I feel speaks even more closely to the story I am telling.

So this is a story of revolt. It's a small, imagined, part of a very large and old place. One that to me signifies the impossibility and immortal strength of Blackness beyond blackness. It is what happens when you try to create slaves out of free people, which is the true impossibility. It is inherently about Black women, and family and birth and death and violence and love and God. Its purpose is to share our beautiful history and possibilities and our full spectrum of life with others.

## Structure

Treatment

**Title:** *Quilombola*

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**Logline:** Two women who begin to share dreams use their connection to find liberation in colonial Brazil.

**Setting:** Palmares was the largest *quilombo* (rebel community of Africans, indigenous peoples and European outcasts) who escaped slavery and subordination under slave societies, in recorded history. The story takes place within Palmares, in the capital city of Macaco as well as outside in the colonial city of Olinda. Palmares was located primarily in the modern state of Alagoas and Olinda in neighboring Pernambuco. Pernambuco was one of the most prosperous colonial cities in Brazil in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries because of slave labor used to produce cotton and sugar. The story takes place at the height of the strength of Palmares, loosely in the 1640s. During this time the Portuguese and Dutch were fighting for control of Brazil, which made it easier for Palmares to grow unchecked. There are also elements from earlier and later in Palmares' history, which I have condensed into the story.

### Key Characters

**Cosma:** A young girl, 8, living on the outskirts of Palmares. She is an explorer and a spiritual presence. She is living during the beginning of Palmares, in a smaller *mocambo*.

**Madeira:** A young herbalist, 21, living in Palmares. Madeira is half Tupí and half Angolan. She came to Palmares as a child and had a traumatic childhood, losing her father when she first arrived. She was raised partly by her father's people and partly on her own. She found her way to Macaco when she was about 16 and began apprenticing with her current master Sese. She begins to have dreams of Paola, which begins the film.

**Paola:** A woman, 25, living in Olinda with her mother. She works in an upper class white household, as an enslaved domestic worker. She grew up working in a sugar mill doing intense agricultural labor. Eventually she was sold to a family in the city with her mother. She begins sharing dreams with Madeira while political pressures mount in Olinda.

## Synopsis

We begin in Brazil, sometime around 1600, in a part of Alagoas, on the fringes of a growing *quilombo*. The place is a forest, dense with small parts cleared out for living. The place is almost impossible to see from the outside, the way it is woven in and out of the trees. COSMA, a young girl with dark eyes and delicately braided hair, wanders around the small *mocambo* and the surrounding forest. This exploration will become a dream of MADEIRA. Madeira is living in the heart of Palmares around 1640; she wakes from another vivid dream where she has met a woman. She goes about her day, working in the fields with her friend BAHARI, going to the market and selling herbs. The market of Macaco becomes a market of Olinda, where PAOLA, the other woman in Madeira's dreams, is buying food for the household she works in. Paola also goes through her routine, working on some daily chores with her masters in the peripherals.

Madeira works in the healing house with her master, SESE. They tend to a pregnant woman in the quilombo, KENA. Madeira struggles with the treatment and leaves to deliver medicines and visit DADA. Meanwhile Cosma walks around her compound, observing the everyday life. Dada sneaks out of the *terreiro* or temple to come talk with Madeira. They discuss the dreams Madeira's been having and Dada suggests she speak the *Ibeji* about this. Madeira eventually agrees and Dada returns to the *terreiro* to prepare for the festival that night.

Paola is working in her master's house when SENHORA asks to speak with her. She brings up partnering Paola with an enslaved man who has just arrived. She wants Paola to help settle him (and her). Paola is thoroughly disturbed by this conversation as she walks home, to the *negra* district of the city. There she meets her mother, PALMIRA, who is cooking. Paola brings up the conversation with Senhora and her mother advises her not to worry. She mentions that there has been more military activity in the city and she feels things are getting more dangerous. She tells Paola that she shouldn't leave the house that night and the two argue, Paola insisting on going to the gathering that night.

Madeira consults with the *Ibeji* during the festival and they advise her to pursue the dreams. They point her in the direction of Olinda, saying the woman she is dreaming of is close and in danger. During the festival we transition to Paola who is at a dance circle with her friends and other Africans. This is something those enslaved do in free moments and in somewhat secret. The men begin doing some capoeira and Paola's friend, LUIS, comes to greet her. In Palmares the ceremony quickens along with the one in Olinda, both reaching fever pitches. At the same time Cosma's home is being burnt and trampled by invaders. In Olinda soldiers disrupt the dance and start beating and arresting people. Paola manages to run away with Luis, but the police catch up with them. She manages to slip away, but Luis is not as lucky.

