WOMEN ON OUR STAGE
SOME GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT PLAYS
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Elizabeth Nyager
AUTHOR'S NOTE

This collection of plays spans a number of years but the plays have one thing in common. They reflect the author’s concern on women issues. The women on our stage come from various socio-economic backgrounds but have common needs and share common challenges. The aim of the plays among others is to raise issues and awareness about these needs and challenges that face women daily in our society.

These plays have all been variously produced. The first, “Amina and Yelwa” came out of consultancy work done for USAID while the second play was written and produced for INTER-GENDER, Jos. Both deal with reproductive health issues for women. The last two were academic projects that were produced at the University of Jos Open-air theatre in year 2000.
ACT I
SCENE 1

AUDU'S HOUSE

BARMANI: (Shuttling between the kitchen and the yard). The fire has gone out again. Where have the children gone to? They would have helped me. See, I have the corn to sieve and firewood to hew. The work is too much for me. (Sounding frustrated).

AUDU: (Comes back from the farm holding a hoe). A' a Barmani!

BARMANI: Mallam, you are back? Welcome. How is the farm?

AUDU: God, the sun is really hot. (Sitting on a mat) The farm?

BARMANI: Here is water to drink. (Gives him water in a calabash).

AUDU: (Audu drinks water, smacking his tongue in satisfaction). Barmai, if you see the farm, it is very green. If the rains continue like this, by the grace of God we shall not buy food stuff this year.

BARMANI: True! We thank God!

AUDU: (Audu reclines on the mat in a more comfortable position). AAI! Barmani, as I was working on the farm it occurred to me that as soon as I come back home I would
Somebody that has people around him is richer than the rich. For God's sake, see how people were showering praises on her. So humble and obedient. Nobody has ever reported her to us for any offense.

BARMANI: That is it. It is true.

AUDU: People always point her out as an example. They say that even if you put a finger in her mouth she will not bite it.

BARMANI: If only you heard how people were praising Amina at the venue of the ceremony! It was too much!

YALWA: *(As they converse, Yalwa comes in rudely)* Hello, father!

BARMANI: Yalwa!

YALWA: Yes, mother.

BARMANI: Where are you coming from?

YALWA: I was playing in front of Mallam Ali's house.

AUDU: You are telling lies. *(Shouting)* Useless girl! Just now I passed in front of Mallam Ali and saw small children singing "Bata Bata", and now you are telling me you were in Mallam Ali's house. Mischievous idiot. Always wandering at late hours and telling lies wherever you go.

YALWA: *(Rudely)*. What kind of wandering do I do? In fact, I...

AUDU: Get away from here, you liar! Honestly, Yalwa we are tired of you in this house!

Yalwa, don't you dare bring us shame in this house! This house is not known for indiscipline. Honestly, don't I say don't Yalwa! I will not tolerate it, honestly.

YALWA: Father, all I want now is to marry.

AUDU: Marry?

BARMANI: Marr... What?

AUDU: You this little brat! With your breasts just beginning to develop, you say you want to marry? Do you know the dangers and hazards associated with marrying at a tender age?

YALWA: *(Persisting rudely)*. But all my age-mates are married including Amina!

BARMANI: *(Expressing shock)*. Is Amina your age-mate?

AUDU: *(Cutting in gently)*. There is a gap of five years between you and Amina. If it were not for death, there is Maryamu between you and Amina. No one is going to let you marry now. You will not be given out in marriage, you mischievous fool. *(Turning to Barmani)*. This girl! As for this girl. *(Wagging a finger for emphasis)*. I don't know what I will do with her. Are you listening? I do not know what I will do with her.

YALWA: *(Still rudely)*. As far as I am concerned. I must be given out in marriage. Even if you
YALWA: Yes. He even beat my mother, not to talk of me. He said I am still young and all sorts of other things.

BUBA: But truly, they must still be ignorant. They don't know what is happening in the world.

YALWA: I told them that I am going to my husband's but they said that they won't allow me to get married. I then told them that I was moving out of their house for good. As for me I am getting married.

BUBA: But truly they are not supposed to do that, you have outgrown that and they should not stop your getting married by beating you. You should not be treated like that.

YALWA: Right! You see what I am saying? You cannot beat a person and stop him from crying. It is impossible!

BUBA: They are sadists and mischief-makers. Is that what to do with one's own children.

YALWA: As for me I have told them. Since I have someone that I love and he also loves me - 'shikena'!

BUBA: That is really true.

Suddenly Yalwa shifts and tries to hide her face.

Mallam Nakuka, a friend and neighbour to Yalwa's parents appears and listens to Buba and Yalwa in wrapped attention as he passes. Yalwa whispers to Buba. Buba and Yalwa stop the discussion as Mallam Nakuka passes on. Buba and Yalwa resume their discussion.

YALWA: He is really a mischievous man.

BUBA: (Pointing at Nakuka's direction). You old man, everyday that we come here you must follow this way.

YALWA: He is my father's friend and neighbour. He is the man that strongly supports my parent against our marriage.

BUBA: O.K. He should be very careful. Any day that he follows us here again I will grab him and deal with him.

YALWA: He is the one that usually tells my father that he should not allow me to marry and that I am a small girl.

BUBA: Why is he bothering himself with us? What is his concern with our ways and personal lives?

MALLAM NAKUKA: (Coming back). Yalwa! Is that not Yalwa? What are you doing here? What are you doing here at this time - this late in the night.

BUBA: 'Sanu' Baba. Greetings!

MALLAM NAKUKA: Who is your father? Why don't you go look for your father?

YALWA: (To Nakuka). I was sent on an errand.
MALLAM NAKUKA: Who sent you? You are telling lies. You difficult girl. So, what people are saying about you is really true?

BUBA: She is going on an errand, father.

MALLAM NAKUKA: You shut up! Who addressed you? 
(Turning to Yalwa). Let me tell you now that as from today, if I dare catch you outside again I will tie you even in front of your father and beat you thoroughly.

BUBA: Pardon, father.

MALLAM NAKUKA: You shut up there I say. Who is your father? Go away from here. (Shouting). I say go away from here. If you knew that I was your father you would not look at me from head to toe, the way you are doing. 
(To Yalwa). Start going home.

Yalwa pretends to leave, Mallam Nakuka also leaves while Buba is left alone on the roadside. But Yalwa discreetly walks back and meets with Buba. Buba and Yalwa continue their discussion. Buba peeps to see if Mallam Nakuka is really gone and bites his finger in disgust.

YALWA: (To Buba) For God's sake don't mind the mischievous old man.

BUBA: Truly, he is lucky. If I had not been level headed, I would have hooked him here. 
(Demonstrating).

YALWA: Leave him alone. Did you hear him say that we are roaming about in the night and chatting? What brought him out at this time too?

BUBA: If I hadn't taken care to be calm, I would have dealt with him and everybody would have heard about us. He even said e-e-e-h (mimicking him). "I don't want to see you out again..." While his children are scattered all over town too.

YALWA: Don't mind him. Will they beat us and stop us from crying too?

BUBA: Enemies of progress!

YALWA: (Changing gear). There is something that I want to ask you?

BUBA: (With full attention). Yes?

YALWA: (Emotionally). Do you really love me? Enough to marry me?

BUBA: Do you take my attentions and frequent visits for a joke?

YALWA: All right then. Since you have agreed and promised, I will just go and pack my stuff so that we can leave this town. Since there is no peace in the house for me and the world isn't leaving us alone, won't we go and rest somewhere and forget about these little gossips.

BUBA: (Happily). That is it! That is what I really want. Let's go!

They leave hand in hand. Lights out!
midwife. They will advise you on what to do. (Yalwa ignores TBA and is about to fetch grains in a big calabash, but the TBA makes to stop her from carrying the heavy calabash). Haba Yalwa! You see, this kind of heavy load you are carrying is not good for your situation. A pregnant woman is not supposed to be doing such chores. She should have good rest.

YALWA: See this woman! Tell me if I don't perform such chores, who will do them for me?

TBA: Your children of course. They should be helping you.

YALWA: And who will be hawking for them?

TBA: It is not proper for children to hawk. If they come back from school, they should help you do most of these chores. Let me see your eyes. (Approaches Yalwa). There is evidence of paleness. They are pale which is not supposed to be with a pregnant woman. Now, the advice I am giving you is this, you try and go to the hospital with your swollen feet and your paleness or else this will result into anaemia. Your swollen legs could also lead to convulsions when you come to deliver.

YALWA: But I've already said I will not go to hospital. (Goes to fetch the grain again and the TBA intercepts her).

TBA: Haba Yalwa, we cannot be happy seeing you perform such heavy chores. What I want you to do now is to try and go to the hospital to see the doctor...

YALWA: (Interrupting). You! Don't keep disturbing me with this going to hospital. If you are here to collect your money for the wrapper, say so. But don't bother me about going to hospital.

TBA: Pardon me, Yalwa. Your health is our concern. (She makes to go but on a second thought, stops and advises Yalwa for the last time). Yalwa please think twice about my advice and see a doctor in the hospital. Do you hear? Till next time. (Yalwa does not answer and as TBA goes out, Yalwa stands still brooding over her last words).

**LIGHTS OUT**
SCENE II: ON THE STREETS

Same T.B.A. as she leaves Yalwa's residence sees another woman passing by.

TBA: (To herself but loudly). That looks like Balkisu. (To Balkisu, calling out). Balkisu!

BALKISU: 'Na'am! Hello.

TBA: How is it? Are you not well?


TBA: That is a pity.

BALKISU: (Narrating). Last night, since last night, my head has been aching. I was just praying to God that the day should break so that I would rush and go to the hospital.

TBA: Yes, that is good. You see, I am just coming out of Yalwa's house. If you see Yalwa's feet! They are swollen and heavy. I tried to persuade her to go to hospital, but she refused. She said that she has always delivered at home, that all her five children were delivered at home.

BALKISU: (Eagerly). Then wait let me tell you. (In a narrating tone). In the hospital they usually tell us that immediately one's legs are swollen, it is a bad sign to a pregnant woman.

TBA: Yes. It is really like that.

BALKISU: Wait let me tell you, when we went for ante-natal test last week; are you listening?

They brought a woman with an advanced pregnancy who had never been to the hospital for ante-natal check up not even once!

TBA: (Listening attentively). Not even once!

BALKISU: She never went to the hospital once not to talk of tests. She went and drank a traditional concoction that is said to be medicine against sweet things.

TBA: With the pregnancy!

BALKISU: She continued bleeding and bleeding. They bundled that woman and brought her to the hospital. Hmm! With God's help that woman narrowly escaped death.

TBA: So you can now see. If she were coming to the hospital for tests, how would that have happened?

BALKISU: Yes. It would have been really easy.

TBA: 'Walahi' It would have been easy! (Pause). But do you know how many times she had delivered? How many children she had before?

BALKISU: Wait let me think... I think this was her ninth?

TBA: Her ninth? Even if it were a sack into which you pour grains, for nine years it would be tired and old not to talk of a human being's body. Her womb must have tired.
BALKISU: That is it. *(Pause)*. After her, *(continuing the narration)*, another woman too...

TBA: *(Cutting in).* Was brought?

BALKISU: Yes. She too did not like going to the hospital not to talk of doing tests.

TBA: She too?

BALKISU: Yes, I am telling you. She wanted to get up but pain! Pain!! Serious labour!!! That woman even got tired with labour at home but they were at a loss what to do with her. They were not able to bring out that baby.

TBA: How would they be able to. Is it their work! Do they have any training?

BALKISU: Truly. They bundled that woman too and brought her to the hospital. But... *(emotionally)* before the woman could see a doctor she died!

