

KIRIJI – Fabunmi confronts the British army on the outskirts of Okemesi-Ekiti (excerpts from MORINADE, Fabunmi's Princess, the explosive new novel on the Kiriji war)

“Fabunmi is a king of war, peace will destroy him...and that's what we want” –Thomas Gilbert Carter (British Governor of Lagos 1892)

The British army is arrayed in battle formation on the outskirts of Esa-Oke, a town on the approaches to Okemesi. Opposite them are the Ekiti Forces led by Fabunmi. The British Governor of Lagos, Governor Carter, is at the front of his army conferring with Captain Blackmore. Fabunmi and a few of his confederates approach the British lines...

Captain Blackmore: He wants to parley. I thought he was going to fight.

Governor Carter: Surely Blackmore, you've spent enough time in Africa to know that the most troublesome natives are invariably the cleverest ones. Kosoko in Lagos ... Jaja in Opobo... Fabunmi wants to bargain, but with a strong hand.

Captain Blackmore: A strong hand? He doesn't stand a chance.

Governor Carter: Wars are not always won by he who has the most. They're often won by he who is willing to lose the most in pursuit of victory. We are about to find out how much Prince Fabunmi is willing to lose.

Fabunmi and his commanders reach the British lines and halt, facing the Governor and his leading officers.

Governor Carter (to Fabunmi): You approach my army under a flag of truce, seeking peace. So, why aren't you on your knees?

Fabunmi: It was with a flag of truce that you made your way from Lagos to Okemesi. You wouldn't have got very far if you were crawling on your knees.

Governor Carter: Your path to your headquarters in Okemesi is blocked by the British army.

Fabunmi: Your path back to Lagos is blocked by the Ekiti Parapo army.

Governor Carter: You're isolated and alone. Your kings have signed a peace treaty, as has your enemy, Ibadan; your allies, the Ijesha, have deserted you. You are confronted with an army whose technological prowess is unlike anything you've ever faced. Your bluffs won't work. If you decide to fight, what is left of your army will be wiped

Fabunmi: You might carry the field today. But then what? Sixteen Ekiti kingdoms, a thousand towns and villages, hills and mountains at every corner. Two hundred thousand men under arms. How long will it take to conquer an entire nation? How many men will you need? How many men will you lose?

Governor Carter: If I have to raze every hamlet in this country to enforce the rule of law, I will.

Fabunmi: *(smiles)* Then go ahead. Turn the land into a smoking heap, drive the people into the mountains and then who will you trade with? Or is that not why you are here? How will you find the prosperity you seek in a land reduced to a desert?

Governor Carter: What are your terms?

Fabunmi: The removal of every Ibadan soldier from Ekiti. The end of all tribute from our people to Ibadan. The freedom of every Ekiti slave across Yorubaland and beyond, including those still held in chains in Badagry. And most importantly that every Ekiti soldier who took up arms to resist tyranny is granted an unconditional amnesty, and all my men are allowed back to their land to continue the peaceful pursuits they were engaged in before this cursed war was forced upon us.

Governor Carter: And you agree to disband all your forces. Demobilise your army.

Fabunmi: Before Ibadan came, we had no army; there will be no reason for one to exist once they are gone.

Governor Carter: And you accept that the British army will remain here to maintain the peace.

Fabunmi: If I had a choice, I wouldn't be speaking to you. My cannon will.

Governor Carter: In that case... *he motions to a clerk who had been scribbling away on a parchment while both commanders were talking. The clerk hands the governor the paper.*

Governor Carter: A treaty of peace then, signed by both parties on this day, will consecrate our agreement herein reached and sealed in indelible ink.

Fabunmi: I've walked to this point through a river of blood. Blood shed by the flower of Ekiti youth. Your ink can be erased, their blood cannot. That is my signature.

Governor Carter: All your kings have already signed.

Fabunmi: Blood, costs more than whiskey.

Governor Carter: *(is silent for a while, considering the Ekiti commander, then he speaks, pulling the sheaf of paper towards him)* So be it.

The Ekiti leader nods to him, turns back with his officers, and heads towards his lines, leaving the British Governor and his men staring after them.

Governor Carter: Clever bastard.

Captain Blackmore laughs.

Captain Blackmore: But you must admit, he played a weak hand rather well.

Governor Carter: He might think he's won. But he's just suffered his greatest ever defeat.

Captain Blackmore: How, Sir?

Governor Carter: The most powerful weapon in the arsenal of the British Empire, Blackmore, is not war. It is peace. Today, we have achieved peace.

Captain Blackmore: Forgive me sir, but isn't that what he wants?

Governor Carter half-smiles to himself.

Governor Carter: Yes, but Fabunmi is a king of war. Peace will destroy him..... And that's what we want.