The next day Paola goes to Senhora's home and she is scolded for going to the dance. Senhor takes her to a sugar cane mill outside Olinda as a lesson. While they are at

the mill Paola struggles with the heat, and the memories of her childhood. Senhor ends up choosing a young boy, OTAIKU, to take home with them.

In Palmares Madeira works healing some men back from a skirmish with other *palmarista* forces. There is tension between the major cities, and between the king and his nephew. Madeira meets a man, JUMA, and she hears of a raid that is being planned on Olinda. Paola is doing laundry with Otaiku back in the city when Senhora brings up her possible “marriage” again. Truly upset she speaks to her mother about it that night. Palmira doesn’t reciprocate her feelings of dread and suggests she make the best out of the inevitable. Paola leaves her and finds her friend BEAH. Beah lives on the outskirts of the *negra* district and is known to have ties to Palmares. Paola asks her for help in escaping and Beah eventually agrees to arrange a meeting with the *palmaristas*.

On another day Madeira and Dada discuss the upcoming raid and though Dada doesn’t approve she realizes that Madeira feels she has to go. Madeira tells her she will go with Bahari on the raid on the new moon. Madeira rides out with the warriors of Palmares on the road to Olinda. She joins Bahari’s party, which is going to raid the armory. Simultaneously Paola leaves home that morning and embarks on a journey to a mocambo outside of Olinda. Madeira and the men wait for a signal, the church bells ringing, and then another raiding party to create a distraction. Once the soldiers leave the armory they enter and fight with the remaining guards. Then they begin to load the weapons up. After this part of the mission is finished Bahari shows Madeira to the negra district. Paola meets with a group of *palmaristas* and they ask her some questions to test her. They express interest in her having children for them and she is wary. They have to leave and do not offer Paola an invitation nor do they reject her outright, but they suspect she is not fully committed. When Paola hears of a raid in Olinda she knows she needs to get back home.

Madeira and Bahari manage to find Paola’s house but of course she is not there. Madeira senses, or remembers the house though and she enters. She finds Palmira, returned from church and the two talk. Palmira questions Madeira about her people’s motives and Madeira asks Palmira about Paola. Palmira refuses to tell her about her daughter and Madeira leaves, unsuccessful. When Paola finally rushes home she finds an empty house; her mother is gone. Paola spends the night looking for her with no results and she is filled with guilt. She cannot leave knowing her mother could be in danger.

Both Paola and Madeira are discouraged, and they share a dream where Paola tells Madeira what has happened to her mother. Madeira confides to Dada that she wants to try to find Paola again and help her find her mother. Paola becomes more and disconnected and rebellious toward Senhora, unknowingly she threatens Senhora and runs away, seeking shelter with Beah. In Palmares, Bahari, Madeira and Dada plan out a team to attack the prison where Palmira is likely being held. The only thing missing is how to get Paola to the same place. Madeira and Dada return to speak with the Ibeji and they give her a root to strengthen her dreams. This induces a shared dream beyond all the

rest. Cosma leads Madeira into the forest and Palmira, Paola and the mothers of the Ibeji all join together to bring Paola and Madeira together in the physical world.

Finally joined together Paola and Madeira take the palmaristas they've gathered and ride to the prison. They use a similar tactic to the first raid, drawing out most of the guard and then using their costume to intimidate the ones remaining. Paola searches the prison for her mother while Madeira and Bahari lead the attack on the guards. The battle is bloodier and they are outnumbered. Palmira at the same time hears the commotion and begins to pray. Cosma appears to her and helps her escape from her cell. As they walk other cells open and prisoners run to find an exit. One of the remaining guards has started a fire and the smoke is engulfing the halls. Madeira searches for Paola and forces her out of the prison without her mother. Outside they find Palmira and they load up all the freed prisoners to begin their escape. The soldiers who left the prison earlier are quickly approaching and Bahari and his second ride away to try to slow them down.

Madeira leads the return to Palmares but as they retreat Palmira is struck by a bullet. Madeira patches her up for the ride back, but her situation is dire. When they finally return to Palmares Dada joins them in the healing hut. Madeira works on Palmira's wounds and hazily Palmira reveals that she recognizes Madeira as her daughter. Madeira and Paola share in amazement as they realize that they both survived that fateful night they were separated as children and they are sisters. Tearfully they embrace as Palmira passes on, at peace with her family being repaired after so many years. Finally Madeira notices something, Paola is with child.

In the final moments of the story Cosma, now finished her sacred work, walks through the forest with her own twin. The girls become the Ibeji of Palmares and then back into the Cosmas as young girls.