TBA: Heaven! *(Pause)*. May-be before they brought her from their village to the hospital, she gave up on the way. But still, if she were coming for ante-natal clinic in the hospital things would have been much easier.

BALKISU: Yes. Much easier.

TBA: But do you know her age? How old was she?

BALKISU: Hmm! I looked at the woman carefully and I concluded that she was a young girl. I think that should have been her first pregnancy.

TBA: Maybe she was not more than fifteen or thirteen years old.

BALKISU: *(Imagining).* Hmm... May be.

TBA: But if she were coming to the hospital, the doctor would test her and know if she would be able to give birth on her own successfully or not. And if she used to come for ante-natal care, he would tell her to move close to the hospital about the time of her delivery, so that when she starts labour she would be rushed to the hospital.

BALKISU: *(Sadly).* That’s true. *(Pause)*. Let me rush and go to the hospital. Good morning!

SCENE III:
Health Centre – an antenatal clinic. Posters on walls etc., indicate this. A line of women sits on benches, waiting their turns to be examined. In their midst is a health worker – a nurse.

NURSE: Good morning to you all, women! How are your husbands and children? (Pause). I will now share out your cards to you. (Nurse calls names, every patient that is present answers ‘Na’am’). Mary; Amina; (Silence). Has Amina not arrived yet? Binta, Balkisu, Kande. (They all receive their cards, then pointing to Yalwa Buba). And you, what is your name?

YALWA: Yalwa Buba.

NURSE: Are you a new comer? O.K. let me write a card for you. (Writes a card and gives to Yalwa looking closely at her). It appears you have a problem. After I have discharged others I will take you to the doctor. (Then addressing the other women). Who remembers what we did last week?

KANDE: (Rises her hand). We were told that we should not drink the medicine that is not given to us by a medical doctor. And that we should always be neat.

NURSE: That is good. Who will explain more to us?

MARY: They said that we should eat eggs, vegetables, meat, oranges, carrots and other things.

NURSE: Good.

BALKISU: (Rises her hand; she has a question). You said we should eat meat, eggs, vegetables and similar things. Are they supposed to form our daily meals but nothing else?

NURSE: No. They are not supposed to be your only and daily food, because if we say they should become your daily food it is not all of you that would afford it. Let me show you a picture of the things that you are supposed to eat. Can you see these pictures? Chicken, fish, groundnut and the liver. Their benefits are all the same. Secondly, the foods that give us strength are Yam, Bread, Rice, Maize and the like. Their uses are all the same in the body. Thirdly, the foods that protect the body from diseases are: Banana, Mango, Pineapple, Orange, and the like. Their uses are all the same in the body. Even if you cannot get them all you should try and get at least one from each group and eat once everyday. These things build our bodies and our bodies become healthy. The child that is in the stomach will have enough
health too. If you follow these instructions faithfully, anytime that you start labour things will be easy and less problematic for you by the grace of God. Remember also, it is not good for a pregnant woman to either work too much or walk long distance, or carry a heavy load. A pregnant woman should always have enough rest. Always observe your personal hygiene. When you finish eating always wash the dishes you used very well. You should also always wash your children very well. Do you all understand?

ALL WOMEN: Yes.

NURSE: Who will give us a song to sing like we usually do?

BALKISU: *(Raises her hand and stands up with a song while others follow with the chorus).*

Child, a child is sweet 2x
I should buy eggs and give my child
I should buy oranges and give my child
*(Song goes on for some time).*

NURSE: *(To Balkisu).* O.K. Now, lets examine you individually. I will start with you that gave us the song. What is your problem?

BALKISU: I don't have a problem.

NURSE: Have you taken the drugs that we gave you?

BALKISU: Yes. I usually take them.

NURSE: Do you still have some left?

BALKISU: Yes. I still have some.

NURSE: Alright, that is good. So you can come back after two weeks. *(Turns to Mary).* What is your problem?

MARY: My drugs have finished.

NURSE: *(Gives her some wrapped medicine).* Take this and come back after two weeks. *(To Kande).* What is your problem?

KANDE: I don't have a problem.

NURSE: Do you usually take the medicine that I give you?

KANDE: Yes.

NURSE: Has it finished or there is still some?

KANDE: Yes. There is still some.

NURSE: *(Jokingly).* I can see your pregnancy has grown. It is now time for you to be coming every week.

NURSE: To Yalwa. Let me take you to a doctor so that you can explain your condition. *(She leads her to the doctor).* Hello Doctor.

DOCTOR: Hello. Is there a problem?

NURSE: Yes. Today is her first day of coming, and I checked and discovered that she has a little problem. That is why I brought her to you. *(Exit nurse).*

DOCTOR: Hello, Madam.

YALWA: Hello.
DOCTOR: Sit down. *(She sits and Doctor takes a glance at her card).* Are you Yalwa Buba?

YALWA: Yes, I am.

DOCTOR: What is your problem.

YALWA: I came for a check up and the woman said I am not well, my legs are swollen and that we should go for the doctor to see me.

DOCTOR: *(Looks at her feet and presses them with fingers. Examines her eyes and checks her pulse for BP).*

From this examination that I have discovered that you have High Blood pressure and that could be because you have not been attending ante-natal clinic. If you had come to the hospital earlier we would have told you the things you are supposed to eat. You see, you don’t even have enough blood. A pregnant woman is supposed to eat good food like beans, spinach, meat and the likes for her health and what is inside her stomach. Lack of all these things usually leads a woman into problem and complications during labour. This is because, as the Hausas say: a pregnant woman has one leg in the grave and one in the world. But that is only if one is careless. If you are careless death will definitely claim your life.

YALWA: *(Angrily).* Look Mr. Doctor! Is that what you usually tell people? That they will die? Are you the one that will kill me? Are you God? *(Standing).* A useless hospital. *(She furiously and rudely storms out).*

DOCTOR: *(Looks on with surprise and pain, shaking his head).* I am only telling you what I have spent years doing. *(Calls nurse).* Where did you find this type of woman today?

NURSE: Today is her first day of coming. When I talked to her she got angry too.

DOCTOR: Be sure that you go and meet this woman and advise her to come back to the hospital. Our work is to look after the health of the people that is why the government keeps us here. Do you understand?

NURSE: Yes, I do.

DOCTOR: Standing. Let me go to the theatre. I have a surgical operation to perform there.

Exit, leaving the nurse. Lights out.
TBA: Yalwa, can you now see the result of refusing advice? I tried to see that you went to the hospital but you refused. Turning to the women. Since when did this labour start?

BILKISU: Since yesterday!

TBA: And you did not take her to the hospital? O.K. now rush and tell her husband to go and look for a car and take her to the hospital. (Still trying to make Yalwa comfortable).

BILKISU: (Going to the men). Salamu’aleikum!

NAKUKA AND BUBA: (in chorus, anxiously). Has she delivered?

BILKISU: (Distracted, wringing her fingers). No. She has not. Yalwa is vomiting! She is also stooling!

NAKUKA: (Confidently). It is the sugar that has started coming out!

SALÍSU: Then she will soon deliver. (Bilkisu still standing, confused).

BUBA: (Harshly to Bilkisu). Go back to her! We are talking to you and you cannot even listen. (Bilkisu leaves).

BILKISU: (Back to the room with the other women, reporting). They say that we should soak the medicine that the herbalist sent and give her.

TBA: No. This issue is not for the herbalist. A useless herbalist. Hurry and look for a car because when labour has lasted for up to eight hours, the patient is supposed to be taken to the hospital to see a doctor.

BILKISU: (Back to the men). ‘Salamu aleikum’! (Announcing loudly, with alarm). Yalwa is fainting!

BUBA: (Standing). Fainting?!

BILKISU: Yes. Honestly, she is fainting! (Emphatically).

BUBA: O.K., go behind the house and fetch ‘dankanoma’ leaves and soak and give her to drink.

BILKISU: (Standing her ground). It is a hospital rule you are violating, ‘fa!’ it is a rule in the hospital!! If labour lasts up to eight hours, they say it is good to see a doctor.

SALÍSU: (Shouting and waving her aside). Go away from this place. We were not born in a hospital. It has always been traditional medicine that we take for delivery.

BILKISU: (Insisting). But remember what I said; it is a rule in the hospital!! It is a hospital rule!

ALL MEN: (Shouting at Bilkisu). We are saying, go!

NAKUKA: (Rhetorically). Whose wife is this with such disrespect. (She leaves).

BOKA: (At the door). Salamu aleikum!
BUBA: Who is shouting “salama” at this time that people are in the middle of a crisis?

BOKA: ‘Salamu aleikum’ to the owners of this house.

BUBA: Salisu, go and find out who is saying ‘salama’ at the door.

SALISU: (Goes to the door). Oh, is it Boka? You are welcome. Come in. (Salisu goes in and announces to the men). It is Boka.

BUBA: Tell him to come in.

(As Boka comes in the two brothers get up to greet him).

NAKUKA: Here is a seat.

BOKA: No. I will not sit down. Stands on one side, suspiciously. Just then Yalwa’s parents arrive hurriedly with Amina).

BARMANI: Hello. (In a panic). How is the patient? Where is she?

NAKUKA: She is inside. (Mother and sister move in quickly).

AUDU: (Urgently, but still minding his manners). Good day to you all.

ALL: You are welcome!

AUDU: (Shaking hands). How are you Nakuka? Buba. Boka have you come too? Salisu, you have really grown big, what is the news about the one in labour.

BUBA: (Lying). The situation is somewhat better.

AUDU: Is she in the hospital?

NAKUKA: No. We have not taken her to the hospital. Boka has sent medicine and we have soaked and given her, she has drank and sweet things have started coming out!

AUDU: Boka? A herbalist? When my daughter’s life is in danger! When will you people accept change?

BARMANI: (Rushing back from the sick room). Mallam, what noise are you making? Can’t we do something and take this girl to the hospital?

AUDU: (To his wife). Go in and get her ready. (To Buba, Nakuka, Salisu). They have been saying it on the radio, television, in newspapers and on loudspeakers that the moment a woman is in difficult labour she should be rushed and taken to the hospital. My daughter has spent two days now in the same situation, and is even bleeding and...

AMINA: (Cutting in). father, be fast and let us take her to the hospital.

AUDU: (To Buba and co). Yes what about the blood that she is losing? If we take her to the hospital they will look for blood and give her.

NAKUKA: (With disapproval). It is from the hospital that this thing started right from the beginning.
BARMANI: (Rushing in again from inside to her husband). What do you stand there doing? If this girl dies I will hold you responsible!

AUDU: Hurry then and bring her so that we take her to the hospital. There is a car outside.

NAKUKA: (Solemnly) Mallam Audu, it is good that you obtain permission from the husband before you take her since she is in a matrimonial home.

AUDU: Do not talk rubbish to me. Do not forget that, up till today he has not paid her bride price! That he just took her like that. What does he have to tell me?

NAKUKA: The issue of bride price has not arisen Mallam Audu.

AUDU: Bring her out. Come lets go. (Yalwa is led out by her mother, sister, T.B.A. and other women.)

NAKUKA: (Tries desperately, but in vain to stop the parents from taking Yalwa to the hospital), Mallam Audu, stop and listen please. Please listen.

AUDU: Don't even waste your time because I will not listen to you. (Exit after the women).

BUBA: (Turning to his group). Brother, honestly Mallam Audu has not treated me fairly.

NAKUKA: Mallam Audu, does not understand some things even at his old age.

BOKA: (Who has been standing at a corner, watching, he now speaks). Wait a minute. How could you even allow her to be taken to the hospital?

BUBA: While you were here watching. When they passed with her why didn't you talk until now?

