

Plays suitable for audiences aged between 12 and 16 years

Winner

A Concrete Jungle Full of Wild Cars

by Mariama Ives-Moiba

'My name is Mariama Ives-Moiba. I am of mixed heritage, English and Sierra Leonean. I have grown up and live in Enfield, north London and I am currently studying History at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, where I received the Vice Chancellor's Scholarship. In the play, through children's eyes, I wanted to portray the impact of civil war on those who have escaped. I also wanted to emphasise the social difficulties of immigrating for the younger generation. The magical bracelet enabled me to intertwine the harsh reality with the beauty of magic, and the innocence of youth.'

Characters

Zina

Young Zina, Girl's voice off stage

Naima

Kosey

Aunty, Mama, Gran

Jasmine, Baakir

Radio presenter, Papa, Commander's voice off stage, President Kabbah

Matt, Child in the rain, Boy soldier, Travelling adult

Farad, Child in the rain, Boy soldier, Travelling adult

Introduction

It is 1997 and Sierra Leone has been amidst a civil war for six years. In 1995 Baakir, the eldest of the Limbara family, was captured by the rebels when their town and home in Port Loko was raided and burnt. He is now 19 and a soldier of the Revolutionary United Front. On the outside he appears as a rugged, evil weapon of destruction that is in the hands of his commander. His face is always covered with a soldier cap, and his clothes are loose and tattered. At certain moments we see the young terrified boy, who can no longer choose his future. For two years after Baakir's abduction the family moved to Kamakwie and lived in Mr Limbara's family house, whilst still searching for their son. In 1997 rumours spread of the rebels heading south towards Kamakwie, so Mr and Mrs Limbara decided to send their other three children to live with Mrs Limbara's sister and mother in England, while they continued to search for Baakir. Zina, the youngest, is 13. Her kind-hearted, inquisitive and youthful energy makes her the favourite of the family; however, she has been forced to grow up much faster than most children of her age. In England she grabs a chance at once again being youthfully ignorant of the consequences of her actions. Kosey, her brother, is 15. He is generally absorbed in his own world and blends into English life much quicker than his sisters. His desire to fit in comes from his despair at leaving his elder brother and best friend Baakir in Sierra Leone. Naima is the eldest daughter at seventeen; she is independent and has adopted the role of mother to Zina and Kosey from a young age. Nevertheless both younger siblings are desperate to assert themselves as her siblings, not her children. She has always had many responsibilities and finds it hard to adapt as a young teenager in England, and in a strange country she leans on her siblings as much as they lean on her.

Scene 1

Zina, Naima and Kosey have just arrived in England at their Aunt's small two bedroom house. There is a bedroom downstairs for the grandma and the house is full of paintings and sculptures of Sierra Leone. However, the furniture, dining table and chairs all give the appearance of an ordinary English house in North London, Enfield. Their Aunt is a middle-aged westernised Sierra Leonean who chose a career rather than children, and who lives with and supports her mother. This encounter is the first time she has met her nieces and

nephew, and she is unsure of how to relate to them and what they have experienced. She has adopted the fast pace of western culture in the way she walks and talks. She is always dressed in smart suits, emphasising that although the children's lives might be at a sudden standstill, the rest of the world is still at work.

Aunty: This is the living room/dining room, through there is the kitchen and on that side is your gran's room. She finds it hard to go upstairs and the bathroom is by the front door. Kosey your room is upstairs and on the left.

Kosey: Okay, thank you. *[exits]*

Aunty: Girls I'm afraid you two are going to have to sleep in the living room. If you pull out this sofa it turns into a double bed, it's very comfy. You can put your suitcases in your brother's room. I would have given you the bedroom Naima, seeing as you're the oldest, but I thought it would be better having you two share than Kosey and Zina.

Naima: This is fine Aunty, thank you.

Zina: Thank you.

Aunty: Okay, well I just have to go to the supermarket to do some food shopping. I've had a hectic last few days at work and never got the chance. I won't be long, an hour maybe but if there's any problems Gran is here, but she's sleeping so only wake her if it is really important. You must be exhausted after those three days of travelling so if you want to have a nap by all means do so. I'll leave you both to settle in now and I will be back soon.

Both: Thank you Aunty.

Aunty: You're welcome. I'm happy to finally meet you both; you are just as beautiful as your mama said. Remember this is your home now so don't be shy. *[exits]*

Naima: I thought we would have had our own rooms.

Zina: I don't mind sharing.

Naima: Her house is much smaller than ours.

Zina: Yes but Mama said England is expensive.

Naima: hmmm... I'm sleeping on this side.

Zina: Should we unpack now?

Naima: You can I want to explore.

Zina: Where are you going?

Naima: Out.

Zina: We can't just go out; we don't know our way around.

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Naima: I just want some fresh air.

Zina: You can't just leave.

Naima: Zi stop worrying I'll be back before Aunty so no one will know, unless you tell... Zina?

Zina: I won't tell, but don't be too long.

Naima: That's why I love you.

Kosey: [enters] What do you two think of the place?

Naima: It's small.

Kosey: Yes that's what I thought.

Zina: I like it, its cosy.

Kosey: Are you two sleeping down here?

Naima: Yes.

Kosey: Looks like I got the best room then.

Naima: Yes you did, anyways I'm going out so see you two in a bit.

Kosey: What! Where are you going?

Naima: Just out, want to see what there is here.

Kosey: I'm coming.

Naima: No you're not.

Kosey: Yes I am or I am telling.

Naima: You're so annoying. Fine come on then we have to be back before Aunty.

Zina: What about Gran?

Naima: Aunty said she's sleeping so just don't wake her up.

Kosey: Zi you coming?

Zina: No I'm going to unpack.

Kosey: You're such a good girl.

Naima and Kosey exit. Zina gets out the bracelet from her suitcase. Flashback. Zina is back home in her room sitting on the floor with a packed suitcase listening to a little portable radio.

Radio Presenter: This is Abdalla reporting to you on Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service from Freetown. The latest peace deal to end the six-year civil war between President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and Sankoh's rebels has unravelled, and a spokesperson has said that if...

Mama: [enters] Turn that off please. [Zina turns off the radio.] Are you ready?

Zina: Yes Mama.

Mama: Sit down I have something for you. It's my bracelet, I want you to have it.

Zina: But Mama you love this bracelet, are you sure you want to give it to me; I know Naima has always wanted it.

Mama: Do you remember what your name means?

Zina: Secret gift.

Mama: Only the youngest possess the power to see.

Zina: To see what Mama?

Mama: Look at the stones.

Zina: Every stone is so colourful, it's as though there are rainbows within each.

Mama: The colours will soon set to one, the one which will remind you that you will never be far from home, or those you love.

Zina: What do you mean?

Mama: Zina this bracelet will allow you to see whatever you want to see, but for only a limited time so think wisely before you wish.

Zina: How is this possible?

Mama: I don't have time to explain everything to you now, but...

Zina: [*interrupts*] Mama if it allows you to see whatever you want, then why don't you use the bracelet to find Baakir?

Mama: I... I can no longer see.

Zina: Why not?

Mama: I shared my gift. Zina you must never tell anyone of what you see.

Zina: Mama why can't I stay, if you said I can see then I can help you find him.

Papa: [*offstage*] Farida we must leave now if we are to get to Lungi before the rebels move further south.

Mama: Zina it is too dangerous for you here, just promise me you will never tell.

Zina: I promise.

Mama: Zina.

Zina: Yes Mama?

Mama: Always look at what you can see now, nothing more.

Zina: Mama what do you...

Mama: [*interrupts*] Put it in your suitcase, quick!

Naima and Kosey enter.

Naima: Mama, Papa says we must leave now if we are to beat the rebels.