## Glossary and Key Themes

This is a brief glossary of terms used in the script that may be foreign to readers, as well as explanations of some of the symbolism and larger concepts explored in the story.

**Bantu-** “A general label for the 300–600 ethnic groups in Africa who speak Bantu languages”, this includes the peoples of Angola who were colonized by the Portuguese and brought to Brazil.

**Bom-** “Good” in Portuguese.

**Branco-** “White” in Portuguese.

**Candomblé-** The Brazilian syncretic religion blending African religions, Catholicism, and Indigenous traditions. There are many sects of this but the primary one in *Quilombola* is Candomble Ketu, the Yoruba-derived form.

**Chameleon-** The chameleon is important in Bantu mythology. He was sent by God to tell mankind that they would never die, but the lizard beat him and announced that man was, in fact, mortal. Some see both animals as bad omens; some evangelical sects compare the chameleon to Jesus Christ. I use it as a messenger of God and symbol that Cosma has a divine connection.

**Macaco-** The capital city of Palmares, where the king Zumba resided with the royal family and council. It is one of many cities in Palmares.

**Negro-** “Black” in Portuguese.

**Mãe-de-Santo-** “Mother of the saints”, the head priestess in Candomblé, there is also a “Little Mother” who serves under her.

**Meu Deus-** “My God” in Portuguese.

**Mocambo-** Or “mokambo”, a smaller village of people who have escaped slavery. These were very common and much more liminal than quilombos.

**Obrigada-** “Thank you” in Portuguese.

**Olinda-** The historical capital of Pernambuco, Brazil founded in 1535. It was one of the only profitable cities at the time, primarily because of its production of sugarcane through enslaved African workers. It was destroyed by the Dutch and then rebuilt, with slavery remaining intact officially until 1888.

**Orixá –** “Idol” in Yoruba. The orixas are the pantheon of Yoruba deities descended from an almighty God. They have complex lineages and histories. Many West African societies have different versions of this pantheon and they have been changed and adapted across the Atlantic. Oxum, Yemoja, and Oya are specifically mentioned in this story.

**Palmares-** Also known as “Angola Janga”. The largest maroon society on record (the greatest of all may never have been discovered). It existed in Brazil from ~1605-1694, but smaller mocambos and quilombos still remained after it was destroyed. It was said to be the size of Portugal with a populations from 11,000-20,000 Africans, indigenous peoples as well as some Europeans. There were Catholics, spiritualists, Muslims and Jews living together. Palmares defeated the Portuguese and Dutch military on many occasions and was destroyed with the introduction of cannons.

**Palmaristas-** Those who live and fight for Palmares.

**Possession-** Complex religious experiences when a devotee or worshipper is visited by an orixa and “ridden”, their mannerisms become that of the divinity. There is a specific

ceremony to return to the body after this occurs and possession is very important in some religious sects/temples.

**Quilombo-** Larger than a mocambo, Palmares is an example of a very large quilombo which is made up of smaller villages and has its own structure and society.

**Quilombola-** A person from a quilombo (not only from Palmares).

**Serra da Barriga-** The area most closely associated with Palmares, where the memorial for the place stands today. It has many large hills with cast expanses, which made for an advantageous location for Palmares.

**Sim-** “Yes” in Portuguese.

**Tupí-** One of the many indigenous groups in Brazil that were both part of Palmares and were part of its opposition.

**Terreiro-** The temple in Candomblé, a very important space in the community and religion, and one that is predominantly female.

**Zumba-** The first king of Palmares and the son of Aqualtune. He began to make a treaty with the Portuguese when invasions became too great to give back any Blacks living in Palmares that were not born there. This led to his nephew, **Zumbi**, overthrowing him and continuing to fight the Portuguese until his death. Zumbi is revered as a national hero.

### **Slavery in Colonial Brazil (And how it differs from the US)**

“Labor performed by both slave and freed women was largely divided between domestic work and the market scene, which was much larger in urban cities like Salvador and Rio de Janeiro. The domestic work women performed for owners was traditional, consisting of cooking, cleaning, laundry, fetching water, and childcare. In the 1870s, 87–90% of slave women in Rio worked as domestic servants, and an estimated 34,000 slave and free women labored as domestics. Thus, Brazilian women in urban centers often blurred the lines that separated the work and lives of the slave and the free.

In urban settings, African slave markets provided an additional source of income for both slave and ex-slave women, who typically monopolized sales. This trend of the marketplace being predominantly the realm of women has its origins in African customs. Wilhelm Muller, a German minister, observed in his travels to the Gold Coast, "Apart from the peasants who bring palm-wine and sugarcane to the market everyday, there are no men who stand in public markets to trade, only women." The women sold tropical fruits and vegetables, cooked African dishes, candies, cakes, meat, and fish.

