

Mr Grammar



Olatunbosun Taofeek

MR GRAMMAR

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Book Station West Africa

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Production history

Mr Grammar was premiered on the 8th of April, 2013 at Annual Easter Cultural Festival tagged “Arise Africa” at Chi Afrique multipurpose Hall, Thurbon Avenue, Yaba Lagos. It was also improvised as a radio play on 103.1 Unilag FM before being staged in the University of Lagos.

Several readings of the play have been done at the National Theatre and the University of Lagos, Nigeria, in Ontario, Canada; and the United States before the time of publication.

Note to the Play

Certain words which appeared in italics are explained in the glossary.

Acknowledgments

Appreciation goes to Professor Duro Oni, Professor Emmanuel Adedun, Dr Chris Anyokwu, Sam Awa, Lekan Balogun, Onileagbon Femi and Gbenga Peters.

not present

Instruction

- The situations in the play can be staged or read independently or dependently.

Situation One: *Mr Grammar in Politics*

CASTS

Mr Grammar, the candidate of SPP

Candidates, SMPP and EPP

Chairmen, SPP, SMPP and EPP

First Character, one of the masses

Second Character, one of the masses

Prof. Makuti, SPP member

Dr Dontintin, SPP member

Prof. Okoro, SPP member

Prof. Heraclitus, SPP member

Prof. Olowoeyo, SPP member

Drunk, one of the masses

Male SNEB, staff of SNEB

Female SNEB, a staff of SNEB

Woman, one of the masses

Chief Mba, member of EPP

Elder Timothy, member of EPP

Youngman, a friend to Mr Grammar

Firewoman, staff of Twenty-four Seven Fire Station

EPP Members, SPP Members and SMPP Members

Chorus, Imam, Pastor, Seer, Policemen, Moderator

Spiritual Beings & Narrator

THE THREE POLITICAL PARTIES

Stubborn Masses Progressive Party (SMPP)

Eat-and-go Progressive Party (EPP)

Scholars Progressive Party (SPP)

ELECTORAL COMMISSION

Sovereign National Electoral Board (SNEB)

Mr. GREGORY YOUNGMAN, Chairman

Chorus: There is a new day coming, it's gonna be a glorious day.

Mr. GREGORY YOUNGMAN: And it's gonna be a glorious day.

Chorus: There is a new day coming, it's gonna be a glorious day.

Mr. GREGORY YOUNGMAN: And it's gonna be a glorious day.

Chorus: There is a new day coming, it's gonna be a glorious day.

Mr. GREGORY YOUNGMAN: And it's gonna be a glorious day.

Chorus: There is a new day coming, it's gonna be a glorious day.

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Mr. GREGORY YOUNGMAN: And it's gonna be a glorious day.

Chorus: There is a new day coming, it's gonna be a glorious day.

Mr. GREGORY YOUNGMAN: And it's gonna be a glorious day.

Prologue

Lights on. NARRATOR walks onto the stage.

Narrator: Dr Ajanlekoko is back to the country he left over twelve years ago on intensive academic pursuit. He is back with the aim of changing the country. But right now he lives in a university community where his house is on fire. (**NARRATOR** leaves while **CHORUS** walk onto the stage and take various positions. **FIREWOMAN** ambles onto the stage, sits and opens her files. **YOUNGMAN**, with a bucket of water, runs onto the stage shouting)

Chorus: Dr. Ajanlekoko

before I leave my motherland

Youngman, who is a member of the

Chorus, says, "Twenty-four Seven" and that

200 Members, 200 Members and 200 Members

Youngman, "Buster" and "Professor" (Youngman

and the 200 Members)

Youngman: (In the direction of CHORUS) Fire! Fire! Fire!
Help! Help! Help!

Chorus: (Running to and fro while FIREWOMAN remains calm) Fire! Fire! Fire! Help! Help! Help! Help! (YOUNGMAN runs off stage while MR GRAMMAR enters in a singlet dialing his phone)

Firewoman: (Receiving a call) Hello! Who is on the line? This is Twenty-four-seven Fire Station.

Mr Grammar: (Restless) Okay! This is Doctor Ajanlekoko from the University of Hometown.

Chorus: Ehen!

Mr Grammar: Faculty of Arts.

Chorus: Ehen!

Mr Grammar: The Department of Linguistics.

Chorus: Ehen! (Fold their hands and pose)

Firewoman: Yes, Doctor, in what way can I help you?

Mr Grammar: I am desirous to confirm the undaunted certainty that you are the combustion officer.

Firewoman: Come again, sir?

Mr Grammar: Please, I am calling with due alacrity. There is a gigantic conflagration that has engulfed my immense domiciliar edifice. (**CHORUS** *fall to the ground*)

Firewoman: (*Rises*) Doctor, I don't understand you. Is it that your house is inside the fire or the fire is inside your house?

Mr Grammar: No, everything is combusting.

Chorus: (*Running to MR GRAMMAR as he runs off stage*) Y-e-e Mr Grammar! (**FIREWOMAN** follows **CHORUS** while **NARRATOR** comes back)

Narrator: Unfortunately, Firewoman couldn't understand Doctor Ajanlekoko. Before his neighbours could help out, his whole house was razed to the ground. (**CHORUS** *run onto the stage crying for MR GRAMMAR before leaving in sympathy*) In his effort not to give up, he has secured another apartment in the city. Here is Doctor Ajanlekoko going home. (**WOMAN** enters with a basket of tomatoes. *Looking left and right, she puts her basket down and arranges her tomatoes.* **MR GRAMMAR** enters in pencil trousers, a white suit and a pair of eyeglasses with two books in his hands)

Mr Grammar: (*Approaching WOMAN with a disdainful look*) What the hell is that? (*Pointing to her basket*)

Woman: (*Standing up from her squatting position*) Wetin I

do? I no dey sell hell for here. Abi ogwa you no dey see well?