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Mama: Oh my pikin make me proud and be good for your aunty, I love you all so much. Always remember, If I choose not to see,

All: What threatens my sight,
If I cover my ears,
To block out the fright,
Then God as my witness,
I can imagine that all is right.

End of flashback.

Zina: You are still so colourful... see... what will you let me see? My room, my, oh if only I could see my house in Kamakwie once more.

She rubs the bracelet in her hand. It begins to glow red.

Zina: The sun is soo hot. [*opens her eyes to see her house burning*] No, no, no, no!

Gran is in her late sixties. She can speak perfect English but tends to blend Creole, her native tongue into her everyday language, as it enables her to hold onto her identity as a Sierra Leonean and separate herself from her westernised daughter. She is loving and witty and becomes very close with Zina who reminds her of her youngest daughter, Zina's mama.

Gran: [*enters*] Eh pikin wetin you for do, are you okay?

Zina: [*hides the bracelet*] Hello... Granny... yes... yes... I'm fine... sorry did I wake you?

Gran: Why yo fo shout oh?

Zina: I was playing.

Gran: Eh you no grown?

Zina: I'm 13.

Gran: And you still play foolish games, hmm when I was your age I had three nieces and nephews that I had to take care of, I did not have time to play games. Hmm you pikin all you want fo do is play... so is it just you? I thought your brother and sister were coming as well?

Zina: Yes they are here as well.

Gran: Are all of you playing hide and shout?

Zina: No... no... they... they are erm in Kosey's room.

Gran: Ah you can't lie oh.

Zina: Sorry?

Gran: First you want fo tell me that you were playing when you were screaming, second you want fo tell me that your brother and sister

are here, when me no see dem. Hey pikin me I am old oh, but I am not stupid.

Zina: Sorry.

Gran: It's okay come here and hug me oh, you are fine girl you fo grown big, me no see you since you were a small pikin and now you tall so?

Zina: Mama has told me so much about you.

Gran: Ahey that palaver lady.

Zina: What was she like when she was my age?

Gran: Ah she was soo troublesome she is the reason for all my grey hairs, ah you fo smile like her. Now you fo tell me why you maka fo scream like that?

Zina: [pause] I... I saw a spider.

Gran: Where? Ah I hate them, where is it I will kill it, they think they can creep up on us and, and scare us but no hmm I will teach them to respect my foot, where it fo don go?

Zina: It went under the sofa.

Gran: Ah you lie; hey I'm afraid I can't go that low you will have to kill it yourself. So that's why yo fo scream hmm me I don't blame you, I mean why would God make a creature with so many hairy legs hmm I dunno oh.

Zina: It's okay it just took me by surprise that's all.

Gran: Hey don't fret people think because we are Sierra Leonean we must love all these hairy, many legged insects and bugs. But I say to them, just because there are many of them in my country does not mean I must like them, that's like saying to an American ah because you have sooo many rats, because they do, soo many, that, that they must like them. Hmm I said this to my neighbour she was so confused, I don't think she knew I spoke English, hey the English, well you will soon learn. You want something fo drink?

Zina: Erm yes please.

Gran: Okay.

Zina: Sorry for waking you up, I'll control my screaming next time.

Gran: Its okay, me I just glad you safe.

Scene 2

It's night time and Zina and Naima are in the living room. Zina is lying in the bed and Naima is searching through her handbag.

Zina: What's wrong?

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Naima: I can't find my earrings that Diallo bought for me.

Zina: Are you sure, have you checked your suitcase?

Naima: Yes they are not there either, ah of all the things I should forget how did I forget them?

Zina: Where did you last see them?

Naima: I don't know.

Zina: Think.

Naima: Erm I was going to put them on and then and then [pauses] Papa told me to come and get you and Mama and I completely forgot, I left them on my dressing table.

Zina: I am sorry.

Naima: It's okay at least I know I haven't lost them.

Zina: But they will be burnt.

Naima: What, what do you mean?

Zina: Erm I mean, I mean the rebels might have come and...

Naima: [interrupts] Zi you can't think like that we don't know that they came to our village. When the war is over we will return, and maybe we will live safely in our home or maybe we can even return and rebuild our home in Port Loko.

Zina: Yes I hope so. [pauses] What was it like when you went outside, did you meet anyone?

Naima: It was cold, very, very cold and people were walking around in shorts and sleeveless tops. Apparently this is summer. Me and Kosey could not believe it.

Zina: Mama said that the English do not feel the cold.

Naima: I thought she was joking. There were some other young people in the area by this huge park, Kosey started chatting to them straight away and then the boys asked him to play football with them, and you can imagine the rest.

Zina: He's such a show off, did he do his Balotelli trick?

Naima: Yes of course, they all loved it. I didn't mind just sitting there watching him. I almost forgot where I was and imagined him playing in the dust and the heat, his dark limbs running back and forth so fast he became a blur. I think he forgot as well because when he scored he started doing the Fetenke dance, and he was so shocked when the other boys came and jumped on top of him in congratulations. He looked at me and at that moment I felt as

though he needed me to be the strong one, so I smiled at him and he continued to play. On the way home we didn't speak. Then as we got to the door he asked me if I think we will ever return home.

Zina: What did you say?

Naima: Yes.

Scene 3

It's morning, everyone is sitting down in the dining/living room eating breakfast except for Auntie who is busy packing her bag for work.

Aunty: Right I'm off, there's food in the fridge and I need all three of you to fill out the forms I have left on the counter, about enrolling at school in September. Naima your mama told me that you are good at doing hair, so I got you an interview at my local hairdressers. It's at twelve so I won't be able to take you, but I have left the directions on the counter. The only day they could do was today, sorry for it being so soon but I thought you would like having a job, so you can have some extra cash if you want to go out with friends in the future.

Naima: Thank you Aunty.

Aunty: Kosey, Zina feel free to play out in the area but please don't go any further, and Kosey look after your sister if you do go out.

Kosey: Yes Aunty.

Aunty: Right is everyone okay?

All: Yes.

Aunty: Good, well I'm off, see you all later. *[exits]*

Naima: I better go get ready, what should I wear?

Zina: Something smart.

Naima: Yes, yes but I don't... oh I have that blouse that Diallo bought for me, yes I'll wear that and my school trousers. *[exits]*

Gran: *[enters in a dressing gown and sits down]* Morning pikin.

Zina: Morning... Granny how comes Aunty never speaks in Creole?

Gran: Eh that English women hmmm she don't know how, she fo talk too much with her English paddy.

Zina: Oh, well I guess she only has you to talk in Creole with anyway.

Gran: Ah am I not enough?

Zina: *[laughs]* Of course you are Granny... Granny what was Grandpapa like?

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Gran: Ah that man... well people always used to say your man he fo come like hippopotamus not because he was fat no, because he was aggressive like them. But I used to say to me paddy that the hippo he fo have reason to be angry all the time because his body is sooo fat and his legs are sooo short. I mean imagine carrying all that weight on four little tree stump legs hey, how would you feel? But your grandpapa ah he had no excuse he was tall and lanky, there was no meat he needed to carry, just that beer belly of his that had to lead him everywhere. Ah that man he was the reason for all my grey hairs.

Zina: So it wasn't just Mama?

Gran: Ah they fo come like team.

Knock at the door

Gran: Zina will you get that please?

Zina opens the door to Jasmine, a 13-year-old black Jamaican girl. She is bubbly and confident and uses her witty and sarcastic nature to test people of all ages.

Jasmine: Oh hi, erm we got your post again.

Gran: Hello Jasmine, you fo come inside, hey how di body?

Jasmine: [*enters and laughs*] The body fine Granny.

Kosey: You know Creo?

Jasmine: No, just the basics like how are you and oh I can say hello, cushay, cushay.

Kosey: [*laughs*] You sound funny.

Jasmine: You sound fresh.

Gran: Hey Kosey she fo out smart you, so don't make palaver with her oh, hey my pikin how is your mama?