BOKA: Did you give her the medicine that I sent to her to drink?

BUBA: Yes. They have given her and she has drank it.

BOKA: Then, if you are sure that she has drank it, and you have allowed her to go to the hospital, then I am assuring you that they don't usually mix my medicine with that of the hospital. For this reason if you allow her to take that of the hospital she will die!

NAKUKA: (Confused). She will die!

BUBA: (Confused too). What!

BOKA: She will die! (Pause). Let me ask all of you, is this her first delivery?

BUBA: No, she has had five children. She delivered all of them at home. This one is the sixth. It is usually from you that I go to collect medicine for her, don't you remember?

BOKA: (Proudly). Then, you knew that the woman was still strong and energetic, yet
you allowed her to be taken to the hospital. Let me now tell you that this her sickness is not just labour. There is somebody’s hand in it. I will not tell you the person’s name. The person is fair, dark and short! You know that since this woman has been giving birth she has never been taken to the hospital. You, yourselves were not born in the hospital. Let me tell you now that my hand is not involved in this matter. Here I go! (Exit).

BUSA: (Confused still). Hey brother, there are elements of truth in what the herbalist has said. This is because there is a man, her uncle, any day he comes here he’d be looking at her by the side of his eyes. I suspect he is the man responsible for her sickness.

NAKUKA: In fact, you should always fear this type of old men. Any time a woman is pregnant they usually kill the child in the stomach. That is why they sometimes tell people to avoid them.

(Suddenly, at the door).

MABUDI: Salamu aleikum! (No answer). Salamu aleikum!!

BUSA: Salisu you go and check and see who is there.

SALISU: (To Mabudi). You are welcome.

MABUDI: Is the owner of the house at home?

SALISU: Yes, he is inside.

MABUDI: Speak to him please. Call him.

SALISU: (To his brothers inside the house). It is the ward-head!

BUSA: The ward-head himself? Tell him to come right in. *(SALisu leads the ward head and his entourage in. As the ward-head enters they all get up in reverence to him)*.

MAI ANGWA: How is the woman in labour? Has she delivered?

NAKUKA: In fact Mai Angwa we have never experienced such a thing in the history of this village, for a woman to be in labour for two days. It is really a surprising thing.

MAI ANGWA: *(Surprised)*. Two days and you did not take her to the hospital?

NAKUKA: *(Surprised too)*. Mai Angwa we have received medicine from Boka the herbalist. We soaked it and gave her and she drank, and sweet things even started coming out. Then her father, Mallam Adu from uphill, came and took her to the hospital.

MABUDI: *(Disappointed with Nakuka)*. Bo... what? Herba... what ? 'La ila hailalahu’! Mallam Adu is right! He has done the right thing by taking away his daughter.
NAKUKA: *(Using a proverb).* You look at a small boy with disrespect when you are talking in front of elderly people.

MAI ANGWA: In fact, what Mallam Audu did is very good. That is what should be encouraged now.

BUBA: What! Did good?

MAI ANGWA: Really! For a long time now, many people have forgotten about herbalists. But when shall we all be wise? A herbalist would come and deceive us that we should bring a black goat or white cock or a goat with three legs. That time has passed. Our parents did that because of ignorance and lack of civilization.

NAKUKA: Then Mai Angwa should we leave our tradition today? Are you saying we should leave the ways of our people?

MAI ANGWA: If you are talking about tradition then why don’t you go back to using masquerades, because that is the root of tradition. It is unbelievable that a woman has been in labour for two days but she has not been taken to the hospital. The hospital people came here and enlightened us that if a woman is pregnant she should try and be going to the hospital for tests, so that a doctor will be checking her health and what is inside her. There is an old tradition that we inherited from our parents or grandparents that if a woman is sick her neighbours have no right to take her to the hospital, except if her husband is around and he agrees. But now we are enlightened and our eyes are open. We should not agree with that type of tradition. For this reason I am calling on all married men that whenever such a issue arises, may God forbid it, they should stop that old habit and allow their neighbours to rush the woman to the nearest hospital.

MABUDI: Your highness, Buba is one of those people that do that kind of thing. You know, it is not today that I have been with Buba. All advice about his wife’s labour fell on deaf ears. And it has now happened. Anybody that does not take advice when the worst happens he should cry for himself.

MAI ANGWA: And I am still calling on married men that they should try and be giving their pregnant wives good food like eggs, meat, vegetables, fruits, and the like. Are we not fortunate that we are farmers and all those things are within our reach? Also we should make sure that when a woman is pregnant she does not work much, trek for a long distance or carry heavy load because of her health and that of the child inside her. If
these things are observed when the time for labour comes, things will be much easier. May the woman deliver safely. Good day! (Stands).

NAKUKA: Your highness, before you go I have something to say. What you said is very true and we have realized our mistakes. In your position as the father of the land, I am bringing our cry to you. You should take our complaints to the government to help us with drugs and hospital staff for the hospital that we are building through communal effort. That will ease the problem of transporting patients from the village to the city.

MABUDI: No doubt! Your highness, Nakuka’s talk is very good, because when my wife was in labour I had a serious problem with transportation before she was taken to the city. For this reason your highness, they should help us.

MAI ANGWA: I have heard your complaints. In my position as the father of the land I will take your complaints to the government, so that they will send hospital staff and drugs to our community hospital. But before then if there is any problem of sickness you should try and take the person to the hospital in town. And we shall continue with the project of weeding and repairing our road for easy commuting. Good bye to you all.

We are grateful. Go safely. (He leaves)

ALL: We are grateful. Go safely. (He leaves)

BUBA: Alright, what Mai Angwa said was the truth. It is good that we rush and follow Yalwa to the hospital.

NAKUKA: Alright. I have heard, brother.

BUBA: Alright. I will go home and take my outer gown. Let us meet in the valley. Hurry! Don’t waste time. (Exit).

BUBA: Alright, brother, until you come. (Turns to Salisu). I will follow them to the hospital so that everything will be done in my presence.

SALISU: I will also go.

BUBA: Then if you will go, fold that mat and bring it along, because that will be our bed.

SALISU: Alright. (Folds the mat and they exit together).

THE END
HAFISAT GOES TO TOWN
CHARACTERS

Hafisat
Hafisat's Aunt (Female Relative)
Doctor
Male Relative
Mid-Wife
Voices
Sule (Hafisat's Boy Friend)
Women Farmers
Male Farmers
Grace (Girl Stranger)

EPISODE 1:

(At a local health clinic. An antenatal clinic is in session. Women arrive with varying sizes of pregnancies. Others are already seated. The midwife on duty goes through a lecture time with the patients. Lecture covers salient issues on reproductive health touching such topics as diet, hygiene, and common ailments in pregnancy including STDs. She breaks off occasionally to ask patients if they have any questions. This should offer an opportunity for interaction. One particular woman breaks into the lecture several times. She is new and has many questions. These questions give the midwife the opportunity to touch on issues like women's economic empowerment through petty trading, women's rights to their bodies, family planning and self-protection from STDs, etc. At the end of this lecture the midwife invites women to rise up as they take a song. The song should be one that will reflect and re-enforce the message of the lecture, like the following in Hausa):

Chiki da goyo, ka ya ne! (2x)
Hutun haifuwa sosai (2x)
Domin lafiyan jiki na
Domin lafiyan yara na
Domin lafiyan maigida
Chiki da goyo, ka ya ne!
(When this song has been taken for like two times there is a sudden commotion as a woman is rushed in by relatives. She looks extremely weak and can barely groan. In fact she is bleeding badly? The midwife rushes about trying to make her more comfortable.

She perceives that this case is beyond her so rushes to summon the doctor. By the time the doctor arrives, the woman dies even before he begins his check-up. He asks questions):

Doctor: Who is the husband of this woman?
Male Relative: Her husband is away? I am her brother. He is a migrant miner; gone to mine.
Doctor: Has this woman been attending ante-natal clinics?
Female Relative: Never! She uses traditional medicine and delivers her babies at home.
Doctor: How old is she?
Relatives (together): Thirty-six!
Doctor: How many children does she have?
Female Relative: Fourteen! (This is a deliberate exaggeration for dramatic effects).
Doctor: Fourteen children? At thirty six! This woman has killed herself! (Turns and walks away). There is loud crying and wailing by relatives. One particular woman stands out as a mourner. She

is the sister of the dead woman. As she wails and throws herself about, the male relative, tragically bears the dead woman off the stage. The other relatives follow in tears and wailing. The midwife is left alone as she turns to the audience and the retreating patients as they move away solemnly and mournfully).

Midwife: You see! Just what I have been telling you all about the importance of looking after yourselves during pregnancy. About attending clinics. See how this woman died a useless death due to ignorance!

Voice from the audience: (Worried). Nurse! Madam! You want talk say na because dis woman no come hospital na him make e die?

Midwife: Yes, but for other reasons too. You see, this woman was thirty-six. From thirty-five years there are great risks in pregnancy. But for this woman her uterus was overstretched. With fourteen deliveries her uterus could not just cope any longer. That is why she bled so much. The uterus just blew-up like an overstretched balloon!

2nd Voice: ‘Allah sarki!’
Midwife: (con’d): Oh, this was a stupid death. This death could have been avoided. (shakes her head as she walks away).

Lights Out.

EPISODE II:
Two days later! A sitting room in a village. The mourning woman in Episode I is seen seated alone. She is still in mourning. She talks to herself as she laments her sister’s death. From her lamentation we get to know that she is the dead woman’s sister!

Sister: Hmm, An!! Chai!, so mama Hafisat is dead! Dead! Chel, is this how this life ends? Today you are here, the next day you are gone. (Breaks into fresh tears). My sister is gone! Gone for having babies! Every year this woman is carrying a pregnancy. And she won’t even go to the hospital. I’d talk and talk, trying to persuade her to go to the clinic. All she’d say was that she could not leave her farm to attend clinics. With so many mouths to feed, how could she think of anything else but to farm? And that useless husband of hers was never around to help her! Always on the move in search of money. Money that no one sees. Yet he would have the guts to come home just to get her pregnant and take off again. Fourteen children! Why would she not die; delivering like a chicken? No rest, just one baby after the other like that. All in the name of looking for a male child! Oh, mama Hafisat, this marriage has killed you oh! (Begins to weep again, using the
edge of her wrapper to wipe her eyes). These babies have killed you oh! Suddenly there is a knock on the door. Quickly, she tries to compose herself as; in rushes a young girl, holding an old travel bag in her hand. The woman is alarmed for it is Hafisat, her dead sister's daughter. She is about sixteen years old.

Hafisat: Good-day Auntie!
Sister/Aunt: (In alarm) Hafisat where are you going?
Hafisat: Auntie, I am going to the city! I am tired of life in this village! In this village where there is only death! Every year women die here in child-birth. There is no time that we do not hear that such and such a woman has died from child-birth. I never knew that my mother would be next on the line. But for me, I refuse to live here and die like every woman.

Aunt: Haba Hafisat, you know that not every woman here has died from pregnancy. There are many women who have safely delivered their babies! Don't you understand that anywhere you stay, if you look after yourself you will live long?
Hafisat: Are you saying that my mother did not look after herself?

Aunt: You know your mother's situation Hafisat. All that labouring on the farm to feed you all, she hardly had time to do anything else. Many times I would persuade her to at least be attending ante-natal clinics but she always said she could not make out time because of the farm. And with your father always away, she felt she could not spare the time.

Hafisat: So my mother died because of farm labour!
Aunt: Not only that, she was also careless with her body. These yearly deliveries without medical advice, all in the name of looking for a male child. Also with so many of you to feed, she wasn't even eating well.

