

SLAVE

BY KEVIN FEGAN

A stage adaptation of the original book

by Mende Nazer & Damien Lewis.

Commissioned & Produced by Feelgood

Theatre Productions at The Lowry 2010,

followed by national tour 2011.

Directed by Caroline Clegg.

(c) Kevin Fegan

www.feelgoodtheatre.co.uk

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ENSEMBLE CAST

4 FEMALE 4 MALE

MAIN FEMALE CHARACTERS

MENDE

UMI

KEHKO

RAHAB

MAIN MALE CHARACTERS

KUJUR

BA

BABO

DAMIEN

APART FROM MENDE AND KUJUR, ENSEMBLE CHARACTERS

DOUBLE AS OTHER CHARACTERS AND THE CHORUS.

SOME SUGGESTED DOUBLING:

UMI – also NUNGHA / ASHCUANA

KEHKO – also NANU / MADINA /

RAHAB – also HANAN / FATIMA

BA – also SHADAL / LONDON BABO/ MUSTAPHA

BABO – also PETER / OMER/ ALUAN AKUAL BOL / MONIR

DAMIEN – also ARAB RAIDER / ABDUL AZZIM / JANINEY / AL

KORONKY

ACT 1 SCENE 1

LONDON: SEPTEMBER 2000.

SCREEN CONTENT? MUSIC.

MENDE IS ALONE IN A ROOM. SHE IS HUNCHED OVER
LIKE AN OLD WOMAN, HOLDING ON TO HER SMALL,
OLD, YELLOW TEDDY BEAR, "URAN". SHE TRIES TO
LIGHT THE GAS FIRE AND FAILS.

"MENDE KANDO" – A STORYTELLING SONG.

CHORUS

Where is the little one?

Where has she gone?

Where are you Mende kando?

Where is the little one

Who fetches water from the river?

Where is the little one

Who fetches firewood from the forest?

Where has she gone?

Where are you Mende kando?

Where is the little one

Who walks the green hills of the Nuba Mountains?

Who runs in the caves with rivers flowing through them?

Where is the little one

Who sits under the acacia trees?
Who plays with handfuls of stones in the red earth?
Who cracks open the goro gorok and drinks the milk?
Who loves to eat the roasted locusts?
Where has she gone?
Where are you Mende kando?

Where is the little one
Who has been drifting like a speck of sorghum dust
In the wind, all these long years?
There is a dark storm in bilabara,
Land of the khawajas, a country far away
They call Brittania,
Where a young woman remembers
The little one - where has she gone?
Where are you Mende kando?

MENDE

I am from a people who never write anything down, who
spend their lives telling each other stories. For us, life is a
warm fire around which stories are told. But this fire, I don't
even know how to switch it on. Is this freedom? This fire that
does not work? This room where I do not belong? Is this what
I have escaped to?

MENDE LOOKS INTO A MIRROR WITH URAN.

Where is that little girl who was ripped from the arms of her
parents and sold into slavery?

KUJUR

Freedom has a terrifying beauty, Mende,
you will have to learn again how not to be afraid.

MENDE

You are kujur, you can guide me?

KUJUR

Mende, your name means "gazelle" –
of all the creatures in the Nuba Mountains,
not the hyena or wild goat,
not the monkey or mountain lion,
but the gazelle, in all her graceful glory.

Become the creature you were born to be:
raise up your head, lift your shoulders,
stand proud like your ancestors.

Mende Nazer, you are Nuba,
of the Karko tribe
whose bloodline goes back to a time
when we lived along the great Nile,
direct descendants of ancient Sudan and Egypt,
whose ancestors were Pharoahs.

THERE IS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

MENDE

Please, kujur, don't leave me, I need you.

KUJUR

I am with you in spirit.

Listen to the khawaja, Damien,

he is "Corba" – he who can do many things.

KUJUR AND CHORUS DISAPPEAR. ENTER DAMIEN.

DAMIEN

Assalam alaikum.

MENDE

Alaikum wassalam.

DAMIEN

How are you?

MENDE

Please, look out the window – who is there?

DAMIEN

There's no one there.

MENDE

Please?

DAMIEN CHECKS THE WINDOW.

DAMIEN

Don't worry, they can't get you now.

MENDE

You do not know them like I do. They will come after me.

DAMIEN

Hey, we won't let any harm come to you.

MENDE

They are the masters, they are the rulers.

DAMIEN

Not in this country, they aren't. Your lawyers have applied for
asylum.

MENDE

How can this thing called "asylum" save me?

DAMIEN

Yeah, good point. Look, there are laws -

MENDE

What is Law? Where is kujur in this land who can bring
justice?

DAMIEN

Mende, you are free.

HE HOLDS UP HIS CAMERA.

I have the pictures to prove it.

MENDE

Please, again, the window?

DAMIEN

Maybe another time?

DAMIEN PUTS DOWN HIS CAMERA AND CHECKS THE
WINDOW AGAIN.

DAMIEN

See – no bogeymen.

MENDE

I don't understand.

DAMIEN

You're safe, believe me.

MENDE

How do I know I can trust you? You are not Nuba.

DAMIEN TOUCHES HIS HAND TO HIS HEART

REPEATEDLY.

MENDE

Where you learn this? How can you feel my suffering?

DAMIEN

I've worked in the Sudan for years, I'm a journalist.

MENDE

You have been to my homeland?

DAMIEN

I've seen the Nuba Mountains, do you get my drift?

MENDE CROSSES HER HANDS ACROSS HER HEART

AND ON TO HER SHOULDERS.

Yes, I will listen deeply to what you have to say.

MENDE

I want only to see my family and to return to my people.

DAMIEN

Mende, it's not possible just yet.

MENDE

I don't speak well your language. Why is not possible?

DAMIEN

In time, hopefully, you will meet your family.

MENDE

I am fearful they will take revenge on them for what I have done.

DAMIEN

The Embassy will be embarrassed by the publicity about your case, they won't dare make matters worse by hurting your family.

MENDE

I cannot believe it is happening, Mr Damien.

DAMIEN

You're still living the nightmare, Mende, it's understandable. Is there anything you need tonight?

MENDE

Please, "muslaiyah" – a prayer-mat.

DAMIEN

Hmm, not really my thing, but I'll see what I can do.

MENDE

Show me please how to light fire?

DAMIEN

I thought you'd be an expert, living in the bush?

MENDE LOOKS UPSET AS DAMIEN TURNS ON THE GAS AND IGNITES THE FIRE.

I'm only teasing. Is your little bear feeling the cold?

MENDE

This is Uran.

DAMIEN

Hello, Uran, how are you liking our weather in London?

MENDE

I gave her name after my cat, when I was a child. "Uran"
means "blackie".

DAMIEN

You have a bear that is really a cat and it's yellow but really
it's black – are all Nuba as confusing as you, Mende?

MENDE

You have wicked tongue, Corba.

DAMIEN

Be patient, Mende. Things will change for you, all in good
time.

MENDE

As slave, you must know I have patience.

EXIT DAMIEN. MENDE SITS BY THE FIRE,
REMEMBERING HER CHILDHOOD AROUND AN OPEN
FIRE. MUSIC.

ACT 1 SCENE 2

EARLY 1990'S. KARKO VILLAGE IN THE NUBA
MOUNTAINS. MUSIC. SCREEN CONTENT?
MENDE'S FATHER, "BA", IS SAT AROUND THE FIRE IN
THE COURTYARD OF THEIR HOME. HE IS JOINED BY
MENDE'S MOTHER, "UMI", AND HER BROTHER, "BABO".

BA

Come, wife, we have eaten well. Come Babo, my son, we
have worked hard in the fields today, it is time to relax.

(CALLING TO MENDE) Come, come.

MENDE HESITATES.

Come Mende, sit a while around the good fire with your old
father.

MENDE LEAVES HER FLAT WITH THE GAS FIRE AND
JOINS HER FAMILY. SHE IS ABOUT 10 YEARS OLD. SHE
GOES TO HER FATHER AND RESTS HER HEAD ON HIS
LAP.

BA

Look at the clouds, Mende, cuddling the hills.

MENDE

One day, Ba, I'd love to touch the clouds. What are they like,
hard or soft?

BA

Well, a long time ago, the sky was so low that you could reach
up and touch them. But, one day, a greedy woman was

making a huge bowl of sorghum porridge. As she was building up the fire, she thought to herself that she would take some of the clouds to eat with the porridge, because they were soft and creamy like butter. She stoked up her fire until the big pot of porridge was bubbling away. But, just as she was about to seize some of the clouds to eat, the sky noticed how big and hot her fire had become. The sky became very afraid, because it feared that all the clouds were going to melt. In fact, the sky was so scared that it rushed away from the earth until it was as far and as high as it is now. So, if it hadn't been for this greedy woman, you could still reach up and touch the sky and feel how soft the clouds are.