Mr Grammar: Please could you evacuate your possession creating obscenity to this environment?

Woman: Sorry! *I no sell drugs and I no get obsemetry.*

Mr Grammar: Stop that woman! Do you want to turn this environ to a citadel of garbage?

Woman: *(Surprised) Garbage! No sir, I no sell garbage. Because of government I no dey sell drug; how much more drug like garbage.*

Mr Grammar: I said you should evacuate your commodities from this place with immediate effect and automatic alacrity before I lose my temper, tempo and temperament.

Woman: *(Remorsefully) Sir, the country no fit loss anything. For I no dey sell temper, tempo or temperature, only tomato.*

Mr Grammar: *(Shouting) Are you deaf, woman?*

Woman: *(Raises her voice while she removes her scarf to tie around her waist) You dey abusing me say I deaf? You too are you see?*

Mr Grammar: You are a nincompoop!

Woman: *(Walks close to MR GRAMMAR, who moves*

backwards) You too you are photocopy. You are a nothing.

Chorus: (Rush to the stage and drag **MR GRAMMAR** as he gets ready to fight) Mr G-r-a-m-m-a-r!

Mr Grammar: (Agitates as they drag him off stage) No! Things must change in this country. It must change. Change must take place. C-ha-n-g-e! (**WOMAN** picks few tomatoes from her basket and throws at **MR GRAMMAR**, she rushes again and pulls him by his tie while **CHORUS** lead him out as lights fade)

Scene One

Lights on. EPP CANDIDATE enters in traditional attire, with a protruded stomach, carrying a ballot box with a carved image of the country's map. On getting to the stage, he gazes at the ballot box and the map; he moves forward and shakes his head. After moving to and fro for a while, he beckons to someone at the left side of the stage. PASTOR, who is in a white garment with a big Bible in his right hand and a big red cross on his neck enters in spiritual ecstasy. On getting closer to EPP CANDIDATE, who is now in fright, he points at the ballot box. PASTOR moves closer and looks at it in deep meditation. He brings out three red candles, sets them around the country's map and ignites them. He brings out anointing oil, pours it on the candidate and on the ballot box. Finally, he brings out a rod and touches both the candidate and the ballot box. Suddenly, he stops, gazing in a trance. He turns, packs his candles, his Bible and runs offstage.

EPP CANDIDATE, who kneels all the while, rises and moves to and fro in search of him. Unable to find him he beckons to another person on the right of the stage. IMAM with a big Quran and a chaplet comes in counting his beads, beckoning to the candidate to come closer. IMAM points at the country's map and the ballot box to know if those are the causes of his worries. The candidate nods. IMAM puts his right hand on the candidate's chest and assures him there is no problem. IMAM moves round the country's map counting his beads. Suddenly, out of fright, he moves offstage tiptoeing away.

After **IMAM** leaves, **EPP CANDIDATE** carries the map, the box about to leave. Suddenly, he turns back, drops the ballot box and the map in reverie. He beckons to **SEER** who is in a complete red garment carrying a cauldron along. **SEER** walks onto the stage majestically. He beckons to **EPP CANDIDATE**. The candidate points at the ballot box then **SEER** puts the cauldron on the ballot box and pours seeds into the cauldron to increase it fire.

SEER brings out a pound of flesh and two pieces of fish. He places them on the country's map. Immediately, **SPIRITUAL BEINGS** walk unto the stage from both left and right sniffing for the sacrifice. At first, to the back and later to the front, searching for the sacrifice. **SEER** touches the eyes of **EPP CANDIDATE**, who is not aware of their presence. When he sees **SPIRITUAL BEINGS**, **EPP CANDIDATE** runs backwards in fear while **SEER** covers his mouth. **SPIRITUAL BEINGS** carry the map and walk away while **SEER** follows with his cauldron. Looking left and right, **EPP CANDIDATE** carries the ballot box and follows as lights fade. The country's national anthem is played in darkness after which lights reveal an empty stage.

Next, **SMPP MEMBERS** rush onto the stage. In their hands are clubs, sticks, cutlasses and all sorts of weaponry. Their dresses are out of place. **SMPP CANDIDATE** leads raising the map of the country. **SMPP CHAIRMAN** follows and other members rant after them. After their entrance, they line up and **SMPP CHAIRMAN** addresses them. Whenever he pauses, they all raise their weapons and bring them down uniformly.

SMPP Chairman: My people!

SMPP Members: Ehen!

SMPP Chairman: My people!

SMPP Members: Ehen!

SMPP Chairman: I don't think there is any reason for us to hold party meeting again?

SMPP Members: No, there is no need!

SMPP Chairman: Look, the only way out for us in this coming election is for us to protest.

SMPP Members: Yes, we have to protest!

SMPP Chairman: Another solution is for us to steal ballot boxes.

SMPP Members: Yes, we have to steal ballot boxes!

SMPP Chairman: We have been deprived of succeeding in this coming election. Is there any other way to this matter?

SMPP Members: No!

SMPP Chairman: Do we have other option?

SMPP Members: No!