Hafisat: Well, as for me, I have decided to leave this village. That should be one mouth less to feed.

Aunt: Hafisat, please think again. With your father away, who will look after your younger ones.

Hafisat: You people had better send for him. I cannot stay here and sacrifice my life the way my mother did! Besides, you are also there for them. Auntie, I am leaving. (Storms out of the room; leaving her aunt on her knees pleading).

Lights Out
EPISODE III

At the village square. Hafisat is seen rushing across with her luggage when she runs into a young man, slightly older than herself.

Hafisat: Hello Sule. It is you I have been looking for.

Sule: Hafisat what is that you are holding? Are you traveling?

Hafisat: Yes, Sule, I am not just traveling, I am leaving this village. I am migrating!

Sule: Migrating? Have you become like your father? Where are you going to?

Hafisat: I came to tell you that I am leaving this village for the city. Every year in this village women die with pregnancy. I never knew that the next on the line would be my mother.

Sule: Haba Hafisat, who told you that people do not die in the city? Death is everywhere. But death can be avoided sometimes. You know.

Hafisat: Oh so you also think so. That my mother could have lived longer? But married to a man like my father did she have a choice? He is always away, coming home only to get her pregnant. All these deliveries in the name of looking for an heir. Now she is dead and where is he? Nobody knows where he went to this time. But as for me, I am leaving this village! I must go and find out what is out there for me. (She moves to go).

Sule: (Chasing her). But what about us? What about you and I; our plans to get married? Did you not say you will marry me?

Hafisat: Marry you! Marry you and die! (Tearfully).

Sule: No Hafisat you will not die. (Pleading). If you marry me, I will take good care of you. We will have all our children delivered in the hospital, you will be attending antenatal clinics and we will space our children.

Hafisat: But that means I will get pregnant.

Sule: Yes, but only when you choose to and you will eat the right foods as prescribed at the clinic like eggs, vegetables, etc. (enumerates one by one as he counts on his fingers).

Hafisat: No Sule, I don't ever want to marry! I don't want to get pregnant! Goodbye. (Rushes off the stage as Sule attempts to follow her but in a flash, she is gone. He turns back and addresses the audience).

Sule: (To the audience). People, can you hear that? (Imitating Hafisat) I don't ever want to marry, I don't want to get pregnant. Is it marriage or pregnancy that
kills? Is pregnancy a disease? Is it not looking after oneself that keeps one alive. How can any woman in this age have an excuse to die the way Hafisat's mother died. In this village there is a clinic but she will not attend. On the radio, the campaign for women to take care of themselves is always on. Even the other day, the government sent a drama group to come and teach these women about caring for themselves. So, no woman, in this village has an excuse. Her mother died because she chose to. Even if I am Mr. Death, I will look for such a person to kill. *(Storms out in anger).*

**EPISODE IV:**

*A country road. Hafisat is seen with her travel bag on the road. She arrives at a clearing by the road-side. It is a farm. Some women are on the farm planting seed as they chat.*

1st woman: Hey mates, can you see the kind of dying that is now going on around us? What is happening?

2nd woman: As if you knew what was going on in my mind! The way people are now dying is too much. The other day it was Mallam Audu. Yesterday it was that thirteen-year old girl that could not deliver until she died.

1st woman: But why didn't they stake her to the hospital?

2nd woman: They did but it was too late. The nurses said she needed surgery and we don't have the facilities here. If she had been attending ante-natal clinics regularly, the nurses say they would have referred her to town long before her expected day of delivery. They said she was too young to have gotten pregnant.

3rd woman: Don't mind these nurses. Her age has nothing to do with this. Was this girl not the same age with Maimuna who is now nursing a bouncing baby-boy?

2nd woman: But don't you know that bodies differ from person to person. Everyone has his or her own constitution. What will you say of Hassana who is now passing both stool and urine on the bed because she was too small to deliver her baby? They say, the weight of the bay tore up the vagina to pieces!

4th woman: Haba women! You talk too much. At this rate, we will never finish this work. We all must die someday, whether young or old.

1st woman: It is true anyway, but it is really sad when young girls die. But what about Mama Hafisat. Her own death was really sad. After all that suffering.
2nd woman: And with fourteen children left orphans as their father is always away; it is really sad.

1st woman: But Hafisat's mother is partly to blame. Did she ever attend clinics with these her yearly pregnancies. No amount of talking could prevail upon her.

3rd woman: But they took her there only when it was too late. You should have seen the quantity of blood she lost. She was already tired by the time they got to the hospital.

3rd woman: So even the hospital could not help her! Anyway my problem now is that she was owing me money when she died and I cannot recover it.

2nd woman: Are you the only one she was owing? She took two wrappers from me on credit the last time I came back with goods for sale. Who do I ask now for my money?

(At this point, Hafisat arrives at the farm. She stops to greet the women.)

Hafisat: Good day my mothers! (Shouting).

All woman: Good day Hafisat.

1st woman: Oh Hafisat! Is that you! Where are you going with a traveling bag?

Hafisat: I am going to the city.

All woman: City? (In a chorus).

1st woman: What for?

2nd woman: To do what?

3rd woman: To see who?

4th woman: Hey women, leave her alone. (Gently to Hafisat.) Hafisat, why are you going to the city?

Hafisat: I am migrating! I want to go and live in the city. I have heard that life in the city is better than in the village. I don't want to live here and die.

1st woman: Who told you that people, in the city don't die? Dying does not depend on where you live but on how you care for yourself.

Hafisat: But dying in this village is too easy. Every year women die with pregnancy. This woman today, that woman the next day! I never imagined that it would get to my mother.

1st woman: Your mother’s case is a different matter. Was she attending clinics? Have you seen any of the women dying who attend antenatal clinics!

Hafisat: Anyway, I don't want to stay here, marry, get pregnant and die like my mother. Goodbye (she leaves).

1st woman: (Calling out to her). Hafisat, Hafisat!

4th woman: Poor Hafisat. Her mother's death has really upset her.

3rd woman: Poor girl, lets hope she comes to her senses and returns home.

1st, 2nd & 4th woman: (In a chorus). Yes let's hope so.
3rd woman: Hey ain’t we finished yet? How much more do we have to sow?
4th woman: With all this talking how could we have finished?
3rd woman: Oya, Mrs. Hardworking, you can go on working while we take a break. Me, I am leaving. Who is coming with me?
1st & 2nd women: (In a chorus) we are. (They begin to put together their things to leave).
4th woman: Well, if you say its time to go, then we all go. (They leave, arguing among themselves).

EPISODE V

Hafisat is still on the road. She is rushing along when she again comes across two men on the farm, digging and making farm ridges.

Hafisat: (Shouting greeting) Salama! Greetings. I salute your hardwork.
1st man: Hey, young girl. We greet you too. (Seeing her luggage) where are you going with that bag?
Hafisat: I am going to town
2nd man: You are going to town all alone?

Hafisat: Yes, I am leaving this bush life where all that ever happens is death. Yesterday my mother was buried. The other day it was our neighbour. Every year, women die in this village with pregnancy. I never knew it would be my mother's turn this time. I refuse to stay here and die like my mother.

1st man: (Laughing at her). Young girl you amuse me! Who told you that there is no dying in the city?

Hafisat: Even if there is death there it is not as bad as here in the village.

2nd man: Young woman, death exists everywhere. Wherever you live, if you are careless about yourself, you will risk falling into the hands of death.

1st man: (Cutting in). Definitely so. In fact young woman, if you do not know, there is more death in the city than in the village! In the city people do not only die from natural causes but also from un-natural causes like accidents and other disasters. Do not leave the village (laughing as he moves towards her with outstretched hands). Stay back and marry me. I will take good care of you.

2nd man: Hey Danlam, is it every woman you see that you want to marry?
1st man: Yes (nodding his head). What do you think? Since I am capable of looking after them. (Turning to Hafisat). Look, if you marry me I will make you comfortable. You will be my sweetheart since you are the youngest. All that I have will be left in your care.

Hafisat: But will I get pregnant?

1st man: Yes certainly. Who marries a woman without expecting children?

Hafisat: (Storming off). Then good-bye to you. I do not wish to get pregnant and die like my mother.

1st man: (Turning to the audience). People, can you hear that. She does not want to get pregnant. Then why would I want to marry her? When we marry women, is it not so that they will give us children?

2nd man: (Boastingly). As you see me here, I have five wives already! And my children? They are thirty-six! Unfortunately, none of them is male! That is why I am looking for a sixth wife so I can have an heir.

2nd man: Thirty-six children and no male? Don't you think that Allah may be keeping a male from you deliberately?

1st man: No way, Allah just wants to make me wealthy. Consider the bridal-wealth from all these girls. And as for that heir, I will continue looking for him until I find him. Out there, there are more women to pick from so don't mind this foolish girl. (Goes back to work. They work in silence for a while then).

1st man: Hey Buba, should we not be going home now? (Stretching himself up). You see these women are breaking my waist. They never let me rest at night.

2nd man: Yes I think its time to go and take 'kuni'. We will carry on from here tomorrow. (They leave leisurely with their hoes slung over their shoulders).

Lights Out
EPISODE VI:
Hafisat arrives the city. We should see her confused by the sights. We see her fumble and stumble over people who don't even notice her. She looks lost. She takes tentative steps here and there hoping to meet a known person. Finally someone taps her on the shoulder. She jumps and turns around to stare at a young girl of her age, but a total stranger. She relaxes with relief but is still unsure of herself.

Girl stranger: Hello! Need some help?
Hafisat: (Not sure of herself). Yes, but who are you?

Girl stranger: Just a girl like you. But I thought you were new here and needed some help.
Hafisat: Yes, so I am. I am from Gymbus village.
Girl stranger: Gymbus? Where is that? I wonder. Anyway, my name is Grace. I live in this city. What brought you to town?

Hafisat: I ran away from the village when my mother died. In my village, every year women just keep dying, especially with pregnancy. I did not want to stay there and die like everybody else.

Grace: (Laughing). Hey you are funny. What is your name by the way?
Hafisat: I am Hafisat.

Grace: Well Hafisat. You say women are always dying with pregnancy in your village? Don't they have a hospital or health clinic there?
Hafisat: Yes they do. But the village women most prefer traditional medicine.
Grace: Did that include your mother also? Did she also prefer traditional medicine?
Hafisat: Yes, my mother never went to the hospital. She always preferred traditional medicine. My aunt always told her to attend hospital clinics for check-ups but she always refused. She had fourteen of us without ever going to the hospital!

Grace: Fourteen of you? In this age? And how old was she when she died?
Hafisat: Thirty-six!
Grace: Fourteen children at thirty-six! Oh Hafisat, I am afraid your mother killed herself.
Hafisat: (Indignantly). Don't you accuse my mother of killing herself. Is it not that useless husband of hers who killed her? You see my father never stays at home but migrates every year to mining places. He would only come home to get my mother pregnant and off he would go again. He claimed he was looking for an heir. She had no choice in the matter (begins to cry).
Grace: Oh Hafisat, I am sorry. I did not realize that the situation was like that. So you mean you are all girls?

Hafisat: Yes, and I am the first. We are many. My mother had to labour all year round to feed us! That is why she wouldn't ever go to the Health clinic. She said she needed all the time she could get for her farm-work.

Grace: But surely your father was sending her money.

Hafisat: Never! (Tearfully). She took all the responsibility for the house and our upkeep.

Grace: Oh Hafisat, I am so sorry. No wonder you decided to leave. But now that you have left who will take care of your younger ones, since your father is always away?

Hafisat: I have an auntie, my mother's sister, she will look after them.

Grace: But you should be there to help too.