BABO

I think Ba has gone soft in the head.

BA

We'll soon see who is soft when you join in the wrestling this year.

BABO

Really? Can I really join the wrestling?

BA

Of course. How else are we to make a champion of you?

UMI

Don't you think he's a little young? There are some big men in the contest.

BA

Nonsense. The boy has to learn.

UMI

Let's talk about it first.

BA

There's nothing to talk about, I'm his father.

UMI

And I'm his mother.

BA

I could always fetch another wife.

UMI

Off you go, see if you can find another woman fool enough to
put up with you.

MENDE

No, Ba, we don't want another mother!

BA

Why would I do that? Your mother knows she is like ten wives
to me.

UMI

Your father was a great "kuul" when he was younger –
champion of the Karko tribe.

BA

We fought hard in those days because we worked hard – not
like the younger ones today.

BABO

I work hard!

MENDE

And so do I.

BABO

School isn't work.

MENDE

You take that back!

MENDE AND BABO WRESTLE.

UMI

That's enough now!

MENDE

I fetch the water and the firewood after school.

BABO

Women's work.

BA

Don't let your mother hear you saying that.

UMI

I hear.

BABO

Sorry, Umi.

UMI

Mende will have to study hard if she is to become a doctor.

BA

She only wants to become a doctor since you were seriously

ill, Babo, and we had to take you to the big hospital in Dilling.

UMI

That's right, they walked with you for two days.

MENDE

Not so sure I want to save him now.

UMI

Your father's hands are rough with making the baobab rope to keep you at school.

MENDE

I know, Umi. That is why I am top of the class. Thank you, Ba, you will be proud of me one day.

ENTER KUJUR & CHORUS. SCREEN CONTENT? MUSIC.

KUJUR

This is how we live.

CHORUS

At the centre of the Earth, in a remote part of Sudan. At the foothills of the Nuba Mountains.

MENDE

Our round houses cling to the rock like birds' nests.

CHORUS

A village of mud huts with thatched roofs made of grass.

BA

Our home is two huts facing each other with a yard in between, surrounded by a wooden fence. Beyond the fence is a compound where we keep our sheep and goats and stores

of grain.

UMI

In our garden we grow maize and beans.

BABO

In the fields lower down we grow sorghum and tend our cattle.

BA

I am not rich but I am not poor.

It is a privilege to keep cattle, Babo. One day, this herd will be your inheritance.

KUJUR

The spirit of the cattle is in the Nuba. We do not eat the cattle unless the occasion demands it. Our tribes are farmers and hunters.

MENDE

I face the mountains to the East and pray to Allah five times a day.

KUJUR

Yes, but who do they come to when they are sick, when they are frightened, when they need rain or when they want justice?

MENDE

It is true: Kujur is the one who can speak to the spirits.

BA

If my dagger was stolen, I would go to Kujur. I pay him a chicken and he sends word: if the dagger is not returned in

two days, the man who stole it will die by lightning strike. The thief is afraid and returns the dagger. The Kujur calls for me and I sit with the thief and Kujur. The thief confesses and I have the right to forgive him or not. Kujur wants me to forgive him for good community relations. Kujur is a force for good. A real Kujur can never do anything bad.

CHORUS

Mende is the fifth and last child. She has two sisters and two brothers. Her sisters, Shokan and Kunyant, live in neighbouring compounds with their husbands and children. Her brothers, Babo and Kwandsharan, live outside the family compound in the men's house, where the unmarried males eat and sleep together. Mende's uncles and aunties live within shouting distance of their home. There are three beds in their hut: for father, mother and Mende.

MENDE

But I always end up in my father's bed – with my cat, Uran, sleeping on my tummy.

ENTER KEHKO. SCREEN CONTENT?

CHORUS

This is Mende's best friend, Kehko. They are walking back from school.

MENDE JOINS KEHKO.

MENDE

Why does the teacher give us Arab names? I am not

"Zainab", I am Mende.

KEHKO

We have to speak their language or we could not talk to other peoples, not even other Nuba.

MENDE

Yes, but does she have to beat us with cane from the acacia tree?

KEHKO

You are beaten because you are a naughty girl.

MENDE CHASES KEHKO.

Stop! Stop! I need to go pee-pee.

MENDE

Go into the bush, I will stand guard.

KEHKO GOES INTO THE BUSH. MENDE IS A LITTLE
FRIGHTENED ON HER OWN.

(CALLING) I need to go too! Wait for me!

MENDE FOLLOWS.

KEHKO

I can hear something moving, Mende. What do you think it is?

MENDE

It's probably just a mouse.

THE GIRLS SCREAM AND COME RUNNING BACK.

KEHKO

It came slithering towards me.

MENDE

It was huge.

KEHKO

The biggest snake I've ever seen.

MENDE

I couldn't stop peeing.

KEHKO

I think I've pee-pee'd all down my leg.

THEY COLLAPSE WITH LAUGHTER.

I don't want to die from snakebite.

MENDE

Like poor Aunty Nhe. It was the first time I saw someone die.

KEHKO

We were only little children.

MENDE

My mother went with her to cut raffia in the forest. They arranged to meet in the shade of the big baobab tree; but Aunty never arrived.

KEHKO

What did she look like when you found her? Was it horrible?

MENDE

Her face had swollen like a balloon. Her head was jerking backwards and her feet and arms were twitching. My father found two puncture marks on her arm. Part of one fang was broken off in her skin.

KEHKO

Urgh! Don't tell me any more.

MENDE

We were all crying. My father tried to force drops of water into her mouth, but her jaws were locked solid.

KEHKO

I can remember the men carrying her back to the village.

MENDE

Her face was so swollen that her eyes had completely disappeared. That night she began to bleed from her mouth, her nostrils, her ears and her eyes. She was sweating blood.

KEHKO

How can this be?

MENDE

I couldn't watch any more and she died. Everyone was wailing and crying. The women washed her and the men took her body to the "tilling", the place of the dead.

KEHKO

The funeral lasted for three days. I saw your father slit the throat of three goats.

CHORUS

"Allahu Akhbar! God is Great! Allahu Akhbar!

MENDE

If you do not give praise to Allah, the meat will not be halal.

(PAUSE) Poor Aunty Nhe.

KEHKO

Look at the shadow from the tree: the sun is falling and we still have to fetch water. Keep your eyes peeled for snakes.

THEY LEAVE. SCREEN CONTENT?

CHORUS

Some days Mende's father would go hunting in the mountains with his spear and axe or his bow and arrow.

BA

I might kill a rabbit or a shengokor. I carry a gourd full of drinking water and a cow's horn. If I kill a larger animal, like a deer or hyena, I blow on my horn and the sound echoes across the hills.

CHORUS

Men would set off to help him carry back the dead animal.

BA

Babo likes to go with me and hunt birds with his slingshot made from raffia palm.

BABO

Look, Ba, at the hairy black monkeys. Quick with your spear!

BA

No, Babo, Nuba never hunt the monkeys.

BABO

Why don't we kill the monkeys?

BA

Because we don't eat them.

BABO

But why don't we eat them?

BA

Have you never considered why they look so human?

BABO

No, Ba.

BA

Because there was a time when they really were people.

BABO

How can that be?

BA

They have been bad people during their lives, so Allah, in his wisdom, has decided to turn them into monkeys.

BABO

If I am bad, will I be turned into a monkey?

BA

Not unless you're very bad.

BABO

I can still eat my pigeon, can't I?

BA

Yes, Babo, we will feast on your pigeon.

SCREEN CONTENT? MUSIC - THE CAST TAKE UP THE
ONDO AND DRUMS.

CHORUS

All Nuba boys and girls play the "ondo". We play each day

and make up songs of our lives.

KUJUR

So when I speak to the spirits of our ancestors to bring us rain
for the next harvest, and the rains come, we play music and
dance and sing for joy.

CHORUS – "RAIN SONG"

Are coucoure, are konduk ducre,
The rain is coming,
There will be a good harvest,
No one will go hungry,
The rain is coming,
Are coucoure, are konduk ducre.

BABO

Ba, did the kujur really make it rain?

BA

Yes, Babo, the Kujur made it rain.

BABO

But what about the time when the rains failed?

BA

That time the Kujur did not have the help of Allah.

CHORUS

One year, the water runs dry. The rains do not come. Our
crops fail and there is no food.

UMI

The old and the young are dying of starvation.

CHORUS

A huge cloud of dust appears on the horizon. A line of gleaming white trucks emerges from the dust.

BA

Khawajas!

MENDE

Their skin is so pale, they look like ghosts.

BA

These khawajas are very good people. They come from bilabara - far, far away - because they know the rains have failed and we are starving.

UMI

Each family is given a sack of lentils, a drum of cooking oil, a blanket and some sorghum seeds for planting the following year.

CHORUS REPEAT THE "RAIN SONG".