Jasmine: She's good thank you, she managed to get an interview for that promotion at the bank.

Gran: Oh that's good... oh this is my granddaughter Zina and my grandson Kosey.

Kosey and Zina: Hi.

Jasmine: Hi.

Gran: I think you and Zina are the same age, you're both 13?

Both: Yes.

Gran: Ah well maybe you could show Zina and Kosey weiting you can do here?

Kosey: I don't need her to show me around I made some friends yesterday and I'm meeting them at the park after they finish school.

Gran: Oh okay... hey you don't want to be seen with these two fine girls?

Kosey: Gran they're younger than me.

Gran: And so? Jasmine how come you no go school today?

Jasmine: Erm it's, it's inset day for me.

Gran: Oh okay, well I'm going to watch some Oprah in my room, don't make too much noise.

[Kosey and Gran exit]

Zina: Why do you have a day off?

Jasmine: I don't really I just said that to your Gran, really I got suspended.

Zina: Suspended?

Jasmine: Yeah.

Zina: Why?

Jasmine: I pushed someone and apparently my school does not tolerate aggressive behaviour.

Zina: Why did you push them?

Jasmine: I don't get on with that many people they think I'm rude and I think they're annoying. I usually have fights this was just the first time I got in big trouble, because she snitched.

Zina: Snitched?

Jasmine: Told on me.

Zina: Oh.

Jasmine: You ever been in a fight?

Zina: No only with my brothers and sisters.

Jasmine: Oh you sound like my sister she's the opposite of me, really quiet, lets people walk all over her really.

Zina: I don't let people walk all over me, I just don't like fighting.

Jasmine: Fair enough.

Zina: *[pauses]* Have you ever met the Queen?

Jasmine: The Queen? No.

Zina: I want to.

Jasmine: What the Queen?

Zina: Yes.

Jasmine: Good luck.

Zina: Is it hard?

Jasmine: Once you get past the guards you'll be fine.

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Zina: You're mocking me.

Jasmine: Yeah it's hard, you would have to know someone pretty important to meet the Queen.

Zina: My grandpapa was the chief of my village, he met the Queen.

Jasmine: What here?

Zina: No in Sierra Leone.

Jasmine: Oh cool.

Zina: Where are you from?

Jasmine: Jamaica.

Zina: I like Jamaican music, I like the way they dance it makes me laugh.

Jasmine: Yeah they're a bit wild aren't they?

Zina: Yes very much.

Jasmine: How long you been here for?

Zina: We arrived yesterday.

Jasmine: Oh wow that soon?

Zina: Yes.

Jasmine: So I really do need to show you around, do you know anything about England?

Zina: My mama used to tell us about England. She moved here with her mama and two sisters when she was younger she said it was a strange place unlike home. She called it a concrete jungle full of wild cars.

Jasmine: Is your mum here?

Zina: No she moved back when she was 20 and met my papa they are still in Sierra Leone.

Jasmine: Why are you here then?

Zina: There is a civil war back home and my parents are looking for my brother. When they find him they will come and get us and we will all return... home.

Jasmine: I thought you said your brother's here?

Zina: Kosey is here, Baakir is not.

Jasmine: Oh... sorry, I didn't mean to upset you.

Zina: It's okay, it's nice to talk about them and home.

Jasmine: Well I better get back. I'm not in my mum's good books at the moment. But I can come knock for you tomorrow after school if you want and show you around?

Zina: Yes that would be nice, thank you.

Scene 4

Zina is alone in the living room holding the bracelet in her hands, and as she rubs it and wishes, it glows red.

Zina: What if he's hurt or or dead, I don't want to see him in pain... but if I don't see then I won't ever know. Mama gave it to me so I would know... so I would see. Baakir, Baakir where are you?

Baakir is leaning against the exit, which represents a door. He has a long rifle gun in his hands, his clothes are tattered and dirty and he looks tired and ragged. He is alone.

Zina: Baakir... Baakir it's me... Zina. *[she reaches out to touch him but pulls away instantly as though she has been burnt – Baakir cannot see or feel her]* Ahhh! *[pauses]* Can't you see me?... Baakir oh sweet Baakir I have missed you. *[pauses]* Where are you? So much dust and dirt. Where is everyone?

Suddenly there are three gun shots from within the building.

Baakir: If I choose not to see,
What threatens my sight,
If I cover my ears,
To block out the fright,
Then God as my witness,
I can imagine that all is right.

Commander's voice: *[offstage]* Boy you fo don see anyone outside?

Baakir: No... no sir, me fo be the only one here sir.

Commander's voice: *[offstage]* You fo come inside then, me I want you to see something.

Baakir: I... I am fi... fi... fine here sir.

Commander's voice: *[offstage]* Me I no ask you if you are fine, me say I want you fo see something, come!

Baakir exits

Zina: Baakir, Baakir!

Naima: *[enters]* Zi... Zina stop shouting... what's happened?

Zina: I'm sorry.

Naima: Why were you calling Baakir?

Zina: I... I had a nightmare.

Naima: You were sleeping?

Zina: Yes. Where have you been?

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Naima: Guess?

Zina: I don't know.

Naima: I got the job!

Zina: Job?

Naima: The job at the salon, remember?

Zina: Oh that job.

Naima: Yes what other job was there?

Zina: No sorry my head is not in the right place.

Naima: Yes you look a bit weird are you okay?

Zina: Yes I'm fine.

Naima: [*picks up the bracelet which has returned to its original colours*]
Isn't this Mama's?

Zina: Yes.

Naima: Did she give it to you?

Zina: Yes.

Naima: Why?

Zina: I... because I asked her for it before we left.

Naima: I asked her many times if I could have it and she said no.

Zina: [*pauses*] I guess you did not ask at the right time.

Naima: I guess I didn't. Well take care of it.

Zina: I will.

Naima: It was her favourite.

Zina: Nai.

Naima: Yes.

Zina: Mama loves us all the same.

Naima: Zi... you are too young to see everything, even if it is right
before your eyes.

Scene 5

Zina and Jasmine are on a park bench. Jasmine is in her school uniform and Zina is dressed casually with a thick jumper.

Jasmine: Are you that cold?

Zina: Aren't you?

Jasmine: Nah this is English summer, just be grateful it's not raining or worse snowing.

Zina: I don't mind the rain, back home it rains for six months in the year.

Jasmine: You're kidding?

Zina: No.

Jasmine: Wow six months, everyone here moans when it rains for just a week. I think the whole country would come to a standstill if it rained for six months, mind you, is it still warm?

Zina: It is always warm.

Jasmine: Hmm see the rain here is icy cold, so it's just miserable, cloudy and cold.

Zina: When the first rains would fall after the dry season, we would all run out and bathe ourselves in the cool water. Ahh, what I would give to feel that cool water trickling down my face, washing away the sticky heat.

Unintentionally she begins to rub the bracelet which turns blue under her jumper. Jasmine freezes and suddenly two other children including Baakir, Naima, Kosey and a younger Zina are running around, jumping in the puddles, laughing and singing.

All: Tank God Tenky

The rains have come,
The bringer of life,
Coconuts and rice
Tank God Tenky
The rains have come,
So sing and shout,
To end the drought.

The children run off stage and Jasmine unfreezes.

Jasmine: That would never happen here, people would think you were crazy if you started running and singing in the rain. Actually there is a film about that, but I think it's American and it's much hotter there.

Zina: [*pauses*] I think I am going crazy.

Jasmine: We're all a bit nutty I guess. Oh, talking of being crazy, my teacher Miss Goodfrey is a nutter. I'm serious it's as though she's two people, there's a word for it but I can't remember it.

Zina: Why is she crazy?

Jasmine: You're asking me? I don't know... all I do know is she has issues, I mean one minute she's all nice and helping me with my English. We had to write a following scene for *Animal Farm*, do you know it?