Lauderdale Graham, Sandra. *House and Street: The Domestic World of Servants and Masters in Nineteenth-Century Rio De Janeiro*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1988. Print.

Morgan, Jennifer L. *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004. Print.

Nishida, Mieko (August 1993). "Manumission and Ethnicity in Urban Slavery". *The Hispanic American Historical Review*. 73: 315. [JSTOR 2517695](#).

## **Quilombos**

It is important to note that these communities formed all over Brazil, and that Palmares was in no way the only example. Partly because of the notoriety of Palmares and Zumbi, quilombos have remained a living part of history in Brazil and it is something most people seem to know something about. These communities existed in the U.S. as well (see the Dismal Swamp in the Mid-Atlantic or the Gullah people in the Carolinas), but the history is not as discussed. These histories are also not sent throughout the Diaspora and knowledge of them seems to stay fairly local. Quilombos still exist today in Brazil and the descendants of quilombolas are fighting for land rights and federal recognition, similarly to indigenous peoples in the U.S. and Canada.

## **Yemjoa, Oya, Oxum**

These orixas are all mothers in different ways in mythology. Yemoja is a water goddess associated with the ocean that has almost countless incarnations across the world. She is also associated with the water passage of the Transatlantic Slave trade and was thought to protect those on slave ships. As the mother of many of the other orixas, including Oya and Oxum, she represents femininity and motherhood. She is revered in Brazil and also known as Iemanjá. Oxum is associated with rivers and she is the mother of the Ibeji. However, she was shunned for having twins and abandoned the children. Oya, also known as Iansá, is associated with storms, rivers and death, took them in and raised them as her own. The three mothers are interconnected and represent different aspects of womanhood and life itself.

## **Ibeji**

The Ibeji are the twin orixas in Yoruba mythology. Twins represent different things all over the African continent, even just within West and Central Africa. In the Yoruba faith specifically though, they are seen as a blessing and there are festivals solely to celebrate twins. Twins have specific rituals that they are to hold throughout their life as well. The Ibeji are the children of Chango and Oxum and were raised by Oya, though some also say Yemoja raised them. They represent joy and mischief and are seen as childlike and curious. Their saints are Cosme and Damian.

## **Names for Africa**

I use several names for Africa in the course of the script and it is purposeful. The modern and western conception of Africa is one that still works to perpetuate colonial values and it literally makes the continent appear smaller than it is on a map. The Africans in the story relate to each other across ethnic and linguistic lines, and I believe a Pan-African and Black identity was formed, but they all must have had different ideas about what “home” was. I wanted Africa to be just that, an idea of home. And for different generations and individuals that idea would represent many different things. Some may see it as an ideological refuge to return to, others a very concrete memory with smells and tastes, and even others may see it as nothing but a memory or past they do not want to confront. “Guinea” is a word that was used to encompass all of Africa and is

more vague, “Yorubaland” speaks to a specific geographical and ethnic area in modern day Nigeria, and “Ndongo” was an indigenous term for what we know as Angola. I wanted to emphasize that the names we now know as African countries were created out of colonialism, and highlight the complex relationship enslaved people had with their homeland.