ACT 1 SCENE 3

SCREEN CONTENT? MUSIC. THE KUJUR DISTRIBUTES
ASH FOR THE MEN TO COVER THEMSELVES. BABO
PREPARES FOR THE WRESTLING CONTEST.

KUJUR

It is harvest time. The moon and the stars are in position so
the wrestling can commence as soon as our guests from the
surrounding tribes arrive.

CHORUS

This is the year the Karko host the contest.

KUJUR

You must prepare for the wrestling contest. Take the sacred
mixture of ash from burning wood and spread it on your faces
and decorate your bodies.

THE WOMEN PREPARE SEPARATELY FROM THE MEN.

UMI

You must prepare, Mende, to follow Babo to the wrestling. We
must oil your skin to make it soft and shiny in the sun.

MENDE

Umi, what are those scars on your body?

UMI

They are not scars, Mende, they are for decoration. When I
was a young woman all the girls and boys would make these
patterns on their bodies.

MENDE

Why?

UMI

They are signs of great beauty. Do you not think they are beautiful?

MENDE

Yes, of course; but did it not hurt?

UMI

Yes, it hurt. Your grandmother would cut the patterns into the skin with a sharp stone until the skin scarred. We were taught to be brave so I never complained.

MENDE

Why haven't I got any?

UMI

It is a very old tradition, but it was dropped before you were born. It is sad but I understand why.

MENDE

How will I look beautiful?

UMI PRESENTS MENDE WITH A "BEAD SKIRT".

UMI

I have made this for you, especially for the occasion.

MENDE

Oh, thank you, thank you.

UMI OFFERS HER A NECKLACE.

UMI

This necklace has been in our family for generations. I would like you to wear it. Let me help you.

UMI PUTS THE NECKLACE ON MENDE.

MENDE

I will never take it off.

UMI

When you are married, you will wear this necklace.

MENDE

Who am I to marry, Umi?

UMI

His name is Juba, from the Juba village.

MENDE

Have I ever met him?

UMI

No. It was arranged at your birth.

MENDE

What if I don't love him?

UMI

You will. Your father has chosen well. Don't worry, Mende, no one is forced to marry against their will.

MENDE

Do you remember Kunyant's wedding?

UMI

How could I forget your sister's wedding, it was a great

occasion. She was very happy.

MENDE

But why was she crying on her wedding night? She was in pain and there was blood on the sheets, I saw it in the morning. Did her husband hurt her?

UMI

No, Mende, he did not hurt her. It is painful at first, but after a while it is a great pleasure to lie with your husband.

MENDE

Is it as painful as the circumcision? Because if it is, I am never getting married.

UMI

Don't worry your pretty little head. Soon, when you become a young woman, I will tell you all about it.

BABO IS READY AND JOINS THEM.

BABO

Hey, look at you! Is this really my little sister? She's the most beautiful girl in the village.

MENDE

Yes, it is. And today I will clap and sing for you and you will be a champion.

KEHKO JOINS MENDE. BABO JOINS THE MEN.

Kehko, you look as beautiful as a bride on her wedding day.

KEHKO

We look like sisters.

MENDE

Umi says I am to be married one day to a boy called Juba.

Do you know who you will be married to, Kehko?

KEHKO

No, but I know the "bride price". My father has been promised four cows and twenty goats for me.

MENDE

It's not enough, you are priceless.

KEHKO

I am from a good family and strong of character, but the more educated you are, the higher the price.

MENDE

They should pay for your beauty as well, Kehko.

KEHKO

Come on, let's go and look at the boys wrestling and see if any of them are worth anything!

SCREEN CONTENT? MUSIC.

CHORUS

We follow a path into the mountains to a distant part of our tribal area. Vast processions of people are gathering as far as the eye can see. Each village flag is carried by its champion wrestler at the head of the procession. The women form the rear of the procession, carrying on their heads calabashes of water and soup for the wrestlers and beer for the rest. The contest is being held on a flat plain, surrounded by hills on

three sides. The wrestlers sit apart from the crowd. There are more than fifty wrestlers from our tribe and similar numbers from five other tribes. Several thousand people assemble around their respective flags.

KUJUR BLOWS THE LONG HORN.

People dance around the wrestling ring. The wrestlers stamp their feet so the stones rattle in their gourds around their waists and the bells shake around their ankles. They clash their spears against their animal-skin shields and snort like the cow horns. They square up to each other to select an opponent. Several pairs of wrestlers fight at the same time and each pair has its own referee. A large, stocky man, Shadal, selects Babo. He calls out a challenge:

SHADAL

Heya! Heya! (Let's fight! Let's fight!).

SHADAL PICKS UP A HANDFUL OF SAND AND LETS IT RUN THROUGH HIS FINGERS. BABO GETS INTO POSITION TO LOCK ON.

KEHKO

Stop him, Mende, he's going to get hurt.

MENDE

No, no, Babo! Don't fight him, he's too fat.

BABO

Don't worry, little sister.

MENDE

Umi said you're only allowed to fight someone your own size.

CROWD LAUGH.

BABO

Don't embarrass me, Mende.

WHISTLING AND DRUMMING AS THE YOUNG MEN

WRESTLE. MENDE SHADOWS BABO'S EVERY MOVE,

WILLING HIM TO WIN.

MENDE

Be careful! Stay back!

SHADAL

Perhaps your sister could fight for you?

BABO

If you've seen the elephant, why go for its shadow?

BABO THROWS SHADAL TO THE GROUND AND RAISES

HIS HANDS IN VICTORY. MENDE AND KEHKO RUSH TO

HIM AND PLACE BEADS AROUND HIS NECK.

EVERYONE SINGS A VICTORY SONG FOR BABO.

CHORUS – "VICTORY SONG"

Babo, cherio – condore shine,

Mende net – condore shine,

Kunyant net – condore shine,

Kwandsharan net – condore shine,

Shokan net – condore shine,

Babo kuul – Hussain do.

Babo, a youth – in the wrestling ring,
Mende's brother – in the wrestling ring,
Kunyant's brother – in the wrestling ring,
Kwandsharan's brother – in the wrestling ring,
Shokan's brother – in the wrestling ring,
Babo the champion – the son of Nazer.

KUJUR PRESENTS BABO WITH AN ACACIA BRANCH.

KUJUR

Take this simple branch from the acacia to mark your victory.
It is a symbol of growth and strength. Burn it and use half of
the ash next time you fight. The other half you must keep, for
it will accompany you to your grave. The ash is the spirit of
the man, his sacred self.

SHADAL CONGRATULATES BABO.

SHADAL

You are very strong for a thin man.

BABO

And you are very fat.

THEY LAUGH AND THROW THEIR ARMS AROUND EACH
OTHER. SHADAL LIFTS BABO OFF THE GROUND.

SHADAL

Look, you are so light. How is it that you managed to beat
me? What's your secret?

BABO

I was taught by a great champion – my father.

KEHKO

(TO MENDE)

I just heard some girls talking about the thin boy who beat the fat man. I told them I knew him, they were very impressed.

MENDE

I hope you told them I was his sister?

BABO APPROACHES.

I was worried you were going to get hurt. I'm so proud of you, Babo.

BABO

I told you not to worry. The fat man is like a balloon. One pin and he bursts. The thin man is always stronger than the fat man.

KEHKO

All the girls are talking about you.

BABO

Come on, then, you'd better introduce me.

CHORUS

At nightfall, there is great feasting and dancing and singing in our village. Our lives have been like this since time began.

ACT 1 SCENE 4

SCREEN CONTENT? MUSIC.

NIGHT-TIME IN THE VILLAGE.

CHORUS

It is the end of the dry season, when
the sun beats down on a cloudless sky.

It is deep in the night,
the village is fast asleep.

MENDE

An eerie orange glow flickers across our hut,
there are muffled cries in the distance;
Uran stretches, my eyes peel,
my mother rises, my father opens the door.

BA

(SHOUTING)

Ook tom gua! Ook tom gua! Fire in the village!

MENDE

I grab Uran in one arm,
my father grabs the other
and we hurry into the yard
with my mother.

CHORUS

Arab men are running through the village,
throwing flaming torches at thatched roofs;
family's are screaming and crying

and burning alive.

BA

(SHOUTING)

Janjaweed! Janjaweed!

CHORUS

People scatter in all directions.

BA

(SHOUTING)

Run to the hills! Run! Run!

MENDE

The raiders are quietly slitting men's throats
like chickens or goats,
their curved daggers glinting in the firelight;
they are forcing women to the ground
and pawing at their bodies;
they are dragging children away to the forest.

BA

Hold on to me for dear life, Mende!

MENDE

My father stops dead in his tracks.
Up ahead, a ragged line
of Arabs on horseback
are blocking our escape to the hills.
I see their wild, staring eyes and scraggy beards,
their ripped and dirty clothes;

they are brandishing their swords at us.