Zina: No.

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Jasmine: It's basically about a bunch of animals taking charge of a farm or something, its sooo boring. I thought it would be good because I like animals but nooo. Anyways I had no idea what I was gonna write about, so I asked her and she said write about anything and I said well that's the problem, I don't know what to write about because you keep on saying write about anything. But what's anything? I need you to be more specific. Then suddenly she just switched at me, oh got angry, and started yelling at me saying I can't do your work for you, is this how you think you're going to succeed in life? I was like woohoo hold on a minute, who are you to tell me I won't succeed? Well you would have thought I had called her a crazy demented pig because she came up to my face and started screaming at me. I don't even remember what she was saying because I closed my eyes because she was spitting all over me, so I pushed her and...

Zina: [*interrupts*] You pushed your teacher?

Jasmine: Yeah she was getting up in my face literally spitting all over me.

Zina: What did she do?

Jasmine: She ran off and told on me, remember I told you.

Zina: Wait is that why you were suspended?

Jasmine: Yeah.

Zina: I thought you had had a fight with another pupil, not your teacher.

Jasmine: Same thing.

Zina: Schools in England seem strange. If I ever did that to a teacher back home the teacher would beat me and my parents would beat me for being beaten.

Jasmine: Damn sounds harsh.

Zina: You have no idea.

Jasmine: I guess everyone's good out there then?

Zina: Most, but not all. Some just get so used to the beatings that they no longer care, and others place newspaper underneath their trousers so when they get hit on the bottom they cannot feel it.

Jasmine: What jokers.

Zina: Yes they joke a lot.

Two boys walk over. Matt is white and the more assertive of the two. Farad is and likes to be viewed as the joker. He and Jasmine secretly like each other, however, neither are willing to admit it. Both boys are dressed in their school uniforms.

Matt: Hey Jasmine, who's this?

Jasmine: This is Zina.

Matt: You alright?

Zina: Yes thank you.

Farad: Ah what, she's fresh.

Jasmine: Shut up Farad.

Matt: Where you from Zina?

Zina: Sierra Leone.

Matt: Cool.

Zina: Do you know where that is?

Matt: It's in West Africa init?

Zina: Yes.

Matt: Just coz I'm white don't mean I don't know about Africa.

Zina: Sorry.

Matt: Nah it's cool I'm sure my boy Farad didn't know where it was.

Farad: What? Yeah I did she just didn't ask me init.

Matt: So what you girls doing?

Jasmine: We're just relaxing and enjoying the sunshine.

Matt: Aren't you hot in that?

Zina: This is not hot for me.

Matt: Is that so? Alright, so how comes you speak such good English then?

Zina: How comes you don't?

Farad: Boy, she's a feisty one.

Jasmine: No it's just you lot ask stupid questions.

Matt: I like you Zina.

Zina: I'm not sure I like you.

Farad: Oooh.

Jasmine: She told you Matty boy.

Matt: Alright alright, so you gonna answer my question?

Zina: Sierra Leone used to be an English colony so most people can speak English, but I speak very good English because my mama lived here when she was younger, and my papa was the son of a chief and therefore also spoke perfect English.

Matt: Cool.

Zina: Are you going to answer mine?

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Matt: The Queen's English ain't for me, it don't roll off my tongue like slang.

Zina: Slang?

Farad: Aww please tell me you know what slang means?

Jasmine: Farad I'm warning you.

Farad: Chill Jas.

Matt: It means a shorter way of talking, cutting words down or making new ones to say what you mean, like me saying you're buff, it means I think you're pretty.

Zina: Oh.

Jasmine: You don't waste no time do you Matty.

Matt: Come on Jas, I'm not Farad.

Farad: Shut up Matt.

Jasmine: You guys been playing football?

Farad: Yeah there's this new boy and he is sick, I think his name is Ko... what is it Ko...

Zina: *[interrupts]* Kosey.

Matt: You know him.

Zina: He's my brother.

Matt: Really?

Farad: Boy your brother's good. He and Matt are like on the same level and Matt is gonna play pro when he's older, aren't you Matt?

Matt: Yeah hopefully, your brother's got skills he should try join a club.

Zina: We might not be here for that long.

Matt: Oh are you planning on going back?

Zina: Yes. So you want to be a footballer?

Matt: Yeah, what you wanna be, you know when you're older?

Zina: I want to be a politician.

Jasmine: Really?

Zina: Yes.

Farad: Boy that's some serious job right there.

Matt: Why?

Zina: I want to help make my country great, so that one day the English will say I want to go to Sierra Leone.

Farad: Yeah I doubt that.

Jasmine: Farad I swear if you don't shut up...

Farad: *[interrupts]* Arh chill Jas I'm only joking.

Matt: You got big plans, I respect that.

Kosey enters, his nose is bleeding, he has a black eye and he has cuts on his legs, which are causing him to limp.

Zina: Kosey... Kosey is that you?... Oh no what happened?

Kosey: I'm fine, I just need to go home.

Zina: Kosey sit down, you're bleeding.

Kosey eventually allows her to lead him to the bench, he sits next to Jasmine and all of them stare at him expectantly.

Zina: Kosey, what happened?

Kosey: [pauses] These... these stupid boys. I think they... they were only about 13; they took our ball so... so I took it back.

Zina: And this is what they did to you?

Kosey: Them? Please! I could have taken all three of them easily. They went and got these older boys. I think it was one of their brothers and his friends.

Zina: A group of older boys beat you up?... Why would they do that? That's... that's not fair, how could they do that?

Matt: Fights are never fair round here. Was it the Raymond brothers?

Kosey: I don't know, but they said if they see me there again I won't have legs to run with, so they told me I better swim back to the jungle where I came from.

Farad: That defo sounds like the Raymond brothers they love their ultimatum man.

Jasmine: Farad.

Zina: Are they white?

Matt: Nah they are black Jamaicans.

Jasmine: Yeah they give us all a bad name.

Zina: It sounds to me like they are the ones which belong in the jungle, how can they behave like this, ah they fo make me mad oh... sorry.

Matt: It's okay.

Naima: [enters] Zi, Kos there you are! Dinner is almost... Kosey what has happened?

Kosey: It is nothing, I fell over. I am fine let's go home. [*tries to get up, but the rest have to help him get his balance*]

Naima: I am not stupid Kosey, who did this to you?

Kosey: No one. It doesn't matter. Please can we just go?

Naima: Zi who did this?

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Kosey: Zi!

Zina: It was these boys called the Raymond brothers.

Naima: Where are they? I will talk with them.

Matt: Nah I wouldn't advise that. These boys they don't chat, they do.

Naima: What?

Kosey: Nai things are different here. You can't just complain to their parents, they... they will hurt you.

Naima: [*pauses*] Come, we must get you home before you bleed to death, come Zina let us go.

Zina: Bye.

All: Bye.

Naima and Kosey exit, Zina starts to exit with them.

Matt: Zina!

Zina: [*re-enters*] Yes?

Matt: So what, can I have your number?

Zina: Erm I don't have a phone.

Farad: What? oh my gosh Jas where did you find this girl?

Jasmine: Shut up Farad.

Matt: Oh okay well you gonna play out tomorrow?

Zina: Probably.

Jasmine: Yes relax Matty you'll see her again.

Matt: Cool, so can I get a hug goodbye?

Zina: Erm okay.

Farad: What no hug for me nah?

Jasmine: Don't hug him, he's a fool.

Farad: Arh Jas you know you love me.

Jasmine: Oh please.

Zina: Bye.

Matt and Farad: Bye. [*both exit*]

Jasmine: Hey I'm gonna come with you. Bad what happened to your brother? But raa Zina, Matt was on to you.

Zina: On to me?

Jasmine: He liked you... a lot.

Zina: Really?