Hafisat: Yes, but I don't want to stay in that village, marry, there, get pregnant and die like my mother.

Grace: But it is not staying in the village that made your mother die. Wherever you live, if you do not take good care of yourself you will die. Even here in the city, if you are careless with your health you will die. Your mother did not care much for herself, that is why she died.

Hafisat: But was it not my father that put her in that situation?

Grace: Yes, her marital situation also contributed to her death but she also was largely to blame. No woman needs die from pregnancy-related complications these days. She should have sought medical advice on a regular basis. You yourself said you have a clinic in your village but she would not even make time to visit the Health clinic. If she had been going there they would have given her good advice on child-spacing for instance. I am sorry Hafisat, but your mother actually killed herself.

Hafisat: So you also think that if she had been going to that hospital, she would have lived?

Grace: Definitely. So you see, it is not living in the village that killed your mother. Anyone can live anywhere and survive as long as they take good care of themselves. Most especially women as they are being told everywhere now (Pause). So you see, you did not need to have left the village. I think you should go back and help look after your younger ones.
Hafisat: Yes, but I am still scared of getting married. I am scared of getting pregnant.
Grace: But you do not need to get pregnant. (Pause). I understand how you must be feeling because I was like you before. Before I became informed about my body as a woman and how to keep myself healthy and out of trouble, I always feared too.
Hafisat: So you no longer fear? How do I get informed too?
Grace: Have you not been listening to all the campaigns on Radio, television, etc.? Go to any Government Health Clinic and you will be told all that you need to know.
Hafisat: Any Government Health clinic?
Grace: Yes any Government Health clinic. If they do not have all the information you need, they will direct you to a family planning clinic or to some organizations that will help you.
Hafisat: Thank you Grace. Can I call you that? Thank you for being so kind.
Grace: You are welcome.
Hafisat: (Bashfully). I was really stupid and rash too. I pow see that it's not the village that killed my mother and I need not have ran away.

Grace: That's right Hafisat but it's not too late for you to go back. Come, spend the night with me and tomorrow you can go back to your auntie and sisters.
Hafisat: Oh thank you again. (Profusely). I was really stranded but I now know I can trust you.
Grace: (Taking her hand). Okay then, lets go.

**Exeunt**

**THE END**
DR. SOLNESS
(Ph.D)
CHARACTERS

Doctor Solness
Mrs. Solness
Doctor Inuwa
Rose
Male Student
Female Students
Children Of The Solness'
Uncle To Mrs. Solness
Club Boy
Voices

DR. SOLNESS (PH.D)

ACT I

SCENE I

A University campus. The reception/waiting room to the Vice-chancellor’s office. People sit around in various postures and are variously occupied. Some are standing or pacing up and down; others are reading or trying to read, while others stare emptily into space. A caption reading VICE CHANCELLOR’S OFFICE can be seen at a door where occasionally people came out and others go in. Each time that door opens, there is a visible reaction from everyone in the waiting room. All attention is on that door. Suddenly another door opens. It is the door that leads to the outside. All eyes turn towards the door and in steps tall Dr. Solness through the door. He is dressed in a black suit and in his hand he carries a brief-case on which boldly stuck is a sticker bearing YALE UNIVERSITY.

Dr. Solness: ( Loudly and self-confidently)

Hello every-one! How do you do?

A few murmurs are heard from the waiting crowd and a few nods. The doctor walks into the Vice-chancellor’s office with an outstretched hand, ready for a handshake. He offers a handshake to one of those waiting. The man is puzzled, for they have never met but he gives him his hand nevertheless, while still sitting down. Tall Dr.
Solness, brief-case in one hand and towering over the man, shakes him vigorously, taking a long time to do so.

Dr. Solness: (Looking into the man's face for eye contact, grinning) Just flew in last night. Came first thing this morning to pay my respects to the boss. Everybody stares but no one comments. The hand-shake over, he lets go of the man's hand but still stands near the door into the Vice-chancellor's office as if expecting to go in next.

Dr. Solness: Is he in? (nodding towards the door, as with a sweeping gaze, he addresses the crowd. People nod, watching him closely). I flew in last night from the United States. I have to see the boss to tell him I have returned. He should be expecting me.

No one answers, but at this point, the door leading into the Vice-chancellor's office opens and the head of a young girl pops out as if in search for someone. She is the receptionist attached to the vice-chancellor's office.

Dr. Solness: (seeing who is at the door, and recognizing her). Hello Rose! (Pause). You don't remember me, I suppose.

Rose: No ... no-o sir! Who are you sir?

Dr. Solness: I am Solness (adding quickly) Dr. Solness.

Rose: Dr. Solness? (Pause). Oh... you mean you are ... Solness, sir? Oh, welcome sir. Sorry sir, but you are so changed I did not recognize you.

Dr. Solness: Oh well Rose, that is what everyone is saying. I hope you like the change.

Rose: Oh sir, that is not for me to say. Change should be good Sir. (Pause) Especially this kind of change. (She is staring at the bold letters reading - YALE UNIVERSITY on his briefcase). Would you want to see the boss sir?

Dr. Solness: Why else would I be here, Rose, having been away these four years!

Rose: Please wait a little sir.
Solness, brief-case in one hand and towering over the man, shakes him vigorously, taking a long time to do so.

Dr. Solness: (Looking into the man's face for eye contact; grinning) Just flew in last night. Came first thing this morning to pay my respects to the boss. Everybody stares but no one comments. The hand-shake over, he lets go of the man's hand but still stands near the door into the Vice-chancellor's office as if expecting to go in next.

No one answers, but at this point, the door leading into the Vice-chancellor's office opens and the head of a young girl 'pops out as if in search for someone. She is the receptionist attached to the vice-chancellor's office.

Dr. Solness: (seeing who is at the door, and recognizing her) Hello Rose! (Pause). You don't remember me, I suppose.

Rose stares at him, her hand still hanging to the doorknob.

Dr. Solness: Rose? (Pause). Oh... you mean you are ... Solness, sir? Oh, welcome sir. Sorry sir, but you are so changed I did not recognize you.

Dr. Solness: Oh well Rose, that is what everyone is saying. I hope you like the change.

Rose: Oh sir, that is not for me to say. Change should be good Sir. (Pause) Especially this kind of change. (She is staring at the bold letters reading - YALE UNIVERSITY on his briefcase). Would you want to see the boss sir?

Dr. Solness: Why else would I be here, Rose, having been away these four years!

Rose: Please wait a little sir.
Dr. Solness: (On seeing him come in). Hey, Hello there! Just see who is here! Mr. Inuwa I believe. (Pause) I am Solness. Dr. Solness. Do you remember me? Just flew in yesterday from New York. How do you do? (They shake hands).

Inuwa: (Who incidentally is also a Ph.D. is a small man in glasses. He is casually dressed). Oh yes, you must be Dr. Solness now. So you are back from your studies? Yesterday, you said? Hey we were talking about you only yesterday in the coffee-room. Everyone seemed to have been back from abroad, except you.

Dr. Solness: (Smiling all the time and still holding the brief-case). Everybody is back?

Dr. Inuwa: (Nodding) Hmm

Dr. Solness: I never wanted to come back! The place was too good. Now just look at this (making a sweeping gesture at the general state of the office, curtains chairs and all). One had to comeback to all this. Man, it was a difficult decision, but here I am!

Dr. Inuwa: (Nodding). Yes, here we all are! Home is home you know.

Dr. Solness: Home? Here home? Its more homly there man! (Giving him his hand for a hand-slap: laughing loudly, and not
seeming to notice others in the room. Just then the door into the Vice Chancellor's office opens and Rose pops out her head.

Rose: Mr. Solness!
Dr. Solness: (Quickly and sharply). You mean Dr. Solness!

Rose: Oh sorry sir, Dr. Solness sir, he will see you now.

Dr. Solness: (Turning to Dr. Inuwa for another handshake). Thank you Rose.
There is a brief moment of silence after he is gone. People share meaningful looks but say nothing. Dr. Inuwa, left alone in the middle of the room, stares at his right hand for a while, then sighing loudly, he looks out for a place to sit down.

Dr. Inuwa: (Sitting down somewhere). Chei? That was some doctor just returned from abroad. Never thought he'd get there I believe.
No one answers, but there are varied reactions from those around. Some smile meaningfully, one or two just pause from their reading, peering over the newspapers. A few readjust their sitting positions and then - silence. A minute later, this silence is interrupted by the sudden opening of the door leading to the Vice chancellor's office. Eyes lift and turn spontaneously to the door as Dr. Solness re-emerges, brief-case in hand, the sticker - YALE UNIVERSITY, loudly proclaiming his entry. He comes in and in two strides, he is in the middle of the room again, ready with a handshake and a broad farewell smile for Dr. Inuwa as he looks around for him. Finding him, the later obliges by standing. They, shake hands again, Dr. Solness beaming all the time.

Dr. Inuwa: (In humouring tone). Out already?
Dr. Solness: Yes, out already. Didn't have much to say. Only wanted to pay my respects to him. To let him know I was back.

Dr. Inuwa: Oh, I see.
Dr. Solness: So, I guess I should be going now. Enough for the day, I believe.

Dr. Inuwa: Going home eh? You are very welcome back, doctor. I am sure its nice to have you back.

Dr. Solness: Well, Yes. Its nice to see you too! Come to think about it. Good-bye.

Dr. Inuwa: Bye doctor!
They do a final handshake and then exit Dr. Solness. Dr. Inuwa looks at his hand, again scratches his head and sits down wearily. There is absolute silence as others in the room carry on with their various pre-occupations with no comment. A brief freeze, then lights go out sharply.

SCENE II:
The next day. The University campus. At the offices.

When the lights come on, we should see Dr. Solness at the door of his office fixing some inscriptions on his door. First we see him pick up a bold imprint, DR. SOLNESS which he fixes carefully on the door. He moves back to examine the effect of his effort. A student comes along.

Student: Morning sir. (Passing on)

Dr. Solness: (Patronizingly and too absorbed to look) Morning!

(Takes another distant look at his work at the door).

Dr. Solness: (To himself) This will do. Now, next (reaches out for a second inscription). Now what about this one? Where will this go? (Examines the door closely and tries to fix this second inscription). It reads YALE UNIVERSITY. Yeah ... perfect! This is perfect. (Congratulating himself by rubbing his hands together and moving into his office. He shuts the door.) Lights focus boldly on the inscriptions 'Dr. Solness' and 'YALE UNIVERSITY' and then fade out.

SCENE III:
Next day. Dr. Solness' office. The doctor is at his desk, sorting out assorted bric 'a brac. He is very absorbed. There is a knock at the door.

Dr. Solness: Yes, who is there? (Door opens and a student's head pops through. He is a male student).

Student: Good morning sir. Excuse me sir.

Dr. Solness: (Impatiently) who are you and what do you want?

Student: Sir, I am new sir, and I'm trying to ...

Dr. Solness: (Cutting in). New? So am I my friend.

Student: (Apologetically). Sorry, but would you know sir, who I should see about these forms?

Dr. Solness: Forms? What forms? Can't you see that I am busy? Who has time for
forms? Please, get out of my office; Get out with your damn forms?

Student: (Back ing out confused). Sorry sir. Good day sir. (Dr. Solness ignores him completely, his attention still on his bric 'a brac. Another knock at the door).

Dr. Solness: Y-e-s. (to himself) who is that again? (shouting). Come in.
(The door opens and we see Dr. Inuwa's frame at the door).

Dr. Inuwa: Good morning doctor! (Moving in, hand stretched out for a handshake). I can see that you are settling down. (Eyeing closely what Dr. Solness is doing).