## Creative

### Sounds of *Quilombola*

#### The Sounds of Quilombola

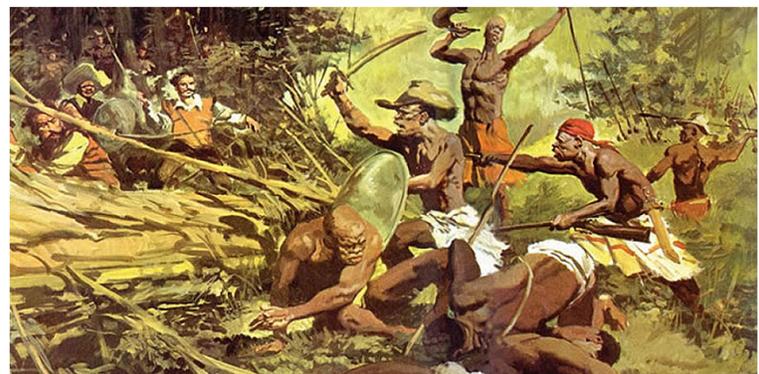
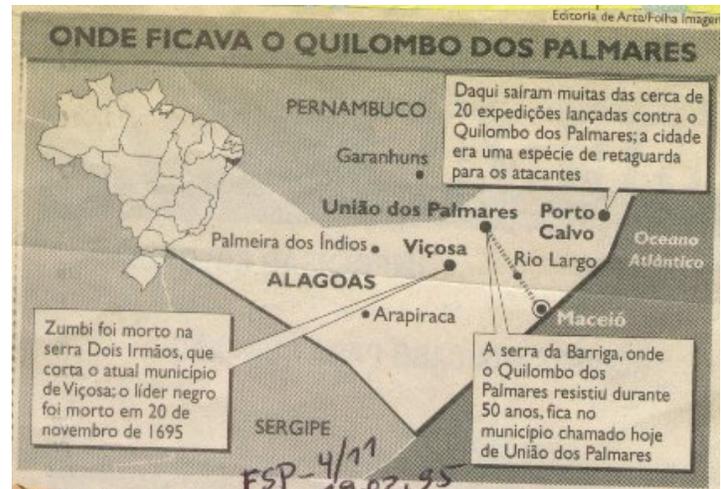
1. “Madres” by Daymé Arocena
2. “Obean Woman” by Nina Simone
3. “Lamento Cubano” by Amara Touré
4. “N’nijo” by Amara Touré
5. “Eh Paka Way” by 79rs Gang
6. “Indian Red” by 79rs Gang
7. “Mma Ama Mbo” by Mary Afi Usuah
8. “Ima Mma Uyem” by Mary Afi Usuah
9. “Eleggua (Intro)” by Ibeyi
10. “River” by Ibeyi
11. “Angola” by Cesaria Evora
12. “Jambo” by Kamau
13. “PohLease” by Kamau
14. “Yemaya” by Celia Cruz, Merceditas Valdes
15. “Ochun” by Celia Cruz, Merceditas Valdes
16. “Timbuktu Fasso” by Amine Bouhafa, Fatoumata Diawara
17. “Me and Your Mama” by Childish Gambino
18. “Redbone” by Childish Gambino
19. “Freedom (Interlude)” by Noname

\*This isn’t a soundtrack or complete listing, just some songs that I listened to while working on the project and I felt had a connection to the work.

## Research

### Important Facts on Quilombo Dos Palmares ☀ Angola Janga

- The first enslaved Africans came to Brazil in 1552
- Brazil was colonized until 1500 when the Portuguese colonized it
- The Dutch and Portuguese fought over colonies from 1601–1661
- Palmares was founded by a woman, Aqualtune
- Recorded lifespan of Palmares from 1605-1694
  - Resistance in the area lasted until 1790
- Also known as “Angola Janga” or “Little Angola”
- Mocambo<Quilombo<Palmares<sup>1</sup>
- Both “Palmares” and “Angola Janga” came from outsiders, they were not called this by those living inside
- Population estimated from 11,000-20,000
- Palmares withstood an invasion every 15 months from 1672-1694
- The lands in Palmares were the best farmed in the area with complex irrigation systems
- There was a capital city, Macaco, and surrounding villages
- Brazil has a very structured racial hierarchy but also a lot of racial mixing.
- Political practices in Palmares derived from Central African traditions
- There were not as many women in Palmares as men and there are reports that some women had multiple husbands<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Maroon Societies, see bib.

<sup>2</sup> “Refiguring Palmares”, see bib.

## Updated Lit Review

### **Methodology**

I began this project my sophomore year through the class “Slave Revolts and Maroons” taught by professor Greg Thomas. This will always be one of my favorite learning experiences, and one that changed the way I thought about slavery. In this class we didn’t only process facts and dates about slavery, but we approached it from a creative perspective, as much as possible we learned from the perspective of the Africans. This was the first step in unlearning traditional slavery narratives, using different language and unlocking the humanity in this atrocity. By learning about Africans, maroons, kidnapped peoples and rebels we were learning about people with histories, cultures and individuality, rather than learning about “slaves” or “chattel”. If we continue to use the language of the enslaver we are re-inscribing the idea that these people were not human but animals, products, mindless, and a homogenous group.

Two aspects of Palmares in particular interested me, the fact that Black people could be born and live a full lifetime in Palmares and never know slavery, the fact that rebellion was actually strong enough to create free life under slavery, and the fact that the Portuguese and Dutch militaries were unable to conquer Palmares for so long. This makeshift African/crioulo/indigenous/ society was able to resist and defeat some of the great military forces of the time with their fighting tactics, knowledge of the land, and pure determination. The whole story seemed almost unbelievable.