Jasmine: Oh please don't play the innocent little African girl with me, you know what I mean.

Zina: Are you and Farad going out?

Jasmine: What? Are you mad?

Zina: Oh please don't play the innocent little Caribbean girl with me.

Both girls laugh and exit.

Scene 6

It is night time. Zina is in bed. Naima enters and turns off the main light leaving a side light on by the sofa.

Zina: Do you think it's weird that no one talks about Mama, Papa or Baakir?

Naima: I don't talk about them, but I do think about them.

Zina: I want to talk about them.

Naima: Zi I am tired.

Zina: We should pray.

Naima: God can't hear us.

Zina: What do you mean?

Naima: *[pauses]* I don't believe anymore.

Zina: What? Why?

Naima: Zi look around, we are in a foreign country whilst our parents and older brother are stuck at home in a civil war. We have no control over our lives and I can't believe that by praying everything will sort itself out.

Zina: We are safe and alive, is that not the work of God?

Naima: We are safe because our parents sent us here.

Zina: Mama and Papa would not be happy to hear you speak like this.

Naima: Zi I have lost my faith, it was not by choice it just happened. I am not saying you must lose yours but I cannot pray for something I don't believe in. Oh I wish I could still believe. When you believe everything seems... so much safer.

Zina: *[climbs out of bed and grabs her bracelet. She begins to rub it and whisper. It turns purple.]* I want to see Mama, Papa and Baakir.

Naima freezes. Their parents are sitting down on a bus. Both look tired and worried, their clothes are dirty and they have one suitcase under their legs. They disappear and Baakir appears, he is sleeping on the ground around an extinguished wood fire. Two other boys are either side of him but only the backs of their bodies are visible. All three boys' clothes are ripped and dirty and they are cradling rifle

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guns in their arms. Zina climbs back into bed and places the bracelet on the bedside table. Naima unfreezes.

Naima: Why did you get up?

Zina: To pray.

Naima: Do you think it worked?

Zina: Yes I think it definitely worked.

Naima: [*pauses*] Zi?

Zina: Yes.

Naima: When you were out I overheard Gran and Aunty talking... they were talking about the war. Gran said that she had heard on the news that President Kabbah has been forced to flee to Guinea, because of a rebellion led by Johnny Paul Koroma and his junior military officers. She also said that Koroma has now become the leader of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and that they have joined with the RUF to rule the country.

Zina: What does the RUF stand for?

Naima: The Revolutionary United Front. Anyway Gran went on to say that the two rebel groups have now joined, and are moving further West to try and take control of Freetown.

Zina: But if they take control of Freetown, they will take control of Lungi.

Naima: Yes.

Zina: But how will Mama, Papa and Baakir escape if they take control of Lungi airport?

Naima: I don't know.

Zina: Why hasn't Gran or Aunty told us this?

Naima: They are trying to protect us. They think that what we don't know can't hurt us. [*pauses*] Zi we might have to get used to England... I have a feeling we will be here for a long time.

Zina: [*pauses*] If you could know, if you could know when the war would end or what would happen to us all in the future, would you want to know?

Naima: I would want to know who would be in charge of our country because unless it is someone trustworthy and honest, another civil war could break out once more. Then it might never be safe to return home. But I don't believe in fortune telling.

Zina: No, no me neither. Night.

Naima: Night.

Naima: [*Zina picks up the bracelet from the side table and begins to rub it and whisper. It glows green.*] I want to see who will be in charge when the war is over.

President Kabbah, president of the Green party SLPP appears giving his speech after winning his second presidency after the civil war has ended in May 2002.

President Kabbah: Six years ago my principal objective was centred on peace – the right of every Sierra Leonean to live in peace and security. I made a pledge to do everything in my power to seek an end to the rebel war and to bring peace to our country. We have already begun to reap the benefits of this transformation.

Scene 7

Zina is watching TV. She is unaware that her pupil has formed into a w shape, however the rest of the iris is the same. There's a knock at the door. It's Jasmine and she is dressed in her school uniform.

Zina: Who is it?

Jasmine: It's me.

Zina: [*Opens the door*] Hi.

Jasmine: Your eyes.

Zina: Pardon?

Jasmine: Your pupil it's... it's in the shape of a... a... W.

Zina: What?

Jasmine: I know right.

Zina: No... what?

Jasmine: Look. [*shows her in the mirror*]

Zina: This is not possible... what?... how?

Jasmine: I know right.

Zina: No Jasmine this can't be... can it?

Jasmine: Well it is... I don't know how... but it is.

Zina: What should I do?

Jasmine: Didn't anyone else see it?

Zina: No, when I woke up the house was empty.

Jasmine: Where is everyone?

Zina: At work and Kosey is resting upstairs. He is still in pain, and I think my Gran went to visit a friend.

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Jasmine: Well I'm sure your Aunty will know what to do; maybe she'll take you to the doctors or something?

Zina: No let us use the internet... it must have something about this... or what you can do to get rid of it...

Jasmine: *[interrupts]* Or what caused it?

Zina: Yes and that.

Jasmine: OK well do you have a computer?

Zina: Yes my Aunty's. I don't know her password.

Jasmine: It's okay we can go on as 'guest'.

Zina: Do you think I am ill?

Jasmine: Look I wouldn't worry yet, let's just see what it says, it's probably nothing. I mean who knows, it probably isn't even permanent.

Zina: Probably?

Jasmine: Well I don't know do I? *[pause]* Has anyone in your family ever had... had this?

Zina: No, not that I know of *[pauses]* actually I do remember someone, I can't, I can't remember who? *[rubs bracelet and it begins to glow orange, Jasmine freezes]* Who was it? *[young Zina is doing her homework while her mother sews an orange dress never making eye contact]*

Young Zina: Mama what are you making?

Mama: A dress for your Aunty in England.

Young Zina: Why?

Mama: Because she has a party to go to.

Young Zina: When?

Mama: Next month it will be Aunty Abena's 40th birthday and she will have a big celebration.

Young Zina: Did Aunty ask you to make her the dress?

Mama: No.

Young Zina: Will it be a surprise?

Mama: Yes.

Young Zina: I don't like surprises.

Mama: Why not?

Young Zina: Because how do you know she will want to wear a dress? She might want to wear a skirt and a top or trousers.

Mama: No she will want to wear a dress.

Young Zina: But how do you know Mama?

Mama: *[smiles and looks up]* I just do.

Young Zina: Mama your eyes!

Mama: [*immediately looks back down*] Stop talking and do your homework.

Young Zina: Bu...

Mama: [*interrupts*] Zina do you want me to tell your father that you were disobeying me?

Mama and young Zina disappear and Jasmine unfreezes.

Jasmine: Right we're on, okay erm let's use google, erm okay w-shaped pupils, oh here we go... Cuttlefish? What's that? Zina you ever heard of cuttlefish? Zina?

Zina: Huh?

Jasmine: Cuttlefish?

Zina: Cuttlefish?

Jasmine: Yeah they're the ones with w-shaped pupils or whatever.

Zina: Yes we have many of them back home.

Jasmine: Oh so do you know much about them then?

Zina: I know they taste good but that is it.

Jasmine: Well it says here that cuttlefish have some of the most evolved eyes, with pupils which are a strange w-shape. They are colour-blind, however they can see the polarization of light, which enables them to see contrasts in the dimmest of lights. What? Okay so they can basically see well in the dark but not different colours, okay. Erm cuttlefish reshape their whole eye to see things in better focus unlike humans who only reshape their eye lenses... can't they ever just write things simply. Erm okay blah blah blah ooh oh also they have internal sensors in their eyes which allow them to view things which are in front or behind them all at the same time. Hmm that's pretty cool. How does anything ever hunt them then?

Zina: So I am turning into a cuttlefish?

Jasmine: Looks like it, but okay apart from the w-shape thing you can still see colours right?