Dr. Solness: Yeah man, trying to. (Still completely taken up by his bric 'a brac).

Dr. Inuwa: Oh, what beautiful inscriptions you have at the door. (Still trying to draw out Dr. Solness).

Dr. Solness: Yeah, beautiful. I believe they are beautiful. (Still too busy to look up).

Dr. Inuwa: (Suddenly) how was the other day doctor? .

Dr. Solness: The other day? What day was that?

Dr. Inuwa: The day we met at the Vice chancellor's office.

Dr. Solness: Oh yes (still looking down) is that you? Dr. Inuwa?

Dr. Inuwa: Yes, Dr. Inuwa. Glad to see that you are settling down. And that we are neighbours here. (Waving towards the door).

Dr. Solness: Oh, are we? (Silence). I should be seeing you often then? (dismissing Dr. Inuwa thus, he is still too busy to look up). Bye Dr. have a nice day.

Dr. Inuwa: You too doctor. Bye!

Exit

Moment: later. Dr. Solness is still alone, busy, very busy still sorting out bric-a-brac. Suddenly, voices are heard outside at the door. Female voices. Dr. Solness' attention is caught by the voices.

1st Voice: He-en! Na who be this one? Dr. Solness? YALE UNIVERSITY.

2nd Voice: Shoo---! May be na dat new lecturer wey dem say just return from abroad.
1st voice: E fit be him oh? See Yale University. Dr. Solness who has paused from what he was doing, seems pleased by this conversation. He smiles pleasedly to himself. There is a knock at the door.

Dr. Solness: (Bracing himself up). Ye-es. Come in.

(Door opens and two females heads pop in).

1st female student: Excuse me sir, Good morning sir.

Dr. Solness: (Standing up) Good morning. How do you do? And can I help you? Please come in. (Girl comes in followed by her friend. They are a typical, regular over-dressed pair of undergraduate female students).

2nd female student: Good morning sir. (Eyeing everything in the office). Welcome sir!

Dr. Solness: Good morning? Can I help you?

1st student: No sir! We were passing-by sir, and just decided to say hello!

Dr. Solness: You decided to say hello? To me? (He is pleased). Well, I am glad you did. (Moving out, from behind the desk, towards where the girls are standing, hand stretched out for a handshake). I am Solness, Dr. Solness. Just returned from YALE.

Girls: (Together). Pleased to meet you sir. You are welcome sir. (Smiling sweetly).

Dr. Solness: Pleased to meet you too. (Pause) and what are your names?

1st Girl: Ngozi and Florence sir. I am Ngozi, she is Florence.

Dr. Solness: Well, Ngozi and Florence, won't you please sit down?

1st girl: No sir, we have a class soon. With Dr. Inuwa but we just wanted to meet you.

Dr. Solness: And do you like what you have seen? (Laughing together). We think we do sir. (Pause).

1st girl: Excuse us sir, but we have to go.

Dr. Solness: Go? So soon. Oh yes, you have a lecture.

Girls: (Together) Yes sir, with Dr. Inuwa. (Moving out). Good-bye sir.

Dr. Solness: Good-bye (walking them to the door). Pop in anytime you are free.

Girls: O.K. sir. Bye. As they leave Dr. Solness escorts them to the door and watches them go, hanging onto his door knob. Moments
later he shuts the door, moves to the middle of the room, stretches himself, a loud yawn on his lips. He looks around his office and decides that it is time to leave for home. We see him, pack his YALE UNIVERSITY brief-case, and move out of the office as lights go out.

ACT II: SCENE I
AT HOME

Mid-Morning:
Dr. Solness' home. A sitting-room. Strewn all over the place are children's toys, children's clothes and all manner of children's books and pieces of paper. In the midst of this chaos, Mrs. Solness appears with a broom, apparently with the aim to sweep. A baby is strapped to her back. She stands still, examining the chaos and wondering where to begin when suddenly, there is a knock at the door. She starts, then freezes, wondering whether to open or flee. She observes the mess and hesitates. The knocking comes again, louder this time. She shrugs, adjusts the baby on her back and moves towards the door to open it.

Mrs. Solness:
(Opening the door and peeping out "cautiously"). Who is it? She steps back when she sees that it is her husband. He pushes her aside and strides impatiently into the room right into the chaotic upheaval of the room. Suddenly he stops short in the middle of the room.
Dr. Solness: What! *(Addressing Mrs. Solness)* do you mean that this house has not been swept this morning?

Mrs. Solness: *(Defensively).* I just finished clearing the kitchen and the washing had to be done and the baby fed so...

Dr. Solness: *(Cutting in)* Shut up woman! Don't give me a catalogue of your chores. Do you not know that it is your place to keep this house clean? Why didn't you wake up early?

Mrs. Solness: But you know I slept late last night and the baby cried all night and...

Dr. Solness: Enough woman! Enough of your excuses. This house is in a mess *(making a sweeping gesture with his hand)* and it shouldn't be so.

Mrs. Solness: But don't you think...

Dr. Solness: *(Cutting her short again).* And don't tell me you want a house help. You would be wasting your time.

*(Moving away).*

Mrs. Solness: *(Speaking after him).* But for how long do you think I can go on like this?

Dr. Solness: *(Turning back to face her).* That is your business woman. All I know is that you are just an elevated house-girl and I won't be having two of you in this house! He turns on his heels and walk away through one of the doors. Mrs. Solness is left in the middle of the room, head bowed, broom in hand, and in this position Dr. Solness comes out through the same door a sports bag in hand, and walks past her, not seeming to see her and exits through the door that leads to the outside.

*(Lights go out).*

**SCENE II**

Afternoon.

Dr. Solness' sitting room. The place is looking more tidy *(cleaner)* new. In one of the arm-chairs sits an old man. He seems absorbed in thought. Mrs. Solness is waiting on her children; a boy and a girl, five and four years respectively just returned from school. This is obvious by the fact that they are still wearing their uniforms, and their lunch-boxes are
carelessly thrown about as well as two pairs of dirty socks. Mrs. Solness, baby-at-back, moves from one to the other, serving them beans.

Boy: Mummy, is it only beans? There is no gari? I want gari, mummy.

Mrs. Solness: There is no gari darling. We ran out of it yesterday.

Boy: (Insistently) but how, mummy can we eat beans without gari?

Mrs. Solness: But darling, (Pleadingly) I have told you that we have no gari in the house.

The girl: Then go and buy gari for us, mummy.

Mrs. Solness: (Coaxingly) mummy doesn't have any money sweet-heart! When daddy comes, he will go and buy us gari, children.

Little Girl: Why don't you have money mummy?

Mrs. Solness: Because mummy doesn't have a job.

Boy: Well, then, get a job, mummy.

Mrs. Solness: I can't now. I have to look after baby and you, clean the house and cook for all of us.

Boy: But Jide's mummy has a baby but she goes to work.

Mrs. Solness: 'But I can't darling. There will be no one to look after baby when I am gone.'

Boy: Then get someone mummy, to look after the baby.

Mrs. Solness: Oh sweet-heart, we cannot afford that, there won't be enough money after that to buy us food and pay your school fees.

Boy: (Frustrated) Oh o-o. (Silence, as the children stare at their beans for sometime. Then begin to eat reluctantly).

Mrs. Solness moves over to where the old-man is sitting. The light is made to trace her movement and it settles on the sitting area where the old man is seated, the children are left in the shadows. She sits in another armchair, opposite him, as she unstraps the sleeping baby on her back holding it in her arms.

Welcome uncle. I hope you are not too tired. Would you want a bath now or later?

Later my child, much later. I am rather tired now. How was it at home when you left?

Fine, everything was fine. Except that Kucha, wasn't feeling too well and Anyogo has had his swollen
Dr. Solness: \textit{(Cutting in angrily).} What does he want?

Mrs. Solness: Nothing! He only came to see us since we were away for so long.

Dr. Solness: Well so he has done that. What next?

Mrs. Solness: I thought you might want to greet him and have a word with him. You came home so late last night that... *

Dr. Solness: \textit{(Shouting at her).} Woman! Don't tell me what I should do and what I should not do. I am a busy man and don't you expect me to be chatting up some ignorant old man from the village! \textit{(He dashes for his jacket, putting it on as he speaks, adjusts his tie, seeming to be in a hurry to go out).} What does he want with me?

Mrs. Solness: \textit{(Also provoked into shouting).} What does he want with you? Is it too much to greet an old man, your in-law who came to see us? Have you become so American that you have completely forgotten your manners?

Dr. Solness: You are wasting your time woman. Do you think that man left his cosy little hut in the village for a cold place like this, just so he could be greeted? Money is what he wasn't, money, my good woman. And he has missed his way. I cannot squander my earnings on adventurous old men from the village! Good by. \textit{(On this note he grabs his briefcase and makes for the door, bumping into the old man who just then was coming into the room on account of the noise. Dr. Solness moves away a pace, surveys his clothes, brushing with one hand where the old man touched him, and completely ignoring the old man, he strides out of the room, leaving Mrs. Solness and her uncle. She sits down on the bed, crying uncontrollably, the old man attempting to pacify her as lights go out.}
ACT III: SCENE I

AT THE CLUB

A club situation. People sit around in various postures, drinking and smoking. One eccentric-looking old professor sits in a corner alone nursing a bear and looking too distracted and preoccupied to keep company or get involved in the general goings-on in the club. A few women are around, trying hard to keep their composure in the midst of a general mood of male hilarity. In the midst of this din of noise some-one clears his throat to speak.

1st man's voice: People, have you heard the latest? (There is so much noise around that he can hardly be heard. Again clearing his throat, he shouts above the din of noise).

1st man's voice: I say, people, have you heard? Our beloved just-retumed doctor is not having it too good at home?

2nd Man's voice: How is that news man? None of us is having it any good at home, are we? What with this sappy, harsh economy sapping all of us dry.

1st man: Well, I think this is rather different. Our man seems to be facing a case of divorce or at the least, a separation.

3rd voice: A separation? This soon after his return. Come to think of it, I wonder why that hasn't taken place yet. I cannot imagine anybody living with that prig.

4th voice: Haba man, that might be the very thing Madam found attractive about him - his priggishness. You can never tell what might attract a woman to a man.

1st voice: Well, our doctor's wife was heard weeping loudly and vowing to leave. Poor woman, imagine her coming to that point. What could have provoked her so.

2nd voice: It's been heard from an authentic source that her uncle came around and our dear doctor completely forgot that he was back home in Africa and could not as much as greet him.

Chorus of voices: What?

1st voice: That's right. Not even a greeting. Not to talk of the fact that dear Mrs. Solness had to borrow money to send him home!

2nd voice: I bet our doctor couldn't even have him breath the air in his house!
Anyway; that is what happened. She had to go from door to door begging for that money.

2nd voice: No wonder, the story got round so fast.

1st voice: (Pursuing the matter further). Have you observed how she takes that baby everywhere she goes? Well, I hear she is all manner of things in that house; a wife, a nanny, a house-girl, a mother and cook!

2nd voice: (Taking him up on this point). So what? What is strange about that? Didn't our mothers do much more than that?

3rd voice: Haba man, don't be archaic. Times have changed. A woman can't do all that and still fit into our present society. Consider the pressures. (Pause).

3rd voice: No wonder, she is forever looking so unkempt.

1st voice: Unkempt! Have you ever been to their house? Chaotic is the only word that adequately describes the perpetual look of their living-room.