This impossibility brings me to how I am approaching my script. This is how the idea of *AfroRealism* came about. While learning about different rebellions and societies Black people created under torture, rape, murder, etc., there were numerous instances of this kind of impossible spirit. There was Granny Nanny in Jamaica who was known to catch bullets in her bare hands, there was the Igbo people who walked on water in Georgia, and the flying Africans who grew wings and flew back to Africa. There were many of these stories intertwined with impossible military victories against trained armies, the impossibility of surviving in the environment they did (from the mountains of Haiti to the Dismal swamp of the American Mid Atlantic).

These feats led to me not distinguish the stories of Africans who could breathe underwater from a small group of runaways beating back a Portuguese militia. I decided not to draw that line of possible and impossible. This is also in a way, reorienting to an African and African American worldview. Things that we see as physically impossible and culturally invalid (witchcraft, superhuman feats, miracles) are seen as both real and almost commonplace in many global Black communities. My grandmother talks about old neighbors putting hexes on her family, she also has dreams that let her know when people are sick or that let her talk to relatives that have passed. During my time in Ghana witchcraft, though taboo, was a real part of society and it had touched most people's lives in some way. It wasn't a superstition, but a very negative part of society, and no one questioned its validity. I would like to find a way to portray the magic in everyday life and culture as well as the specific ability of those people to survive in an impossible place.

## **Source Evaluations**

### **Magical Realism**

I watched several films that have been labeled as “magical realism” films. They were all very different and gave me different examples of how magic mixes with the every day on screen.

*Midnight's Children* is a film, which tells the story of all the children born in India on the midnight of independence. They share a mental bond as well as all different magical powers. What I found most impressive about this film was not necessarily the explicitly “magical” parts, but the fact that it told a generational story. There were so many characters and plotlines that were interwoven delicately and quickly. Characters were always introduced in a way that got to the heart of them, but not in a simplifying way, and they were usually very dynamic. I also responded to the cinematography of the film, especially in the very beginning. I think the way land and water was shown gave an equally magical feel to the film. I don't think I'll necessarily use this kind of magical realism but I took inspiration from other parts of the film.

*Pan's Labyrinth* was another film I watched, specifically because it combined historical fiction with magical realism. The film is particularly famous for its amazing

creativity and visual design. It also used magical realism as a way to interpret war through the eyes of a child. One of my characters is a small girl and I think I will take inspiration from Ofelia's adventures with my character, Cosma. I think the magic of the film was a way to balance the bleakness of the Spanish Civil War, and also as an outlet for Ofelia. She often escapes to this world that while magical, mimics some of the darkness and risk present in her true surroundings.

I like this approach, of using a child's imagination, or access to a magical world, as a way to process larger and darker events. But I would use this kind of approach in very small doses when Cosma is present, not as a major aspect of plot. *Beasts of the Southern Wild* is another example of using magical realism as a way to interpret a child's world that I admire. This film also incorporates narration to empower the lead and give insight into how she digests her surroundings. It is a way to understand the way she learns and grows as a young girl coming into the world, and I think it could be a good technique for the character of Cosma and possibly the priestess. *Beasts of the Southern Wild* also has visuals that I think reflect my preferences for the film. The film makes the everyday setting of a poor swamp town outside New Orleans seem wondrous. Everything is brimming with life and value. The short films *Minerva's Lilies* and *The Summer of Gods* have also been similar to what I imagine as magical realism in my film. Both feature young Black girls, and the latter is an exploration of Afro-Brazilian religion as well.

A dissertation I recently found, written by Moussa Issifou at UNC Greensboro, illustrates my take on magical realism quite accurately. He describes magical realism in the context of postcolonial African literature.

*“Postcolonial African writers employ magical realism in their literary works as an effective alternative to the realist mode used in the past. It serves to capture what may seem unbelievable to Western sensibilities but real to indigenous understanding, as well as open the way to a world of limitless possibilities.”*

He discusses this in terms of a postcolonial Africa dealing with war, corruption, greed, and above all change. He describes this time period as one of old merging with new in sudden, and sometimes-violent ways, the traditional way of things has been disturbed and the future is very much unclear.

*“Regardless of their specific political agendas, magical realist texts are often written in the context of cultural crises, almost as if their magic is invoked when recourse to other, rational, methods have failed”.*

I am looking at the context of massive forced migration, cultural exchanges, and violence and culture creation. Palmares is a hub of transition. Not only is the “New World” still gestating, but also the quilombo is a point of resistance against the modern age, which will be built off of slavery. There is tremendous pressure on these points of resistance but they continue to sprawl for decades.