Zina: Yes.

Jasmine: And you can't all of sudden see in the dark?

Zina: No.

Jasmine: And you can't see behind you?

Zina: [*pause*] I...

Jasmine: Zina?

Zina: Yes?

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Jasmine: Well can you all of sudden see behind you?

Zina: No, no I can't.

Jasmine: Okay and what about in front of you?

Zina: No!

Jasmine: What? You can't see me?

Zina: Huh?

Jasmine: Zina can't you see me?

Zina: Yes of course I can.

Jasmine: What? So why did you say? Are you alright?

Zina: Yes I'm... I'm fine. *[pauses]* You better go, my aunty will be home soon and she will go crazy if she knows I have been on her computer.

Jasmine: Oh okay well let me know what she says about your eyes. I'm sure you're not turning into a cuttlefish but still you should check it out with a doctor?

Zina: Yes thank you, I will. Erm you better go though, my aunty will be home soon.

Jasmine: Okay well I'll see myself out, see you tomorrow maybe?

Zina: Yes, maybe.

Jasmine: Oh what should I tell Matt?

Zina: Tell him I am sorry but this is not a good time.

Jasmine exits.

Scene 8

Gran is sitting on the sofa watching TV. When Kosey enters he dumps his rucksack on the dining room table and heads straight for the kitchen.

Kosey: Hey Granny I am so hungry I am going to make myself a sandwich, do you want one? *[exits]*

When Kosey exits to the kitchen his gran quickly goes over to search his bag, but before she can empty it he re-enters and sees her. She hears him return and tries to quickly sit down but he sits in her seat.

Kosey: Oh sorry Granny you want to sit?

Gran: Hmph.

Kosey: Granny what were you looking for?

Gran: You are a palaver boy.

Zina: *[enters the house wearing sunglasses]* Hey Granny.

Gran: Hmph.

Zina: What's wrong?

Gran: Yo fo ask the wrong person, ask him?

Zina: Kosey what have you done?

Kosey: Nothing she's lost it.

Gran: No, me I no lose it, it was stolen from me.

Kosey: What was stolen?

Gran: That £20 note that I had left on the kitchen side and which I had refused to give to you.

Kosey: Come on Granny. I would never steal from you.

Gran: Hmph liar, liar pants on fire, you're a thief!

Zina: Granny!

Gran: Yo fo empty your bag now, maka see what in der.

Kosey: No.

Gran: Ahah see he cannot even deny it... he's a thief, he will take everything I have. Eh if all I had was one coconut tree he would not be satisfied with taking my coconuts, but he would cut down the whooole tree and replant it in his garden.

Kosey: Granny please there are no coconut trees here.

Gran: Ahah you wan fo mock me?

Zina: Granny!

Gran: Empty your bag.

Kosey: I don't need this; I'm going out. *[exits]*

Zina: Kosey wait!

Gran: Why do you chase him? Leave that palaver boy.

Zina: Granny you should not accuse people of things unless you know it is true.

Gran: So you wan fo tell me I don't know?

Zina: Well how do you know?

Gran: Hey pikin me I am old oh but I am not stupid.

Zina: Kosey is many things Granny but he is not a thief.

Gran: Hmph... why are you wearing those, those shades on your eyes? There is no sun in here.

Zina: They are new and, and I like wearing them.

Gran: They are new?

Zina: Yes.

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Gran: And how could you afford these new glasses hmm?

Zina: Erm Aunty gave me the money.

Gran: Ahah are you going to steal from me and then lie to me? Take them off.

Zina: No.

Gran: I want to see your eyes.

Zina: Please Granny.

Gran: Zina show me your eyes.

Scene 9

It's evening. Naima is watching TV on the sofa. Kosey finally staggers in drunk.

Kosey: Why... why you up?

Naima: It's only nine.

Kosey: No... it... it can't be.

Naima: Are you drunk?

Kosey: Are youuu?

Naima: No are you?

Kosey: Yesss!!

Zina: You better go to your room before Granny sees you.

Kosey: I might be be tipsy... but I'm, I'm, not, not a thief.

Naima: What?

Zina enters from the kitchen.

Kosey: Ask her Misses Stevie Wonder... why... why are you wearing sunglasses inside... are you blind?

Zina: Are you drunk?

Naima: Wait, who's a thief?

Kosey: Zi!

Zina: I...

Kosey: [*interrupts*] She must have stolen Granny's money and then, and then she stood there like, like pounded yam mute and let me take the blame.

Naima: Zina?

Zina: He's lying.

Kosey: No, no, no you, you are the liar, liar, liar hot pepper and fire.

Naima: You mean pants on fire.

Kosey: Yes I know.

Zina: Granny knows the truth.

Kosey: Ahh she knows, so where is my apology huh oh Granny! Granny!

Naima: Leave her. She is on the phone to Aunty Abena and she said we must not disturb her.

Kosey: So I can't call her name hmm Granny! Granny!

Naima: I told you to shut up.

Kosey: And who died and made you chief! Granny! Granny!

Naima goes over to Kosey and tries to cover his mouth and they begin to fight, Zina tries to intervene but is pushed away. Gran enters and sprays them.

Naima: [coughing] Granny... what... what... is... that?

Gran: It's my verruca spray.

Naima: Errr it's in my mouth.

Kosey: Do I look like a verruca to you?

Gran: Do you want me to answer? Hey I will answer if you want me to answer, hmm foolish boy, am I verruca? If only you were that easy to get rid of. So waiting you fo tell me hmm that maka shout me name so, are we in the jungle that we must shout?

Zina: Granny it was Kosey, he...

Kosey: [interrupts] Ah you like to tell tales...

Gran: [interrupts] So you are the baboon?

Kosey: Yes I am the baboon. [he imitates being a baboon]

Zina: Kosey get off me.

Gran: Ah Jesus, Mary, Joseph is this pikin okay?

Naima: He's drunk.

Kosey: Arhh my sisters you, you, you can't keep a secret.

Gran: You call this a secret? You pollute your body and then run around like some crazed baboon and you blame your sisters? Ah ah what would your mama and papa say?

Kosey: Granny I don't know because they are not here.

Gran: Ah so the baboon in you knows that much, who gave you the drink hmm? Was it that confused friend of yours? Hmm I knew that boy would be trouble with a crazy mama like that!

Kosey: What do you mean?

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Gran: You know I saw his mama and her little pikin the other day, and the pikin's hair was so dry and tough, no grease to be seen. I had to say something. So I went over and I said my dear you should use pink and lovely on your daughter's hair because there is nothing lovely about that.

Kosey: You said that? Ah no wonder his mama was cold with me today.

Gran: Aha so it was him?

Kosey: Yes and so?

Gran: Boy you are only 16. You cannot drink until you are 18.

Kosey: He said we can with supervision.

Gran: And what fool supervised you?

Kosey: His brother who's 19.

Gran: Ahh this woman she fo plop out soo many foolish pikin.

Kosey: Granny her children are not foolish, they are... are they, are not, not foolish.

Gran: And this is coming from baboon boy ah I say no more I am tired oh. All of you go upstairs, ah not you Zina I want to talk to you. And you Mr Baboon if me ever catch you like this again heeeeeeey you will not live fo see the sun rise again, me no joke.

Naima and Kosey exit

Gran: Do you have it on you?

Zina: Yes. [*takes out the bracelet*]

Gran: Your mama had promised me that she had destroyed it... can I see it?... ah who knew something so beautiful could be so dangerous.

Zina: Is this why my eyes are like this?

Gran: Have you looked into the past or the future? Zina I can only help you if you are honest with me.

Zina: [*pauses*] Yes.

Gran: Did your mama not tell you of the consequences.

Zina: She... she did not have time.

Gran: Are your eyes the only weird thing that has happened?

Zina: Yes.

Gran: You are very lucky... I don't want you to use it again.