BA

(SHOUTING)

Janjaweed! Janjaweed!

MENDE

We run back to the village
and the horsemen charge
to the deafening sound of gunfire.

I trip over

and Uran slips away –

Uran! Uran!

My mother is nowhere to be seen.

BA

Mende, run! Run!

MENDE

My lungs are gasping in the cold night air,
my legs are heavy,
waves of exhaustion wash over me.

BA

(CALLING)

Look out, Mende!

MENDE

Cattle stampede towards us:

I am knocked to the ground

and hooves are pounding all around me;

I curl up tight in a ball,
convinced I am going to die.
I feel a dirty hand around my mouth
and smell a foul breath.

ARAB RAIDER

Shut up! Lie still!
I want to help you.
If you shout, the others will kill you.
I will keep you safe
and return you to your family;
come with me.

MENDE

He marches me away.
I see a bloody curved dagger
and pistol at his waist;
I taste the spill of blood;
I smell the stench of burning,
I hear the screams of women and children,
I am touched by the hand of terror.
Allah, please save me,
please save my family!

CHORUS

The children are herded into the forest
and huddle together in fear
for the rest of the night.

MENDE

Where is my friend, Kehko?

CHORUS

The raiders emerge from the smoke,
smeared with blood and crazed with violence,
to a thunderous chant
echoing around the valley:
"Allahu Akhbar! Allahu Akhbar!
God is Great! God is Great!
Allahu Akhbar! Allahu Akhbar!"
Each child is taken by an Arab
and thrown like an old sack onto his horse.

MENDE

I hold on to the saddle for dear life;
he laughs and jokes about his promise
to return me to my family.
As we ride through the dense forest for hours,
he grabs my tiny breasts
and forces his hand between my legs.
My hands cling to the saddle,
I can't defend myself;
I beg him to leave me alone.
When we stop to pee-pee,
he attacks me:
I shout, I cry, I wrestle;

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he hits me hard in the face,
bites my lip until it bleeds,
pushes his tongue inside my mouth,
forces my legs apart;
his hand tears the flesh
made narrow by circumcision;
I scream, he beats me
and pushes something between my legs;
I think it must be a knife or a gun
and that he is going to kill me;
suddenly he groans and rolls away;
I pray for him to have a heart-attack
and curl tight into a ball, crying to myself.
MUSIC. SCREEN CONTENT?

ACT 2 SCENE 1

SCREEN CONTENT? MUSIC.

AT A MILITARY CAMP, THE SOLDIERS ARE GREETING
THE ARAB RAIDERS. MENDE AND ANOTHER GIRL,
ASHCUANA, ARE COMFORTING EACH OTHER.

SOLDIER

How was the ride, brothers? Did you have a good time?

ARAB RAIDER 1

We had a very pleasurable journey.

THEY LAUGH.

ARAB RAIDER 2

We only wish it could have lasted longer.

SOLDIER

These Nuba girls, they are very difficult to open, no?

ARAB RAIDER 1

It's true they've been circumcised just like the Arab girls, but
these Nuba are so small it makes it even harder.

SOLDIER

What do you want, sympathy?

THEY LAUGH.

Did everything go according to plan?

ARAB RAIDER 2

Like a dream.

EXIT ARAB RAIDERS.

ASHCUANA

I can't go to the toilet, it hurts so much.

MENDE

Me too.

ASHCUANA

He cut me down there.

MENDE

He was trying to eat my mouth, Ashcuana, like it was meat.

ASHCUANA

When will this nightmare end?

MENDE

I don't understand: why hasn't Allah turned these bad men
into hairy black monkeys?

SOLDIER APPROACHES THE GIRLS.

SOLDIER

There's no need to cry, you're the lucky ones; you're going to
a very good place.

SOLDIER THROWS A COUPLE OF MILITARY SHIRTS TO
THEM.

Here, you can wear these.

ASHCUANA

This is not a dress, it is a stinking old army shirt.

MENDE

Why don't the soldiers rescue us from the Mujahidin?

AN ARAB SLAVE TRADER, ABDUL AZZIM, ARRIVES TO

COLLECT THE GIRLS.

SOLDIER

These two are yours.

AZZIM

What are your names? Answer me.

ASHCUANA

Ashcuana.

MENDE

Mende.

AZZIM

Get into the back of the truck.

THE GIRLS CLIMB INTO THE TRUCK AND AZZIM DRIVES
AWAY.

ASHCUANA

Where is he taking us?

MENDE

I think I recognise this place? This is Dilling, where my brother
Babo came to the hospital.

ASHCUANA

Could you find your way back to the mountains from here?

MENDE

Yes, I'm sure I could.

ASHCUANA

When he slows down in the town, let's jump out and make a
run for it.

MENDE

It could be our only chance.

AZZIM

What's going on back there? Go to sleep!

TRUCK ACCELERATES OUT OF TOWN AND INTO THE
DESERT. THE GIRLS HUDDLE TOGETHER FOR WARMTH
AND SLEEP AS THE TRUCK DRIVES THROUGH A SUN
AND A MOON. AZZIM POPS PILLS TO KEEP HIMSELF
AWAKE. THE GIRLS WAKE UP.

ASHCUANA

Where are we? We've been bouncing around like cattle for
hours. I'm freezing.

MENDE

Look! What are those lights on the horizon?

ASHCUANA

It cannot be the moon, so where is the light coming from? Is
the desert on fire?

AZZIM

Welcome to Khartoum!

SCREEN CONTENT?

THE GIRLS STAND UP IN THE BACK OF THE PICK-UP.

AZZIM IS CONSTANTLY HONKING HIS HORN AND
SHOUTING ABUSE.

ASHCUANA

Where are all the cows? And goats? And crops?

MENDE

What do these people eat?

ASHCUANA

Is this place made for the people or the cars?

MENDE

Where do all these cars live?

ASHCUANA

Do you think the big cars give birth to the small cars?

MENDE

Look! That one is so small, it has two wheels only.

ASHCUANA

It must have just been born today.

MENDE

Look! Look! Those trees are growing light for their fruit!

ASHCUANA

They must be "light-trees".

MENDE

Some of the houses are as high as the hills back home.

ASHCUANA

The women, they have such beautiful clothes.

MENDE

Their hair is so long.

AZZIM STOPS THE TRUCK OUTSIDE HIS HOUSE AND

SLUMPS ON THE STEERING-WHEEL, EXHAUSTED.

ASHCUANA

Why have we stopped?

MENDE

Look at this house? What is it made of?

ASHCUANA

It is like a magical palace.

MENDE

This Arab must be very rich indeed.

A NUBA WOMAN GREETES AZZIM. IT IS ASHA, AZZIM'S
SLAVE.

ASHA

Salaam alaikum, master Azzim.

AZZIM

Alaikum wasalaam. Take my bags.

ASHA

Salaam alaikum atfall - hello and welcome children.

AZZIM

No time for talking! Take the girls to the basement.

ASHA

Yes, master.

SLAVE LEADS THE GIRLS INSIDE TO THE BASEMENT.

ACT 2 SCENE 2

THE BASEMENT OF AZZIM'S HOUSE IN KHARTOUM.
ASHA BRINGS YOGHURT AND SPOONS FOR THE GIRLS.
THEY LOOK CONFUSED.

ASHA

What's the matter?

MENDE

We are hungry, but we don't know what to do with these
shiny, metal things.

ASHA

It's a spoon. Look.

SHE DEMONSTRATES. THE GIRLS TRY AND FAIL. ASHA
LAUGHS.

ASHCUANA

Can we please use the bread, auntie?

ASHA

Of course.

THEY EAT.

MENDE

Auntie, are you from the Nuba?

ASHA

Yes, I am Nuba. My name is Asha.

THE GIRLS HUG ASHA.

ASHCUANA

How long have you lived here?

ASHA

Since I was a little girl like you. More than twenty years.

MENDE

Where is your mother and father?

ASHA

Let's not talk about that.

ASHCUANA

Why are we here in this grave?

ASHA

It is a room under the house.

ASHCUANA

It's not natural to live underground - we are not dead.

MENDE

What will happen to us?

ASHA

You must do whatever they tell you to do. If you don't, they
will beat you.

ASHCUANA

How long will we have to stay here?

ASHA

Each week, master Azzim, he brings new girls here like you.
Other Arabs will come and take you to their homes.

MENDE

What for?

ASHA

To work for them. You should sleep now. I will be waking you up early in the morning. Here are some fresh clothes for you. We will talk tomorrow.

THE NEXT DAY, THE GIRLS ARE PLAYING IN THE BASEMENT.

ASHCUANA

Look, I found some stones – we could play “kak”.
THEY PLAY A GAME WITH THE STONES, LIKE “JACKS”.

AZZIM

What’s all this?