3rd voice: Really? No, man. You must be kidding. That cannot be so. Consider how smartly dressed dear doctor Solness is always looking. Always suited up and carrying that briefcase, you know? (Shaking his head). He can't possibly live in a dirty and untidy house. You better take my word for it. That is exactly what is happening. At this point, in strides Dr. Solness, in a suit and carrying the inevitable brief-case proclaiming YEALE UNIVERSITY. There is absolute silence as he moves briskly into the midst of the company, a broad smile on his face.

Dr. Solness: Hello everyone! Caught off-guard, no one answers nor smiles back but he is met with stony-looks from everywhere. Not seeming to have noticed this common attitude, he tries to sit near a girl, who instantly moves way. This reaction also seems lost on him and still beaming to himself he calls out to the club attendant.

Dr. Solness: He boy! Bring me a beer will you? (Someone stands up to leave).

Where are you going up to leave? Have a beer on me! (The man does not
answer. He simply wears an unusual look and stares at Dr. Solness.)

(Leaving) Good night people.

Man: Good night.

Chorus of voices: Good night, old boy. A pity you couldn't stay. (Shouting) Hey boy, where are you? Bring that beer for me and for everybody here!

Boy arrives with a tray full of beer bottles. He sets it down on the table. Just then, as if on a cue, everybody else at the table get up, ready to go.

Dr. Solness: Hey there! What is happening! Here is some beer for you all and where do you think you are going?

1st voice: Home to our wives!

2nd voice: And to our children.

3rd voice: And to our visiting in-laws!

Chorus of voices: Good night doctor Solness. (They all leave).

Man (1st voice): (Turning from the door) Hey doctor, we heard you have a visitor at home, an uncle in-law. Why don't you take some beer home for him? I am sure he will love it. Good night doctor.

Dr. Solness is left alone at the table, a tray full of beer in from of him. Beside the tray, stands his briefcase, the YALE UNIVERSITY inscription on it boldly facing the audience. He beams a broad grin, at nobody in particular. At the corner, the only other person to be seen is an eccentric-looking Professor, who is too absorbed with his thoughts to have noticed that the club is now virtually empty. Lights go out.
ACT III

SCENCE II

The club is now empty. When the scene opens the lights are made to trace out the emptiness of the place until it focuses on a spot in the middle, where, sprawled out on the floor, is doctor Solness drunk and passed out, but still hanging onto his briefcase. On this scene, in comes the club boy.

Club boy: Hey, doctor sir, everybody is gone home and I want to close. *(No answer, he tries to lift him)*.

Club boy: I say, Sir! Everyone is gone home, and I am about to close.

Dr. Solness: *(Attempting to talk when lifted to his knees)*. More beer! More beer for everyone!

Club boy: Sir, they have all gone, and it's late! I want to lock the place.

Dr. Solness: Yes, Yeas *(drunkenly)* we want more beer. Give us more.

Club boy: Come sir, I will take you to your car. *(He attempts to lift doctor Solness up but he is too heavy for him. He slumps back, falling on his briefcase which he hurriedly grabs)*. Boo! I can not stay here all night. I'll have to lock him in. *(he moves away some space, turns back to look at Doctor Solness. He shakes his head and hesitatingly moves out leaving Dr. Solness alone on the floor. Lights focus a while on Dr. Solness' sprawled body on the floor, suit, briefcase and all, then final black out)*.
WE NEED HIS MONEY
Characters

ACT I: SCENE I

Mrs. Handle, Boy, and Girl. Evening. Mrs. Handle is a woman in her early sixties. When the play opens we should see her sitting alone, dozing off. Some worn out magazines around her should indicate how she has been passing the evening. The place is dimly lit. It is a living-room in a cosmopolitan setting.

There is a knock at the door. Mrs. Handle sits up suddenly, rubbing her eyes. There is an alarm in her eyes.

(Standing up nervously) Who is it?

MRS. HANDLE (whispering): Oh my God. Who is it?

(Outside): Is anyone in there?

Just open for us, we are relations of Mr. Kar. Isn’t this Mr. Kar’s house?

MRS. HANDLE: No. (pauses) Oh, I am sorry (tussling). You must be freezing. Do come in. I really did not mean to do my husband.

Pause.

MRS. HANDLE: (whispering) Mr. Kar. Isn’t this Mr. Kar’s house?

MR. KAR: No. (pauses) Who is it?

MRS. HANDLE: No one. (pauses) I am sorry (tussling). My daughter instructed me not to open to anyone. We are relations of Mr. Kar. Isn’t this Mr. Kar’s house?

MR. KAR: No. (pauses) Who is it?

MRS. HANDLE: No one. (pauses) I am sorry (tussling). My daughter instructed me not to open to anyone. We are relations of Mr. Kar. Isn’t this Mr. Kar’s house?

MR. KAR: No. (pauses) Who is it?

MRS. HANDLE: No one. (pauses) I am sorry (tussling). My daughter instructed me not to open to anyone. We are relations of Mr. Kar. Isn’t this Mr. Kar’s house?

MR. KAR: No. (pauses) Who is it?

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MR. KAR: No. (pauses) Who is it?

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not think I ought to open at first. You see my daughter said, not to open to anyone on account of the armed robbery. I wouldn't open until you mentioned that you are Jinkas. That's Mr. Kar's tribe. Isn't it? Do sit down somewhere.

(Together). Thank you. (sitting).

You have traveled far, haven't you? My daughter is out but I can find you something to eat. That is no problem. I am the house-keeper here. Serving people keeps me busy. Would you have some semovita or rice? (Little pause). Really, I think you ought to have some semovita. You must be famished and you see, I have just made this very delicious Okro soup. Actually I made it for Mr. Kar, who was supposed to be coming back from a business trip this evening. But it doesn't matter. It doesn't look like he's coming today after all. So would you have semovita?

Boy:

Yes, thank you. (Meanwhile the girl has been staring at Mrs. Handle. She is obviously intrigued by her).

Mrs. Handle:

Okay (Sighing as she goes out. The young people exchange glances. The girl is going to giggle when she hears the shuffle towards the sitting room from the kitchen. She immediately covers her mouth with her hands, stifling the giggle).

(Looking round as Mrs. Handle comes in). ... Very, very tired and its so nice to have finally arrived. The taxi driver was so kind and helpful. He brought us all the way here. I was actually surprised when he took only sixty Naira from us.

Sixty Naira? From what point? Not from the motor-park? Oh you poor dears! You should have paid him only twenty. These taxi drivers! They take the slightest opportunity to extort money. He must have seen that you were new around here.

(Patronizingly) Well listen to me, never you pay more than twenty Naira for a drop next time. Okay?.

Twenty Naira? In the city?

Oh well, left to the taxi-drivers it would be N100 a drop. It was getting
that high you know, until the government stepped in.

Boy:
Thank you very much, Madam (pause). But madam, where is Mr. Kar? We sent a message that we were coming. Did he not mention it to anybody?

Mrs. Handle:
Not before he left. I told you he is away. Your message might never have gotten to him.

Girl:
(Shyly looking from Boy to Mrs. Handle). It doesn't matter really, does it? We are not in a hurry. (Turning to her companion) Are we? We can spend the time visiting places ... we want to know the city. The holiday is only just beginning.

Mrs. Handle:
You'll have to say that to Mr. Kar on his return. (Standing). Let me see about getting that semovita ready. (Exit).

The boy and Girl begin to look around. They seem quite unsure of themselves but are obviously excited about their visit to the city. The girl notices the pile of magazines on the floor. She begins to flip through them. She finds something interesting in a

magazine. She is showing it to the boy when Mrs. Handle re-enters with the meal. They eat while Mrs. Handle keeps up the conversation, as she goes back to her magazines.

Mrs. Handle:
You do like it don't you? I made it for Mr. Kar. He loves Okro. My daughter loves it too. (Pointedly after a pause). Will you be staying around to meet my daughter? She should be coming back any minute from now. (Boy and Girl look at each other, puzzled).

Mrs. Handle:
(Continuing). Where will you be putting up? Some nice relative around eh? Well, you can come and visit us here as often as possible. That would be so nice. Some days I stay here all alone, you know. It does get lonely. And I love to see young people like you.

Girl:
(Quickly) Madam, we did intend to stay...

Mrs. Handle:
(Cutting in pensively). Actually, it's going to be quite a cosy little family re-union. My younger daughter from Ibadan is coming over too. I ought to get the other
bedroom ready for her. She said she might be bringing a friend too.

**Boy and girl are dismayed. They exchange looks as Mrs. Handle approaches the dining table.**

**Mrs. Handle:** It was a good meal wasn't it? Did you like it? *(Smiling down at them sweetly).*

**Boy:** *(Quickly).* A very good meal. The Okro soup was very well made.

**Mrs. Handle:** *(Naively).* You said that to please me didn't you?

**Boy:** I meant it. *(Turning to girl)* the meal was good, wasn't it? *(The girl who has been staring into space with a dismal face is caught unawares. She jumps round and quickly).*

**Girl:** What? The meal? It was good. Yes, it was good.

*(Mrs. Handle exits with dishes).*

**Girl:** *(Immediately to Boy).* You should have said something *(accusingly).* She knew that we meant to put up here. Now what do we do? Where do we go?

**Boy:** Go back home tomorrow.

**Girl:** Meanwhile, where do we sleep tonight? Beg her for the spare bedroom? She made it quite clear that that was meant for her darling daughter from Ibadan. *(Looking at Boy closely).* Of course you are not worried and no wonder, the sitting room will do for you. But what about me? *(Pause)* I wish Mr. Kar was here.

Well he isn't here and the earlier you give up your dreams about a holiday in the city, the better. *(Pause)* Who is this woman anyway? She seems to be the boss here. And she is "Oyibo"! So sure of herself too. Okro soup for Mr. Kar indeed! *(Bitterly).* I bet its her white skin that intimidated you. Anyway, I shall not ever go anywhere with you again, I could have done better on my own!

Nonsense! *(Pause, then).* I wonder who is the master here. I'd like to meet the honourable Miss Ronke. You heard about her didn't you? Mr. Kar's big catch. They say he is going to marry her. Indeed, they say they are getting married soon. Mmm, no wonder! This must be Ronke's mother.
LIGHTS OUT

SCENE II:

NEXT DAY
Same as in previous scene.
Mrs. Handle and Ronke
Ronke, a pretty girl of about 24. There's a general air of confidence about her. She is in obvious discussing with her mum – Mrs. Handle.

Mrs. Handle: So I had to make them realise that they could not stay here since we were expecting Iyabo.

Ronke: I hope you did it nicely, for Mr. Kar's sake. But actually, I can't have people coming from the village to stay here. I can't just trust these villagers. Not after what Dad's family did to you when he died. Fancy them just turning you out without a thing. The greedy lot! They did not care for us either because we were girls and not boys. (Pause). Anyway you should have told them that this was my house, even if Mr. Kar bought it! Well, I did not intend to go telling them that he stays here only occasionally but has another home. For all I know they might find that out themselves. The girl was green-eyed with the idea of a holiday in the city!

(Changing the subject) Say, mum, when is Iyabo supposed to be here? (Standing). I am off to visit. Tell her she is welcomed. I shouldn't be long. (Exit).

(Alone). My dear children, could I ever do anything without you? A penniless old woman. My family gave me up for marrying a neger and my husband's people because I was 'oyibo'. They said it was because I didn't have a son, but I know it is because I was a stranger among them. I couldn't go back to England. I belong here more than there. I belong here with my children.

LIGHTS OUT
ACT II

SCENE I:
Day. Outside On a Street.

Iyabo and a man. Iyabo about the same age as Ronke. A closer look shows that she is a little bit younger. She is a more practical person too.

The scene opens with them looking up at the house as if trying to find out something.

Iyabo: Num - be - e - r fif - te - en. The last house was fourteen. This must be the house.