Zina: But how will I know if Mama, Papa and Baakir are okay?

Gran: You must trust God to be with them.

Zina: But...

Gran: *[interrupts]* Zina this bracelet can be very dangerous.

Zina: But what about my eyes?

Gran: It is only a warning. Your eyes will return to normal tomorrow. But we will not ignore it like your mama did. We will destroy it tomorrow.

Zina: Granny who gave this bracelet to Mama?

Gran: She never told me, but Zina you will see your mama again and when you do you can ask her.

Scene 10

It's the following evening and everyone is in the living room. Zina is sitting on the floor, Naima is doing her hair and Kosey is watching football. Their aunty enters.

Zina: Granny?

Aunty: No it's me.

Zina: Where's Granny?

Aunty: She went to visit your Aunty Abena. Children, I have tried my best to protect you from what is going on back home, but I have to tell you that the war is getting worse. The two rebel parties have joined together and are taking control of Freetown. Your mama called me today and said that your papa has become very ill, and she is not sure how much longer they can safely search for Baakir... and that they might have to flee to the bushes to be safe from the rebels until they have lost control.

Naima: Why is it not on the news?

Aunty: When a civil war lasts as long as ours has the media stops covering it. I only know because I check online and speak to other Sierra Leoneans.

Zina: They can't just abandon him.

Aunty: Zina that is the last thing they want to do.

Zina: But that's what they're going to do.

Aunty: Zina, many young rebel soldiers have... have...

Zina: *[interrupts]* He's alive.

Aunty: Your mama and papa have you three to think about as well.

Zina: He's alive! *[Zina exits]*

Naima: Zina!

Zina: *[enters]* Where is it?

Aunty: Where's what?

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Zina: When is Granny coming back?

Aunty: I'm not sure, Zina what's the problem?

Zina: My bracelet, Granny has it.

Naima: No, I have it.

Zina: What... why?

Naima: I overheard you and Granny saying you were going to destroy it last night, so when she left this morning I took it.

Zina: Give it to me.

Naima: No I won't let you destroy Mama's favourite bracelet.

Zina: You have no idea what you are talking about, give it to me.

Naima: Zina I am not your equal. Don't talk to me like that.

Aunty: Now girls.

Zina: Naima I am warning you.

Naima: Mama should have given it to me in the first place.

Zina: Arh just give it to me.

Zina spots the bracelet on Naima's wrist and tries to grab it off. They begin to fight and their aunty tries to intervene. Suddenly the bracelet snaps and the beads roll all over the floor.

Zina: Look what you've done! [*scrambles around trying to pick up all the beads*]

Naima: Me! It was you who attacked me, what is wrong with you?

Zina: Now I will never know, now I will never know!

Kosey: I think she's lost it.

All: Shut up Kosey.

Zina: [*she finally gathers all the beads in her hands*] Just leave me alone all of you, just go away!

Aunty: Come on you two. Let's just give her some space.

Kosey: Oh so when I go a bit crazy I get threatened, but when she loses it we all just give her some space, huh the youngest get it so easy.

Naima: Shut up Kosey.

Aunty: Kosey I chose to forget your drunken incident and vomiting on my carpet, so I wouldn't talk about leniency if I was you.

All exit.

Zina: [*she begins to whisper and rub all the beads together*] Please, please work, I need to see my parents and Baakir just once more. *Nothing happens and Zina kneels down with her back to the audience and begins to pray, with her hands leaning on the sofa.*

She suddenly opens her eyes in shock; the bracelet is whole once more and is glowing red. She jumps up, quickly turns around and begins to rub it in her hands and whisper.

Zina: Please, please let me see Mama, Papa and Baakir.

Her parents are sitting on a rock. They and two other people whose backs only are visible are huddled around a wood fire. Papa keeps coughing. All their clothes are tattered and dirty and they seem on edge as though they are waiting for someone. They all disappear. Baakir appears in his tattered clothes. He is holding his rifle gun straight at Zina.

Commander's voice: [offstage] You may choose to lie with him or be shot by him?

Young girl's voice: [offstage] [weeping] Please, please!

Commander's voice: [offstage] Choose.

Young girl's voice: [offstage] Please!

Commander's voice: [offstage] Shoot boy.

Young girl's voice: [offstage] Please, please don't!

Commander's voice: [offstage] Shoot now!

Young girl's voice: [offstage] Please...

Zina: Baakir don't, don't do...

Baakir shoots three times, Zina covers her ears and stands horrified as Baakir disappears.

Scene 11

Zina is sitting on the sofa staring into space. There's a crash from the kitchen and then a few seconds later young Zina enters from the kitchen off stage.

Zina: Who's that?

Young Zina: Hi.

Zina: You can see me?

Young Zina: Yes, can't you see me?

Zina: Yes... but. [squeezes young Zina's arm]

Young Zina: Ouch.

Zina: I can feel you.

A CONCRETE JUNGLE FULL OF WILD CARS

Young Zina: Yes... where are we? Hello... hello are you okay? You look ill. My mama always gives me hot soup when I am not well, do you have any?

Naima: *[offstage]* Zi have you seen my name badge?

Zina: *[grabs young Zina and hides her]* No!

Naima: *[enters]* I'm sure I took it off my top before I put it in the wash... are you okay?

Zina: Me... yes, yes I'm fine.

Young Zina: *[comes out of hiding]* Why did you do that?

Naima: Arhh who's this?

Young Zina: Naima... how did you get here?

Naima: Excuse me?

Zina: Er this this is... erm Jasmine's friend.

Naima: She's a bit young.

Young Zina: Who's Jasmine?

Zina: She's kidding. She's so funny.

Naima: Erm okay, wow Zina she looks exactly like you when you were about... 10.

Young Zina: I am 10, silly.

Naima: What?

Zina: Anyways you better get going, you're gonna be late remember.

Naima: Arh yes, they can just ask me my name when I do their hair. I just hope Marlene doesn't moan at me.

Zina: Okay then bye.

Young Zina: Bye Nai.

Naima: How do you...

Zina: *[interrupts]* She heard me say it.

Naima: Oh... Okay and Zi I'm sorry about yesterday.

Zina: It's fine see you later.

Naima: Well okay, bye you two. *[exits]*

Zina: Okay you need to go now!

Young Zina: Go where?

Zina: Back... you can't stay here.

Young Zina: I've seen pictures of this place... is it, is it my aunty's house?

Zina: Look I don't know what's going on but you have to leave... now!

Young Zina: Why? Nai's here, I know I'm younger but I won't be any trouble I promise, oh I can't wait to tell Mama that I came to Aunty's house.

Zina: How did you get here?

Young Zina: I don't know... I was doing my homework and then here I was... it's a miracle... I prayed that one day I could come to England... I never thought it would come true.

Kosey: [*enters yawning*] Morning Zina, morning little Zina... wait, what the hell?

Young Zina: Kosey you are also here? How did you get here? I think God answered my prayers and brought us all to England... isn't it wonderful?

Kosey: Am I still drunk?

Zina: Yes... yes you are, I think you should go and lie down... I'll bring you some water and breakfast. [*pushes him out of the room*]

Kosey: Okay... Okay. [*exits*]

Zina: Stop doing that.

Young Zina: Doing what?

Zina: Talking to them. Look just go in to the kitchen a minute and don't come out until I tell you to.

Young Zina: Why does everyone keep calling you Zina?

Zina: Because it's my name.

Young Zina: Mine too.

Zina: Please just go to the kitchen.

Young Zina: Okay Zina. [*exits*]

Zina: This can't be happening... what am I going to do... think Zina think, Okay I'll just hide her in my room, arh I don't have a room. Okay I'll hide her in Granny's room until she gets back, yes Granny will know what to do.

Loud bang from the kitchen.

Zina: Zina I told you to...

President Kabbah enters.