MENDE

We are just playing the stone game.

AZZIM

Don’t answer back! You think you are here to play?
AZZIM TIPS A LARGE SACK OF ONIONS ON THE FLOOR.
Slice these onions. When you’ve finished those, I’ll bring another sack.

THE GIRLS START PEELING.

AZZIM RETURNS WITH AN ARAB WOMAN, RAHAB.

AZZIM

See for yourself, which one you’d like?

RAHAB

Oh, you have them preparing food for Ramadan – how useful!

AZZIM

They are going to be very hard workers.

RAHAB

They're much prettier than the last lot.

AZZIM

And very clean. We make sure they take two showers a day.

RAHAB

Which one would you recommend?

AZZIM

This one is Ashcuana –

RAHAB

They have such stupid names.

AZZIM

This is Mende, that's not so difficult to say; but of course you can call them whatever you want.

RAHAB

(POINTING AT MENDE)

This one seems the best.

AZZIM

A good choice. I'll have her ready for you while we conduct the business upstairs.

AZZIM SIGNALS TO ASHA TO PREPARE MENDE AND HE EXITS WITH RAHAB.

MENDE

But I don't want to leave you and Ashcuana.

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ASHA

You have no choice. You must leave with this lady. She is your new master. You must obey her, Mende.

ASHCUANA

When will I see you again?

ASHA

You won't see her again. Remember, Mende, do whatever your new master says.

ACT 2 SCENE 3

RAHAB'S HOUSE. KHARTOUM.

AN OUTSIDE SHED WHERE RAHAB HAS BROUGHT
MENDE.

RAHAB

Come inside, yebit.

MENDE LOOKS SHOCKED BY HER USE OF THE WORD
"YEBIT".

This is where you will sleep. Oh, this is a light switch. When I
leave, you must turn the light off. You do that like this - see?

When I wake you in the morning, go to the outside bathroom
and clean yourself. I don't want you stinking up the house.

Then come and find me in the kitchen.

RAHAB LEAVES AND LOCKS THE DOOR BEHIND HER.

MENDE PLAYS WITH THE LIGHT SWITCH BEFORE
SWITCHING IT OFF. SHE SITS DOWN ON HER MATTRESS
AND PULLS HER LEGS UNDER HER CHIN AND TRIES TO
HUG HERSELF TIGHTLY.

KUJUR APPEARS. MENDE SENSES HIS PRESENCE BUT
CANNOT SEE HIM AT THIS POINT.

MENDE

She called me "yebit" – "a girl worthy of no name". But I have
a name?

KUJUR

They can take away your name, but they can never take away

your spirit, Mende.

MENDE

Why do they do this?

KUJUR

They see us only as slaves.

MENDE

Is it because our skin is darker than theirs?

KUJUR

They want our ancestral home.

MENDE

I have never been alone before.

KUJUR

It is not the Nuba way. You might not see me, but I am here
for you.

KUJUR DISAPPEARS.

MENDE

Are my family still alive? Does our village still exist? Where is
my little cat, Uran?

MENDE WRAPS HERSELF IN A SHEET AND CRIES
HERSELF TO SLEEP.

IN THE MORNING, RAHAB'S HUSBAND, MUSTAFA, IS
IN THE KITCHEN, DRINKING TEA WITH RAHAB AND
READING HIS NEWSPAPER.

RAHAB

Everyone's going to be so jealous, Mustafa.

MUSTAFA

Yes, Rahab.

RAHAB

They'll all want one.

MUSTAFA

Whatever you say, dear.

RAHAB

I'm training her personally.

MUSTAFA

Good for you, dear.

RAHAB

Here she is now.

ENTER MENDE.

MUSTAFA

(WITHOUT LOOKING UP AT HER)

Good morning.

RAHAB TUTS AT HIM DISAPPROVINGLY. MENDE
DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.

RAHAB

Sit there, yebit.

MUSTAFA STANDS UP, TAKING A LOOK AT MENDE AS
HE LEAVES. RAHAB HANDS MENDE AN OLD CUP, BOWL
AND PLATE.

RAHAB

These are yours – for you to eat and drink from. Never use

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any of ours. This is your stool and this is your table. This is where you sit and eat.

Have some tea and listen carefully to your instructions.

RAHAB POURS TEA INTO MENDE'S CUP.

You will stay here for the rest of your life, do you understand?

MENDE

Yes, Master Rahab.

CHORUS OPERATE USRA AND HANIN PUPPETS.

RAHAB

These are my two little girls, Usra and Hanin. You have to look after them. You must treat them very well. You have to clean the house and keep it very, very neat and tidy. You have to clean the yard and the patio at the front of the house. We'll start with the kitchen. When I've shown you how to do something, I won't show you again. Tomorrow you will get up and start your work on your own. When you've finished the kitchen you can clean the rest of the house, from top to bottom, while we have our siesta.

RAHAB LEAVES.

SOME TIME LATER MENDE IS DUSTING THE LIVING ROOM AND EXPLORING VARIOUS GADGETS: MUSIC SYSTEM, TV, VIDEO, TELEPHONE ETC WHILE LOOKING AFTER THE CHILDREN.

USRA

Play with me, auntie.

MENDE

Of course I will.

USRA

Will you brush my hair?

MENDE

Yes. I will brush your hair.

HANIN

My mamma said you're dirty and have diseases.

RAHAB RETURNS.

RAHAB

Don't you dare touch my girls!

MENDE

Sorry, master Rahab, I thought you wanted me to look after them.

RAHAB

Go to the kitchen. We've finished our meal. You can have the left-overs.

RAHAB LEAVES WITH THE CHILDREN. MENDE STEALS A TEDDY FROM THE CHILDREN'S TOYS AND HIDES IT ON HER PERSON. SHE GOES BACK TO THE KITCHEN. SHE TAKES THEIR PLATES AND SITS AT HER TABLE TO EAT THE SCRAPS.

MENDE

(TO HERSELF)

The animals eat the scraps from our table, but I am so

hungry I don't care.

SHE DEVOURS THE FOOD.

I have never eaten alone in my life.

RAHAB RETURNS.

RAHAB

Yebit! What do you think you're doing? Don't you dare eat off our plates! Scrape the food into your own bowl.

MENDE

Sorry, Master Rahab.

RAHAB

I told you before – are you stupid?

MUSTAPHA RETURNS.

MUSTAFA

Hey, the house is really great! The kitchen looks like new.

RAHAB

Yes, well, the yebit has a very good teacher.

MUSTAFA

I think she'll turn out to be a very good "abda", don't you?

MENDE

(TO HERSELF)

She is training me like an animal so I must think like an animal. This way, she won't be able to tell what I am thinking.

MUSTAFA

After a few weeks, "Inshallah" – God willing – maybe you

could even show her how to cook?

RAHAB

Once we know she's clean and healthy, then maybe she can start cooking.

MENDE TAKES OUT THE TEDDY AND CUDDLES IT.

MENDE

My little Uran.

EXIT MUSTAFA.

THE NEXT MORNING, MENDE IS CLEANING WHEN

RAHAB COMES DOWN FOR BREAKFAST.

RAHAB

Yebit, why are you wearing the same dirty dress?

MENDE

I have no other, Master Rahab.

RAHAB

Take these old clothes of mine and change into them later.

RAHAB NOTICES MENDE'S BEAD NECKLACE.

What is that around your neck?

MENDE

These were given to me by my mother.

RAHAB

Get it off! It's disgusting!

MENDE

I never take it off.

RAHAB GRABS THE NECKLACE.

No, please, let me keep it. I promise I won't wear it again. It is all I have left of my family.

RAHAB BREAKS THE NECKLACE AND THE BEADS
SCATTER. RAHAB THROWS HER A DUSTER.

RAHAB

Take this and dust the lounge. I have people coming.

EXIT RAHAB. AS MENDE DUSTS, SHE CLIPS A VASE AND
IT CRASHES TO THE FLOOR. RAHAB HURRIES IN.

RAHAB

You idiot! Are you blind? This one vase is worth more than your whole filthy tribe.

RAHAB PULLS MENDE'S HAIR AND SLAPS HER
REPEATEDLY.

MENDE

"Mailesh", master Rahab, I'm sorry, please don't hit me.

RAHAB

You stupid girl! I'll teach you to watch what you're doing.

MENDE

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry!

RAHAB STOPS WITH EXHAUSTION.

RAHAB

I'm warning you, yebit: if you break anything else, you will be sorry. Now, stop crying and clean up your mess and change out of that filthy dress.

MENDE CRAWLS ON HER HANDS AND KNEES TO PICK

UP THE PIECES.

RAHAB LEAVES. KUJUR APPEARS AND HELPS MENDE
TO HER FEET AND INTO RAHAB'S OLD CLOTHES.