*“This extraordinary ability inherent in magical realism is the reason why writers choose to place their work in the utopian world... The utopia and the traditional beliefs these writers rely on [and] permit the cohabitation between the supernatural and natural, the irrational and the rational, the Western and the indigenous, and the imaginary and the real. This results in the creation of texts that offer multiple versions of socio-political realities in these writers’ countries.”*

This spoke to something I was struggling with in defining magical realism in the context of Palmares. It could be easy to imagine Palmares as a utopia, where there were no hierarchies and some “pure” African society was formed and flourished. The basic principle of living free as a Black person in a slave state is arguably utopian, but this existence was far from perfect, or even safe, rather it was under constant attack, and there was definitely still hierarchy. The point being, entering Palmares didn’t turn everyone into completely moral and perfect beings.

Traditional beliefs are also a huge part of the world I want to construct, and part of why I am drawn to magical realism. This next passage speaks to that best.

“ Toni Morrison seems to make a similar argument as she insists that what critics refer to as magical realism in her work is inherent in her culture; in other words, there is nothing extraordinary in her narrative. This suggests that her narrative aims at faithfully depicting what is going on in the society that has emerged from that culture. As she declares: ‘My own use of enchantment simply comes because that’s the way the world was for me and for the black people that I knew.’ ”

At certain points I questioned if I was even really talking about magical realism, or just Black culture. When I am describing a *Candomblé* ceremony in which a woman is possessed by a god and loses all recognition of her self, is that magical realism or a religious experience? I think it mostly depends on audience. If the people watching were speaking the same cultural language they wouldn’t need the context of magical realism to interpret the scene. I think my characters would feel much like Morrison in the sense that the magic they are experiencing isn’t a foreign presence, as in *Pan’s Labyrinth*, but simply a part of how they experience the world. This is with the exception of a major “magical” event, which isn’t currently in my plot, or maybe small events in the case of Cosma. I will return to this subject in my methodology discussion.

## History

The bulk of my research has been around the history of Palmares as it is known and theorized by scholars. I began this research with the text I used in my Slave Revolts and Maroons class, *Maroon Societies*. This volume is edited by Richard Price and is a collection of different accounts of maroon narratives. This volume was very helpful as it uses and builds upon many primary sources and gives a lot of concrete facts, dates and locations. There is specifically a section on Brazil and a chapter on Palmares. I especially appreciate this book because it gives these communities validation as real societies with established systems of living. Many texts can try to downplay the significance or proliferation of maroon societies but this book uses facts to prove they existed in numbers and explores how they survived and were destroyed.

The next source I found related to history was an article written in the African Diaspora Archaeology Network Journal that is entitled “Archeological Perspectives of Palmares”. This piece goes into a bit more detail about the timeline of Palmares as well as the inhabitants. It talks about the leaders of Palmares and their historical roles. The archaeological perspective is actually very helpful and includes viewpoints on how Palmares evolved as a society and culture.

British archeologist Michael Rowlands reads the Palmares Quilombo with the eyes of such a domination and resistance perspective, and focuses on the idea of Palmares as a plural structure where there was, for example, an important context of enslavement activities in the region. In this perspective, the *quilombo* is seen as a society very close to the one existing in the colonial world at the time. There were distinctions between the Palmarian elite and the other inhabitants of the *quilombo*; in other words, there were distinctions of class and differences established by gender and ethnicity, which were used by Europeans to justify the existence of slavery.

This is just one interpretation of the societal structure of Palmares in this text, and this is an area I have been struggling to come to a conclusion on. In some texts I have come across they assert that Palmares was decidedly African in societal structure, that it was communal, and in some ways an inversion of the surrounding colonial society. In others, such as this passage, it seems there was an amount of hierarchy and politics that may have come from European influence. It is truly impossible to know for sure, and I think I’ll take a measure of artistic license in this area, but it is interesting to see how experts can have such different opinions on this area.

The next source I found, which I am still currently reading, may shed some light on that area. As of now *Quilombo dos Palmares* is the only text written exclusively on Palmares in English. This book covers the broader sugar industry in Brazil, the Luso-Dutch conflict, and very detailed accounts of the major events of Palmares. It is still a very political take on the quilombo and focuses mostly on shifts of power within and outside of Palmares. The major aspect lacking is culture. I still have yet to find anything

of great detail that explores daily life in Palmares, gender roles, commerce, health etc. This leaves more research to be done as well as room for me to create for myself.

## Religion

To make up for the lack of culture in my historical sources I have begun researching specific aspects of Afro-Brazilian life. Spirituality has always been a major part of African resistance in the Americas, be it through the church or drum circles or other forms of worship. In Brazil there is Candomblé. This is the syncretic mixture of Catholicism, West African traditional systems of worship, and indigenous systems as well.