Zina: Oh sweet potatoes.

President Kabbah: Hello.

Zina: Hi.

President Kabbah: May I ask where I am?

Zina: Erm you are in my Aunty's house in England.

A CONCRETE JUNGLE FULL OF WILD CARS

President Kabbah: Hmmm. Am I dreaming? Or is this a joke?

Zina: Oh I wish it was, I'm so sorry Mr... Mr President.

President Kabbah: What is your name?

Zina: Zina.

President Kabbah: Ah you are a secret gift.

Zina: Yes.

President Kabbah: Well Zina I am about to make a very important speech to my fellow Sierra Leoneans and...

Zina: [*interrupts*] Do you really think there will be peace in our country now? Will people like me be able to return to Sierra Leone and live in peace with no fear of another civil war?

President Kabbah: Ah you are a smart lady. Zina I will give you my very own secret gift today, and tell you that I will ensure the right of every Sierra Leonean to live in peace and security. But I must leave now so whoever told you to trick me, tell them that this is not the time and that I must return now.

Zina: I... I don't...

Kosey: [*enters*] Zina can you make me cooked breakfast I... who's this?

Zina: Erm Kosey this is...

President Kabbah: [*interrupts*] I am the president of Sierra Leone young man, who are you?

Kosey: Yeah sure erm I'm the Queen of England.

President Kabbah: Excuse me?

Zina: Kosey.

Kosey: Look erm president man my aunty and gran aren't here, but if you tell me your name I can tell them you stopped by. Zina you shouldn't just open the door to anyone it's dangerous.

President Kabbah: Young man I do not know who put you up to this but I am not laughing, so show me how to go back. I have a very important speech which I must make and I cannot be late.

Kosey: Look I am sorry but I don't know what you are talking about, but I hope you have enough time to make it to your presidential speech.

Zina: Kosey.

Kosey: Zina do you want me to tell Aunty that you just opened the door to a complete stranger?

President Kabbah: I did not come in that way I came from the kitchen.

Kosey: What? How could you come in through the kitchen, look it's time you left.

President Kabbah: Look boy I am not playing with you, I said tell me how to get back.

Kosey: Here's the door, now you can go.

Zina: Kosey, please just give me a minute.

Kosey: What?

Zina: Kosey please?... Erm Mr President I am so sorry about my brother, I think if you go back into the kitchen then you might be able to go back. Just try it please.

President Kabbah exits and then re-enters with young Zina.

President Kabbah: Young lady do you think this is funny?

Zina: Oh not you as well.

Young Zina: Zina... Zina it was so weird, one minute I was here then the next I was back home, Mama was so angry that I had just disappeared and she was just about to beat me and then here I was, in Aunt's kitchen again. Who's this? [*points at President Kabbah*] Kosey you are still here, isn't this fun?

Kosey: Right this is weird, look president man you need to leave now!

President Kabbah: Fine I will find my own way back but you are coming with me.

Takes Kosey by the shoulders and leads him out, both exit. Zina exits after them, and young Zina exits into the kitchen.

Zina [*offstage*] President Kabbah! Kosey! President! Kosey!

Zina: [*enters*] They've gone... oh what have I done. Zina! Zina! She's gone...

Gran: [*enters*] Hello Zina... what's wrong?

Zina: Kosey... Kosey he's gone.

Gran: Gone where?

Zina: Me from the past and, and President Kabbah came to the house today. I didn't know what to do and then Kosey told the president to leave and then the president took Kosey with him and, and I tried to follow them, but they were gone, and Kosey could be anywhere and I don't, I don't know what to do.

Gran: Calm down, did you use the bracelet again?

Zina: I had to.

Gran: Oh Zina. Do you have it on you?

Zina: Yes. Granny where were you?

A CONCRETE JUNGLE FULL OF WILD CARS

Gran: I went to visit your aunty Abena. She is the one that your mother confided in. She knows how to destroy the bracelet.

Zina: Me and Naima were fighting yesterday and it broke. I was sure we had destroyed it but then it was whole again.

Gran: If it could be broken by just snapping it, ah my pikin I would have done that the moment you told me you had it.

Zina: But if we break it now, how will Kosey come back?

Gran: Kosey will now have been transported to the present of the last vision you had, remember you can't tell me what it was, but do you remember the last vision you had?

Zina: Yes I remember. Will the people in my vision be able to see Kosey?

Gran: Yes, just as you were able to see your younger self and the president.

Zina: Will Kosey be able to see me?

Gran: Me I don't know, but before the vision ends you must touch him, so that he can return with you.

Zina: What if he won't come?

Gran: Zina if he does not return we may never see him again. Now to destroy the bracelet you must leave it in your vision.

Zina: You mean just let go of it.

Gran: Yes.

Zina: [*begins to rub the bracelet and whisper. The bracelet begins to glow purple*] I want to see Baakir.

Baakir is sitting in the corner in his tattered clothes, next to him is Kosey.

Commander's voice: [*offstage*] Who is this pikin?

Baakir: Me I found him sir on the roadside, he wan fo join.

Commander's voice: [*offstage*] Does he now, so you want fo tell me why?

Baakir: He heard of what we were fighting for and he wanted to help us.

Commander's voice: [*offstage*] Good, good, teach him of our ways, and remind him we do not have time for pikin here.

Baakir: Yes sir.

Kosey: Thank you brother.

Baakir: You shouldn't have come.

Kosey: I... [*he turns and sees Zina*] Zina!

Baakir: What? Where?

Kosey: There. [*points at Zina*]

Baakir: Brother have you lost your mind? Shush you must not draw any more attention to yourself.

Kosey gets up and walks towards Zina who remains silent. As he reaches out to touch her they both become invisible to Baakir, and Zina puts her hands on him.

Baakir: Kosey! Kosey!

Kosey: I'm here brother.

Zina: He can't see you, please Kosey just stay still, you have to trust me.

Baakir: Kosey!

Kosey: But...

Zina: [*interrupts*] Kosey please.

Baakir: Have I gone mad? [*pauses*]

If I choose not to see,
What threatens my sight,
If I cover my ears,
To block out the fright,
Then God as my witness,
I can imagine that all is right.

Suddenly there are two loud gunshots then silence. Baakir jumps up with his gun in his shaking hands. He stands facing the door in fear. His parents walk in. His mama gasps and goes forward, his papa stops her. Baakir is still holding the gun at them in shock.

Papa: Baakir my eldest, it is us.

He slowly walks towards Baakir and takes the gun from his shaking hands, his mama rushes forward and they both embrace their son. Zina and Kosey watch in silence. She suddenly remembers and lets go of the bracelet, and only Zina sees as the beads all break and fall to the floor. Then suddenly their parents and Baakir disappear, and they are once again in the living room alone.

Zina: Granny! Granny! They found him, they found him!

Scene 12

All three siblings are seated; they are travelling back to Sierra Leone. Kosey and Naima are asleep either side of Zina. They are all six years older.

A CONCRETE JUNGLE FULL OF WILD CARS

Zina: Dear diary, it is the 24th April 2004 and it has been nearly two years since my country was in a civil war. I am finally on my way back home to see my mama, papa and Baakir, and I can finally ask my mama who gave her the magical bracelet. I am going to miss Jasmine and Matt, I said that I will write to them both. I am full of so many emotions that I can't think of one to describe how I feel right now. Sometimes I forgot what was happening back home. Once you escape it's so hard to imagine what is happening. I feel that when I return my people will look at me differently because I was not there, I don't know and I can never fully understand. My mama called England a concrete jungle full of wild cars, and only now do I understand her meaning. But there's one thing she did not understand, and that was wherever you are you always see parts of home. The wild cars become the wild deers, the large leafy trees become the tall, tall palm trees, the cobbled streets the dusty road, and the people, the people become your brothers and sisters, so I was always home.

THE END