KUJUR

There are five rules to survive as a slave. 1) Understand the
order. 2) Do it straight away. 3) Never answer back. 4) No
accidents 5) Hide your real identity.

MENDE

6) Become an expert at listening in to their conversations.
ELSEWHERE RAHAB IS ON THE PHONE. MENDE
EAVESDROPS ON THE CONVERSATION.

RAHAB

Oh no, you've missed the best bit: I don't pay her any wages.
That's right, no days off, no holidays; but I did have to buy her
in the first place. I think these blacks are made for it, they've
been slaves for generations, so they just get on with it.

AN ARAB GARDENER, A "JANINEY", APPROACHES
MENDE.

MENDE

Assalam alaikum.

JANINEY

Alaikum wassalam, biti – hello, my daughter. I am the janiney.

MENDE

You look after the gardens?

JANINEY

Yes. I have a daughter about your age. Why don't you come to our house and play with her, next time you have some time off?

MENDE

I can't leave the house, Uncle Janiney. Can you bring your daughter here?

JANINEY

Why not, biti?

RAHAB

(CALLING)

Yebit! Where are you?

MENDE

I'm coming, "saidea" Rahab.

MENDE RUNS TO RAHAB.

RAHAB

What were you doing?

MENDE

I was cleaning the yard.

RAHAB

Who were you talking to? (PAUSE) Tell me!

MENDE

I was talking to the janiney, master Rahab.

RAHAB

What were you talking about?

MENDE

Nothing.

RAHAB

You're lying!

SHE TAKES OFF HER WOODEN SANDAL TO THREATEN
MENDE.

Do I have to beat it out of you?

MENDE

He wants me to play with his daughter.

RAHAB

Oh, well that's all right then, isn't it?

Don't you know what you are? You're an "abda" – a slave, my
slave.

SHE HITS MENDE WITH HER SANDAL.

Abda! Abda! Abda!

RAHAB FINDS JANINEY. KUJUR APPEARS BESIDE
MENDE, WHO EAVESDROPS AGAIN, DESPITE BEING
HURT.

RAHAB

Janiney, I'm going on holiday and I've asked a man to look
after the house for me, so I won't be needing you again.

JANINEY

It's all very sudden, isn't it?

RAHAB

Not really, I just forgot to tell you.

JANINEY

Have I done anything to offend you, mam?

RAHAB

Not at all.

JANINEY

Can I work for you again on your return?

RAHAB

I've decided I don't really need a gardener.

JANINEY

Would you reconsider, please, I have a family and –

RAHAB

I'm sorry, now how much do I owe you?

EXIT JANINEY. MENDE RETURNS TO HER SHED. KUJUR
APPEARS AGAIN.

MENDE

This Arab Janiney, he is a good person and I have caused
him great hardship.

KUJUR

Blaming yourself can be as damaging as blaming someone
else.

MENDE

I feel sick.

MENDE HOLDS HER TUMMY AND LIES DOWN ON HER
BED IN THE SHED AND SLEEPS.

THE NEXT MORNING, RAHAB COMES LOOKING FOR

HER.

RAHAB

Get up, yebit! What's the matter with you?

RAHAB TRIES TO FORCE MENDE TO HER FEET, BUT
MENDE IS DELIRIOUS AND CAN'T STAND. EXIT RAHAB.
MENDE IS ILL AND HALLUCINATING

MENDE

Ba! Umi! Babo! I'm home! I'm home!

KUJUR

Mende, your mind is playing tricks.

MENDE

What's happening to me?

KUJUR

You have a fever from the mosquitoes.

MENDE

Malaria?

KUJUR

You must rest.

MENDE GROANS. CHORUS ROLL HER OVER AND OVER
IN HER MATRESS AS HER NIGHTMARES TAKE HOLD.
MUSIC. SCREEN CONTENT?

CHORUS OPERATE A GIANT CAT'S HEAD PUPPET.

MENDE

Uran! Uran! Do you remember when I thought you had
eaten too many mice, but really you were about to have

kittens?

CHORUS

Yes, Mende. I'd spend all night licking them clean. So you could see how beautiful they were in the morning.

CAT DISAPPEARS. SOUND OF RAINFALL. MENDE AND CHORUS FEEL THE RAIN ON THEIR FACES.

MENDE & CHORUS

(SINGING)

"Are coucoure, are konduk ducre..."

RAHAB RETURNS WITH A GIANT WOODEN SANDAL.

RAHAB

Stop your singing! Do you hear me? Stop singing!

RAHAB BEATS MENDE WITH IT, BUT IT JUST BOUNCES OFF HER.

MENDE

I swear, whatever it takes, I will escape from you.

RAHAB

If you try to escape, yebit, I will tell Abdul Azzim to take the raiders to find your family and kill them all!

CHORUS PRESENT MENDE WITH AN OLD SUGAR SACK AND SHE PRAYS.

MENDE

I pray to you, Allah, make Rahab die. Make her suffer like she has made me suffer.

RAHAB

So now you're trying to copy us, are you? Do you really think
prayers are for people like you?

CHORUS RETURN MENDE TO HER BED AND COVER
HER DRESS IN BLOOD. NIGHTMARE ENDS.

SCREEN CONTENT CHANGES. MUSIC.

THE NEXT MORNING RAHAB WAKES UP MENDE.

MENDE

Please, someone, bring me a glass of water?

RAHAB

Get up, yebit! I need you to get back to work.

AS MENDE GETS UP, SHE SEES THE BLOOD ON HER
DRESS.

MENDE

I'm bleeding! Help! What have you done to me?

RAHAB

You stupid yebit, you're having your period.

MENDE

What is this period?

RAHAB

You've never had this blood before?

MENDE

Is it my circumcision?

RAHAB

You idiot. Take this cotton wool and shove it between your

legs.

MENDE TAKES A SMALL PIECE.

RAHAB

What? You think you're a bottle? That you can put a cork in it
and it will stop?

RAHAB LAUGHS AT MENDE.

MENDE

I don't know what to do?

RAHAB

Where would you be without me, eh? Go to the bathroom, pull
a big piece of cotton wool, like this. Fold it three times and
make yourself a pad and shove it down your knickers.

Change it three times a day.

SF/X U.S. BOMBERS FLYING LOW OVERHEAD. CHORUS

DUCK AND DIVE.

SCREEN CONTENT CHANGES.

RAHAB

Mustafa! Mustafa! They're bombing Khartoum!

SF/X BOMBS EXPLODING IN THE DISTANCE.

MUSTAFA

This is very bad news, very bad news.

MENDE

(TO HERSELF)

Somewhere in the world, there are people who are stronger
than the Arabs.

RAHAB

These Americans are infidels! They don't know Allah. They think they can just go around killing Islamic people.

MUSTAFA

Hundreds have died, many more are in the hospitals, wounded.

RAHAB

It could be our family next, our children who are killed.

EXIT RAHAB AND MUSTAFA.

MENDE

I pray the bombs fall on this house. I don't care if I die, as long as you die.

SF/X MORE EXPLOSIONS IN THE DISTANCE. MENDE

RISES TO GREET THE BOMBS WITH OPEN ARMS.

CHORUS DUCK AND DIVE AROUND HER.

SCREEN CONTENT CHANGES.

SF/X OF A TODDLER CRYING. MENDE IS NURSING USRA WHEN RAHAB RETURNS.

RAHAB

What's happened to my baby?

MENDE

She was climbing on the table.

RAHAB

Why didn't you tell her to stop?

MENDE

I tried, but you said I can't...she wouldn't listen. I was busy washing-up.

RAHAB

You think that's more important than my little baby? She's cut her lip – it's bleeding.

MENDE BACKS AWAY AS RAHAB BEARS DOWN ON HER.

RAHAB PUNCHES HER AND SHE FALLS UNCONSCIOUS TO THE SOUND OF GLASS SMASHING.

SCREEN CONTENT CHANGES.

A HOSPITAL. CHORUS CARRY MENDE INTO BED. A

BLACK NURSE, NUNGHA, IS BY HER BEDSIDE. RAHAB APPEARS.

NUNGHA

She's coming 'round, she'll be okay.

RAHAB

"Alhamdallilah" – praise be to God.

NUNGHA LEAVES MENDE'S BEDSIDE FOR A MINUTE.

RAHAB

(TO HERSELF)

If you die, I'm in big trouble.

RAHAB

(TO MENDE)

If anybody asks what happened, you tell them you fell over.

Tell them I pay you to work for me as a servant, do you

understand?

NUNGHA RETURNS.

I'll take Mende home today.

NUNGHA

But she has a very deep wound, she has lost a lot of blood,
she needs to stay on this drip.

RAHAB

We'll see what the doctor says, shall we?

NUNGHA

Is this girl your daughter?

RAHAB

No, she's my servant.

NUNGHA

I see. That's why you want to take her home, is it?

RAHAB

I'm going to find your superior.