The book, *City of Women* has been a primary resource in learning about Candomblé. This was written from the point of view of an American ethnographer, Ruth Landes, who journeyed to Salvador de Bahia, also home of quilombos, to learn about this religion and its practitioners. I was skeptical of this source, and remain so, because a white anthropologist wrote it in 1947. I felt she might be biased by racial and cultural views at the time that would influence her work. However, I did find many things valuable in the text, and the preface goes into why the book was rejected by the anthropological community. They saw Landes' accounts as not scientific enough and too personal, which I actually find helpful because reading her thought process allows a reader to see possible instances of bias and misunderstanding instead of having it be labeled as fact. The book goes into detail about Candomblé practices and ceremonies as well as the social structure of priestesses.

Another kind of primary source I found helpful in studying Candomblé has been photography. There are a few photography projects that focus on images of ceremony that not only give good visual details of rituals, but also give the spirit of the events. Alfredo D'Amato did a photo series on women in Candomblé in Bahia, Brazil that depicts Afro-Brazilian women in religious spaces. There is also a film, *Yemanjá: Wisdom from the African Heart of Brazil*, which features footage of Candomblé ceremonies as well as interviews of practitioners that has been very helpful.

I have also been looking deeper into orishas and African myths. I want to incorporate a creation myth into the beginning of the film and I have been looking at

Bantu, Yoruba and other West/Central African collections of stories that may somehow relate to the story I am trying to tell. For this I have used websites like *SanteríaChurch*. While searching for creation myths I have used academic sites like The University of Georgia as well as blogs like Gateway Africa and online culture sites like AfricaPublic. There are often different versions of similar stories, and I learn as much from the comments of people who are adding or correcting the stories as the text itself. I'm aware that oral traditions are ever changing and there is no one version of a story.

## Herbalism

When I began to flesh out more of Madeira's healing scenes I began to look more into specific plants and methods of healing in Brazil. *Sacred Leaves of Candomblé* and *African American Slave Medicine* were very helpful and very interesting texts on this matter. They both gave specific plants and their healing uses but they also described beliefs about plants and how religion played into healing and herbalism. I found it very useful in writing about how Madeira, Dada and the Ibeji's roles may overlap in terms of spirituality and healing.

## Films on Slavery

The films of the LA Rebellion have always influenced me. I see them as a moment when Black filmmakers made a conscious effort to break from western structures of storytelling, and tried to create their own forms. This difference in structure is just as important as content to me. I think rediscovering traditional ideas of story, as well as creating new ones, is crucial to Black art being truly liberating. Historically, storytelling has been a part of survival; it was a way to pass on history, lesson about the world, social rules and practices, predictions of the future, advice etc. This cannot always be marketable, digestible, entertainment, and I think the LA Rebellion embraced that as much as possible.

*Sankofa* and *Daughters of the Dust* are two classics from this movement that use non western forms of storytelling to explore slavery, migration, resistance and other themes that are also present in my story. The stories are nonlinear and include several

protagonists, generations, and interwoven plotlines. I would like to continue to study these films and more from that time period to analyze how they accomplished cohesive stories.

## União Dos Palmares

In January of this year I was able to travel to Brazil with Professor Jennifer Burton. While I was there I travelled to both Araraquara and União Dos Palmares, two cities in different states of Brazil. We were in Araraquara for Professor Burton's film project, but while we were filming at the UNESP I met a student that was raised in a modern quilombo community. Her name is Tarcisia and she is from Minas Gerais, which is another region known for these communities. She is studying health and specifically racial disparities within the Brazilian healthcare system. I've kept in contact with her and sent her many questions over the months about some of the history of the quilombos. She has sent me music and a documentary, which I am still trying to find with subtitles. She also still practices Umbanda, which is related to Candomblé as a syncretic religion. She was very excited about my project and I'm excited to keep speaking with her about it, and maybe explore her community more.

When I traveled to União Dos Palmares I was able to visit the memorial for Palmares. The day I went it was almost completely empty, there is a large celebration on November 20<sup>th</sup> every year, but other than that it's a very isolated area, and it takes a long drive up a steep hill to get to the site. My cab driver was also my tour guide and he showed me around the preserved area. I got to see replicas of houses made with huge grass and straw roofs. There were lots of plaques with information about daily life, the agriculture of the area, the political history of Palmares, among other things. We walked to the Lago Sagrado which today has dried up, but there was a memorial to Aquatune in the form a tree that is said to come from Africa and is deeply sacred to the place. I collected many pictures on this trip, which I have also included here. Overall the trip was extremely helpful in visualizing a place that had mostly existed in my mind, to meet the people and taste some of the foods, and especially to meet and speak with a descendant of these amazing places.

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