Man: Can you see the number?

Iyabo: (Still searching with her eyes).

O yes, I have seen it. Yeah, this is fifteen. I wonder if there's anybody home. (She moves towards the door carrying her luggage. Man catches up with her and tries to detain her).

Man: Shall I be seeing you again?

Iyabo: Well, you do know the place. Wait a minute, I ought to make sure. Let me knock. (She knocks).

Man: If there's nobody home, you can come back with me. We could check up again later.

Iyabo: I think there's some-one in. Probably mum. I can hear someone coming. (Door opens).

Mrs. Handle:

(Seeing it's her daughter). My darling child (Stretching out her hands). You are here at last. (They hug). Did you have a nice journey? (Turning to the man). I see you have company.

Iyabo: This is someone I met when I arrived at the motor-park. He helped me to find this place.

Mrs. Handle: (To the man). That was very nice of you. Would you like to come in?

No thanks, madam. Some other time.

Do come in (Iyabo goes in with her luggage). My first daughter is not in at the moment but it doesn't matter. You would have met her. (Proudly). Just like this one. They look extremely alike. Everybody says they are a most beautiful pair! I am very proud of them. But of course you'll call in some other time. Thank you for bringing Iyabo.

It was no problem madam. In fact it was a pleasure. We will see some other time.

(Shouting as she goes in). Iyabo, darling. Iyabo...

Lights out.
ACT II

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*(She moves towards the door carrying her luggage. Man catches up with her and tries to detain her).*

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*(She knocks).*_

Man: If there’s nobody home, you can come back with me. We could check up again later.

Iyabo: I think there’s someone in. Probably mum. I can hear someone coming._

*(Door opens).*

Mrs. Handle: *(Seeing it's her daughter).* My darling child *(Stretching out her hands).* You are here at last. *(They hug).* Did you have a nice journey? *(Turning to the man).* I see you have company.

Iyabo: This is someone I met when I arrived at the motor-park. He helped me to find this place.

Mrs. Handle: *(To the man).* That was very nice of you. Would you like to come in?

Man: No thanks, madam. Some other time.

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It was no problem madam. In fact it was a pleasure. We will see some other time._

*(Shouting as she goes in).* Iyabo, darling. Iyabo...

_Lights out._
SCENE II
Inside - A few days later.

Mrs. Handle - Iyabo.
Mrs. Handle: Iyabo, you must find something to occupy you. Some boyfriend? What about the man who brought you here? Hasn't called again has he?
Iyabo: Him? He's an idiot. Told me lies trying to impress me. A pauper, that's what he is. Even the car he drove was borrowed. I can do much better than have anything to do with his type. Wouldn't be surprised if he cannot even pay a bill for a meal!
Mrs. Handle: Well that's your ill-luck. Had to meet that kind of man. (Pause). Where's Ronke? Out?
Iyabo: Cleaning up. She says she's going out with Mr. Kar.
(Enter Mr. Kar - Middle-aged)
Mr. Kar: Good evening Mrs. Handle. (Nods at Iyabo)
Mrs. Handle: Good evening Mr. Kar. We haven't seen for two days. I hope nothing is wrong?
Mr. Kar: Just had a few important appointments to keep. You are okay, I hope. (To Iyabo). What have you been doing with yourself since I last saw you? I hope you are enjoying your stay. Do come out with us now, won't you? I'm sure Ronke will not mind.
Iyabo: That would be nice (Pause). I am off to get ready.

(Exit Iyabo).
Mrs. Handle: That was very kind of you; asking her out. I am afraid she's finding it a bit dull here. Hasn't made any friends yet. All the people she's met haven't pleased her, she says.

(Enter Ronke).
Ronke: How sweet you look, dear child! Mr. Kar has asked Iyabo to go along with you. I hope you don't mind.
Iyabo: Of course I don't mind. Is she getting ready? (Calling). Iyabo dear! Do hurry up.
(Re-enter Iyabo).
Iyabo: You don't mind my tom-boyish look, do you? Blue-jeans and no
make-up. It was the least time-

mostly thing to put on.

Mr. Kar:

Eyeing her appreciatingly). 

You look fine. (To Ronke). Don't 
you think so?

Yes she looks ...

Ronke:

(Cutting in immediately). Yes 
they both look fine.

Mrs. Handle:

Thank you all. You have re-

Iyabo: 

assured me. I was feeling rather 
odd.

(The three exeunt).

Mrs. Handle: 

Now, time for an old woman to look 
after herself.

She locks the door and settles 
down with some mags.

Lights out.

SCENE III 

Same place. A few days later. 

Ronke, Mrs. Handle.

Mrs. Handle: 

Has Mr. Kar traveled again? I have 
not seen him for days now. I hope 
you haven't had a quarrel.

Ronke: 

No. He says he is much occupied. 
Has a lot of work to do. I saw him 
briefly yesterday.

(Enter Iyabo). Iyabo my dear, I 
certainly have not been seeing 

enough of you these days. You must 
be enjoying yourself thoroughly. Who 
is the lucky boy. You must bring him 
home sometime you know.

Iyabo: 

(Mockingly & flipantly) Oh! Must I? 

Of course you must. We shall all be 
pleased to meet him. You are as bad 
as Mr. Kar. Nobody ever sees enough 
of him these days. (Pause). Poor 
man, his work must really be 
pressing on him. Used to be here 
everyday!

Iyabo: 

Mum, I have been seeing Mr. Kar. 
Ronke, I am sorry but he is the 'lucky 
boy'. I must bring home.

Ronke: 

What do you mean?

Iyabo: 

(Challengingly). 

I mean I have been going out with 
Mr. Kar!

Ronke: 

(Incredulously). You mean you 
have been seeing Mr. Kar behind my 
back?

(They stare at each other. Ronke not believing, 
Iyabo daring her to. Finally takes off her eyes).

(Exit).
Mrs. Handle: **(Alarmed).** Iyabo what are you talking about? What do you mean? You don't mean you are having an affair with Mr. Kar, do you?

Iyabo: **(Rudely).** That is what I mean mum. And just now I thought it was time we made it known.

Mrs. Handle: **(Distraught).** But you can't do that, Iyabo.

Iyabo: **(Matter of factly).** Yes, I can.

Mrs. Handle: What exactly do you plan to do, child?

Iyabo: Marry him! He tells me he has divorced his wife and I understand he's not married to Ronke.

Mrs. Handle: But Iyabo, he is not divorced yet. That is why he and Ronke are not yet married. Besides, you can't do this to your sister. You know how kind and helpful she's been to both of us. You couldn't have forgotten all that, could you?

Iyabo: I have made up my mind, mum! A pity there are no two Mr. Kar in the world. It does not matter whether he is divorced or not. What is wrong with being his mistress? Hasn't Ronke been doing just that for the past many months? She has such a big wardrobe. Not to mention the car she drives. Maybe it is high time she gave someone else a chance to acquire of her material wealth...

Mrs. Handle: **(Distraught).** Oh dear! What am I supposed to do? **(Looking up and wringing her fingers).** God knows, I can't force Iyabo to do anything. I'll surely be turned out of this house with Ronke. **(Tearfully).** She has been my whole life.

Iyabo: **(Coaxingly).** Don't worry mum, I'll take care of you.

Mrs. Handle: **(Cleaning her eyes).** Ronke will not forgive me. She will think I ought to have discouraged you **(Pause).** But we need Mr. Kar! So, if he wants you, he must have you. **(Blowing her nose).** We have no choice!

Iyabo: That's right mum. Think about that. My mind is made up. Mr. Kar or nobody.

Mrs. Handle: **(Exit).**

Mrs. Handle is left alone. Her distress is obvious. Lights go out on her sitting in a painful heap.
ACT III

SCENE I

Ronke, Mr. Kar and a Crowd.
Voice: What is the matter?
1st voice: A fight!
Voice: Who is fighting who?
Ronke: (Voice above the crowd). Such a cad! Are you not ashamed of yourself? You want to marry me, you say. Next you want to marry my younger sister. And at your age too! I should never have had anything to do with you!
1st Voice: Oh, its Ronke. That girl, she can be as sharp as a knife. Who is looking for her trouble?
2nd Voice: They say it's Mr. Kar. Good for him. I don't know what she ever saw in him.
3rd Voice: You ask that? Of course it's his money.
Mr. Kar's Voice: (Pleading). Ronke, this is unnecessary.
A scene like this will not help matters. We could settle things at home.

Ronke is apparently more outraged. She makes a bigger scene. Shouting insults and making to grab at Mr. Kar. Some people in the crowd come between them. Ronke is finally overpowered and taken away.
Exit Mr. Kar and all the crowd except two people.

1st Man: I say, that serves him right. That is what he needs. A show-down like this. And in the street too! Apparently she was too outraged to wait to have it out with him at home.

2nd Man: What caused the whole palaver?
1st Man: They say he's been chasing Ronke's sister since she came to town. What guts! He probably thinks he's the only man around.

2nd Man: What about the mother? I hear she's been living with her daughter for some time now. Couldn't she stop a thing like this?

1st Man: Stop it? She cannot face Mr. Kar. They need his money. They all have been living on him. I wonder what happens next. Bbo brother, I dey go 'jare'!

Light out as they both leave
ACT III

SCENE II

Mrs. Handle alone, Enter Ronke

Ronke's Voice: *(Shouting).* Where is that sly ungrateful thing! *(Coming in).* My sister indeed! Taking away my man! To think that I have been responsible for her all this time. and she'd choose to repay me this way! Mum, where is she.

Mrs. Handle: *(Painfully).* Ronke, you shouldn't want to fight your sister. What she's done is awful. But after all you would only be swapping places! Besides there are many other men around. We could still all live here. Let Mr. Kar have Iyabo if he wants. You know we need him.

Ronke: Mum! *(Shocked).* What are you saying? What would people say? Besides, do you think I don't have any feelings? No pride? I shall not stay under the same roof as Iyabo. I am going to pack out and you are coming with me.

Mrs. Handle: Do not make things so difficult for me my child. After all Iyabo is still my daughter and at my age I shouldn't be going from place to place if I can avoid it.

Ronke: O.K. Mum. Please yourself. I see you have chosen to stay here with Iyabo. I am going away. But please do me the favour of sending all my things to me. I'll send someone for them.

*Exit - Banging the door.*

Mrs. Handle *(alone):* I know what people will say. They will blame me. Yes they will say I ought to have gone with Ronke. And they will be right. Whoever heard of a mother doing what I have done. Sanctioning what Iyabo has done. Yes, by staying here that is what it amounts to. But I cannot follow Ronke about. I am an old woman and its much easier to remain here. After all Iyabo is still my daughter. And Mr. Kar is rich. I need him *(Pause).* Iyabo shouldn't have done what she did. But how could she avoid envying her sister's big wardrobe and sleek car. Must have been most flattered when he showed her some interest. If only it didn't matter having both sisters! *(Pause).* Yes, I'd rather stay here with Iyabo. Ronke will have to forgive me.

*Lights Out!*
ACT III

SCENE III

Mrs. Handle alone.
As in the opening scene of the play.
This time she is snoring away,
sprawled in an uneccoming position.
It is obvious that she was overtaken
by sleep while reading. The Magazine
she must have been looking at has
dropped from her hand in a disorderly
sprawl too. There is a loud knock on
the door.

Mrs. Handle: (Turning in sleep). Is that you Ronke? I
am coming! Don’t go away!

There is another knock. Finally she
wakes and looks around. It dawns on
her that someone must be at the door.
She walks towards it reluctantly and
opens.

Boy and girl step in. She is surprised
to see them. She holds a big breath.

Lights go out!