RAHAB LEAVES.

NUNGHA

Mende, where is your mother?

MENDE

She's in the Nuba Mountains, auntie.

NUNGHA

Do you have any relatives here in Khartoum?

MENDE

No, auntie.

NUNGHA

Then I shall be your relative. When do you have your days off? On Fridays?

MENDE NODS YES.

Good. When you leave hospital, you must come back and see me, on a Thursday when you've finished work. You can stay with me until Saturday morning.

KUJUR

Tell her, Mende. She will listen.

MENDE

(TO KUJUR)

I am afraid Rahab will kill me.

NUNGHA LEAVES AND RAHAB RETURNS.

RAHAB

Has that black woman been asking you questions? What have you told her?

MENDE

Nothing. She looks after me.

RAHAB

You really think she likes you? You stupid child. Let me tell you: once you trust her, she'll give you a lethal injection and she'll take all your blood to sell. She'll cut out all your organs and sell those too.

MENDE

No, it's not true.

(TO KUJUR)

Will this nightmare never end?

RAHAB LEAVES AND NUNGHA RETURNS.

KUJUR

Tell her, before it is too late.

MENDE

I can't find the right words.

NUNGHA

Don't cry, my lovely.

KUJUR

Tell her.

NUNGHA

I'll see you again after two weeks. You must go home now;
the doctor says you are well enough to walk.

KUJUR

Tell her, Mende.

MENDE

(TO KUJUR)

I have to forget everything: my family, my life in the Nuba
Mountains. They are all dead. This is my life now. I am a
slave. Nothing is going to change. Please, don't visit me
again, Kujur, it is too painful.

MUSIC. KUJUR DISAPPEARS. CHORUS HELP MENDE
INTO A NEW DRESS AND BRUSH OUT HER HAIR AS SHE
CHANGES INTO A YOUNG WOMAN.

ACT 3 SCENE 1

SCREEN CONTENT.

KHARTOUM 1999. RAHAB'S HOUSE. MENDE IS
WORKING. ENTER RAHAB FOLLOWED BY ABDUL AZZIM.

RAHAB

We have visitors in need of refreshment, yebit.

You remember Abdul Azzim?

AZZIM

My word, look how she's blossomed.

RAHAB

Cover your hair, yebit! Do you want men to see your hair? Mr
Azzim's wife is here, what might she think of your behaviour?

MENDE

Sorry, master.

MENDE COVERS HER HAIR WITH A HIJAB AND SEES TO
THE DRINKS.

AZZIM

How has she been for you all these years?

RAHAB

She's very clean and works hard and I hardly ever have to
beat her these days.

AZZIM

What did I tell you? I only ever provide the best girls.

RAHAB

I wanted to talk to you about that. I'm planning to send her to

look after my sister, Hanan, in London.

MENDE STOPS POURING DRINKS TO LISTEN.

AZZIM

That's very kind of you.

RAHAB

Hanan has just had twins and she's so very tired all the time.

She needs help.

AZZIM

What a nice, thoughtful sister you are.

RAHAB

Well, it's easier for me to get another "abda". I understand it's impossible to find one in London. Now, if you get me another one, how do I know she will be as good as this one?

AZZIM

I'll do my best; but they don't come with a guarantee, you know?

RAHAB

That's settled then. Will you be all right on your own for a minute, while I catch up with your dear wife?

AZZIM

Of course, I'm sure Mende will look after me.

AS MENDE GATHERS THE DISHES, AZZIM GRABS HER FROM BEHIND.

MENDE

Let me go!

AZZIM

Come on, you know you want it.

MENDE

Do you want me to scream?

AZZIM

Ssshhh, don't shout or there'll be trouble for you. Come on, a young woman like you must get lonely; you know you'd like to; what's the problem?

MENDE

The problem is, if you don't let go of me straight away, I will scream so loud your wife will hear.

AZZIM LETS HER GO.

AZZIM

Okay, okay, just trying to do you a favour. I thought you might want a bit of fun, that's all.

RAHAB

Yebit, Azzim and his wife are leaving. Take these presents to their car and be careful with them. There should be another yebit outside to help you with the heavier boxes.

RAHAB LEAVES. MENDE CARRIES A BOX OUTSIDE,
WHERE ASHCUANA IS WAITING.

MENDE

Ashcuana? Is it really you?

ASHCUANA

Mende?

THEY HUG AND CRY.

I can't believe it's you.

MENDE

It's so good to see a friendly face. Look at you, you're all grown up.

ASHCUANA

You too.

MENDE

I love your hair.

ASHCUANA

I have good news for you. I met Shadal in Khartoum – you remember, Babo's friend, the wrestler? He told me that my family are still alive. We spoke about you and he said your family also survived the raids.

MENDE

Oh my God! My family are alive! Oh, Allah, thank you, thank you, thank you! Where is Shadal? Can he help us?

ASHCUANA

I never saw him again. When my master saw me talking to him, she dragged me away and beat me.

MENDE

We could run, now, together; we could find Shadal.

RAHAB

(CALLING)

Yebit! What's taking you so long?

MENDE

(CALLING)

Coming, master Rahab!

ASHCUANA

They will find us and kill us.

MENDE

She is sending me away to London, this could be my last chance.

ASHCUANA

(WRITING ON MENDE'S ARM)

Take this number. Shadal gave it to me. There is a cousin in bilabara who might be able to help, when you get to London.

AZZIM APPEARS AND ESCORTS MENDE. ASCHUANA LEAVES. MENDE RETURNS TO HER SHED TO PRAY.

MENDE

My family are alive!

KUJUR APPEARS.

My spirit has returned.

KUJUR

Then there is always hope.

MENDE

But Rahab is sending me to London. I will be further away than ever from my parents. I don't want to go. I need to stay and find Shadal. I need him to contact my family.

KUJUR

You have no chance here. At least in London there is a chance.

MENDE

What kind of a chance can there be for a slave? Rahab is giving me away like a gift to her sister. How can they do this to us?

KUJUR

They do it because they can.

MENDE

Where is London?

KUJUR

It is where the British live.

ACT 3 SCENE 2

IN THE FOYER OF THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN
KHARTOUM. RAHAB IS BRIEFING MENDE IN THE QUEUE
BEFORE HER INTERVIEW FOR A VISA. PEOPLE IN
THE QUEUE, PLAYED BY THE CHORUS, FIND
THEMSELVES LISTENING TO THEIR CONVERSATION.

RAHAB

The embassy people will ask you questions and you must
answer them exactly as I tell you. If you don't, there'll be
trouble, do you understand?

MENDE

Yes, master Rahab.

RAHAB

Good. Be sure to tell them how well I treat you. If they ask you
what happens when you're sick, tell them that you are taken
to see a doctor. If they ask you about holidays, tell them that
you go to stay with your family, you understand?

MENDE

Yes, master Rahab.

RAHAB

Tell them you are going to work for a Mr Ali Bashir Gadalla,
okay? Don't mention my sister Hanan or her husband, Al
Koronky, is that clear?

MENDE

Yes, master Rahab. But who am I really going to work for,

master?

RAHAB

You'll be working for Hanan, of course. But if you tell them this, you won't be given a visa.

MENDE

Why won't they let me go if I say it's Hanan?

RAHAB

That's none of your business. Do as I say and they will give you a visa - I have connections in the right places.

THE QUEUE REACT TO THIS CLAIM, IN PARTICULAR.
IT'S MENDE'S TURN. RAHAB SIGNALS FOR MENDE TO APPROACH THE OFFICIAL, WHILE SHE WAITS.
MENDE PRESENTS THE OFFICIAL WITH HER PAPERS AND MONEY.

EMBASSY OFFICIAL

Please sit down, Miss Nazer.

MENDE REMAINS STANDING.

EMBASSY OFFICIAL

Do you speak English?

NO REPLY.

EMBASSY OFFICIAL

(IN ARABIC)

Do you speak Arabic?

MENDE

(IN ARABIC)

Yes, I speak Arabic.

EMBASSY OFFICIAL

(IN ENGLISH)

Very well, miss, we will speak Arabic.

First of all, who are you going to stay with, what does he do
and how long do you intend to stay in the UK?

MENDE LOOKS BACK AT RAHAB, THEN AT THE
OFFICIAL.

MENDE

He is called Mr Ali Bashir Gadalla. But I don't know what is his
job or how long I will be staying.

OFFICIAL

You don't know?

MENDE

I don't know.

OFFICIAL

Here's a letter for you. You must ask your employer in the UK
to fill it in for you, then come back and see us again.

MENDE RETURNS TO RAHAB WITH THE LETTER.

RAHAB

What happened, yebit?

MENDE

He gave me this letter.

RAHAB

This is so unnecessary. I will fax London and we will return tomorrow.

THE NEXT DAY AT THE EMBASSY. THE SAME PEOPLE ARE QUEUING.

RAHAB

Tell them you'll be cleaning, cooking and washing, same as you do here; but don't tell them you'll be looking after the children. Tell them you'll be staying for six months.

MENDE APPROACHES THE EMBASSY OFFICIAL AND HANDS OVER HER LETTER.

EMBASSY OFFICIAL

Ah, it's you. Good morning Miss Nazer.

MENDE SMILES AS HE LOOKS AT THE LETTER.

You have a nice smile, you should enjoy it more often.

MENDE IS VERY SHY.

EMBASSY OFFICIAL

Thank you for this information. Now, your employer in the UK, how much will he be paying you per week?

MENDE

I don't know.

OFFICIAL

(SMILING)

Sorry, did you say you don't know?

MENDE

Yes. I don't know.

OFFICIAL

I see. How many days off will you have per week?

MENDE

I don't know.

OFFICIAL

I don't suppose you know how many hours per day you will be required to work? Don't tell me – you "don't know".

MENDE

I don't know.

OFFICIAL

Very well. Here is another letter. You must send this to your employer in the UK and ask him to answer the questions.

MENDE

Is this my permission to travel?

OFFICIAL

No, I'm afraid not, Miss Nazer. You'll have to come back again when the form is filled in.

MENDE RETURNS TO RAHAB AND HANDS HER THE LETTER.

RAHAB

Not another form! These English are very nasty. Where did he dream up all these questions? I'll have to send another fax.

THE NEXT DAY, SAME QUEUE. MENDE RETURNS TO

SEE THE OFFICIAL.

OFFICIAL

Hello, Miss "I don't know". Aha! You've brought the
information – splendid.

HE CHECKS THE INFORMATION.

Well done, "I don't know", you won't have to say "I don't know"
any more. Congratulations, you're going to England – here's
your Visa.

MENDE RETURNS WITH THE VISA TO RAHAB AND THEY
LEAVE.

ACT 3 SCENE 3

RAHAB'S HOUSE.

MENDE IS PACKING HER BAG.

MENDE

Master Rahab, can I say goodbye to the children?

RAHAB

Yes, but be quick. They have to sleep and Azzim will be here any minute.

MENDE KISSES EACH SLEEPING CHILD IN TURN. THERE ARE FOUR NOW. THE ELDEST, ASRA AND HANIN WAKE UP. CHORUS OPERATE PUPPET CHILDREN.

MENDE

Ssshh, the little ones are asleep.

ASRA

Are you going now?

MENDE

I'll be gone before you wake in the morning.

ASRA

I don't want you to go.

MENDE

You will all have to come and visit me in London.

HANIN

I've told mamma I want to go and live with you and auntie Hanan.

MENDE

Maybe when you are older. Goodnight little ones, remember me.

MENDE RETURNS TO RAHAB. ABDUL AZZIM ARRIVES WITH A REPLACEMENT SLAVE, NANU, FOR RAHAB.

AZZIM

(TO MENDE)

All ready for your big trip?

MENDE SAYS NOTHING.

RAHAB DIRECTS NANU.

RAHAB

Sit there, yebit.

NANU SITS ON THE SAME STOOL MENDE FIRST SAT ON, YEARS AGO.

Now, you are going to stay here and work for me. I hope you are going to be as good as that big girl over there. She has stayed with me for over seven years. She works very hard and she always obeys me. She's so well behaved I never have to punish her.

(TO MENDE)

See to her, yebit, and clean her up. She can start work in the morning.

RAHAB AND AZZIM LEAVE.

MENDE

My name is Mende. What is your name, little sister?

NANU

My name is Nanu. Can I have some food?

MENDE GIVES HER YOGHURT.

MENDE

Where are you from, Nanu?

NANU

From Gwali.

MENDE

Good. We can talk Nuba while we are alone.

NANU

Can you get me some hot water? It's very painful – down there.

MENDE

Did the Arab raiders hurt you?

NANU

Yes.

MENDE

Tell me what happened, little sister?

NANU

My father died about six months ago. I was living alone with my mother and little brother. My mother was expecting another baby and we were very excited. The night the raiders came, we hid in the sorghum hut. My mummy put my little brother and me inside the grain store. I heard a man shouting at my mother: "Where is your husband? Where are your

children?" My mummy was screaming, "My husband is dead, I have no children, I am pregnant with my first child. Please don't kill me!" Then it went quiet and the man set fire to our hut. I climbed out of the grain store and saw that the man had slit my mummy's throat. Her tummy had been cut open and the baby was lying in a pool of blood.

MENDE HOLDS HER IN HER ARMS.

MENDE

I am so sorry, little sister.

NANU

I grabbed a stool and tried to help my little brother climb out of the grain store, but the flames were burning my hands. I couldn't get him out. I had to get away from the flames. Then the raiders took me to the forest...

MENDE

I know, little sister, I know. Don't blame yourself, there was nothing you could do. I will fetch you some warm tea. Wash yourself down there with the tea, it will help stop the pain. Do this every day. Then I will rub you with warm oil. It's what my mother did for me when I was circumcised.

NANU

Please don't leave me.

MENDE

Let me show you where you will sleep, little one.

MENDE TAKES HER TO HER SHED.

MENDE

Nanu, I won't be here in the morning; they are sending me away. Remember, if Rahab tells you to do something, you must do it or she will beat you. Peace be with you...

KUJUR APPEARS.

How can I leave her, knowing how she will suffer at the hands of Rahab?

KUJUR

You have to go on, Mende. Someone needs to speak of these things.

MENDE

How can I speak when my mouth is gagged?

KUJUR DOESN'T ANSWER.

Please, Kujur, watch over Nanu.

ACT 4 SCENE 1

KHARTOUM AIRPORT 2000. SCREEN CONTENT? MUSIC.
STAFF AND PASSENGERS ARE PLAYED BY THE
CHORUS. RAHAB ACCOMPANIES MENDE THROUGH
DEPARTURES. RAHAB HANDS MENDE'S PASSPORT AND
TICKETS TO CUSTOMS.

CUSTOMS OFFICIAL

Which one of you is travelling?

RAHAB

She is.

OFFICIAL CHECKS MENDE'S DOCUMENTS.

OFFICIAL

You're free to proceed.

CHORUS FORM A QUEUE WITH RAHAB AND MENDE.

RAHAB

Now, remember when you get to London, you must do exactly
what Hanan tells – this is as far as I can go.

ANOTHER OFFICIAL CHECKS MENDE'S DOCUMENTS
AND USHERS HER THROUGH. MENDE TURNS TO
RAHAB AND WAVES. RAHAB WAVES BACK AND LEAVES.
ON THE PLANE, MENDE IS LOOKING FOR A
PLACE TO SIT, WHEN AN ARAB WOMAN TAKES HER BY
THE HAND.

FATIMA

First time, little sister? Sit here by me, I'll look after you.

MENDE

Am I allowed?

FATIMA

Of course.

MENDE SITS.

My name is Fatima.

MENDE

Thank you. I am Mende.

FATIMA LEANS OVER AND FASTENS MENDE'S

SEATBELT. PLANE ENGINES ROAR.

Auntie Fatima, I'm frightened.

FATIMA

Don't worry, once we're up in the air, it will be nice and quiet.

MENDE

What happens if we crash?

FATIMA

I've flown many times before, it's very safe, we won't crash.

MENDE GRIPS THE ARMREST AS THE PLANE TAKES

OFF. ENGINES QUIETEN.

MENDE

What is wrong with my ears? I can't hear properly.

FATIMA

It's normal, your hearing will come back.

MENDE

When will we stop at the next station?

FATIMA

I'm afraid we don't make any stops until we reach London in four or five hours' time.

MENDE

But I need to go to the toilet.

FATIMA

It's up there at the back.

MENDE

What happens if I'm on the loo and the plane suddenly changes direction? Will I fall out?

FATIMA

You're much too big to fit through the toilet.

MENDE

It's okay, I'll wait.

MENDE FALLS TO SLEEP. SCREEN CONTENT?

FATIMA WAKES HER UP AS THE PLANE LANDS.

FATIMA

Mende? We're coming in to London. Do you have family here to meet you?

MENDE

No, not family; but someone should be here for me.

MENDE AND FATIMA ARE CAUGHT UP WITH THE OTHER PASSENGERS LEAVING THE PLANE.

What happens now?

FATIMA

Follow me, stay close; it's very busy.

MENDE

Is all of London like this?

FATIMA PASSES THROUGH CUSTOMS AND WAITS FOR
MENDE.

FATIMA

There, we've made it! That wasn't so bad, was it?

Any sign of the person who is meeting you?

MENDE

I don't know what they look like.

FATIMA

Look, I have to go, my husband's waiting for me. Do you have
a phone number of the person who's meeting you? Perhaps
my husband could call?

MENDE

No, I don't.

FATIMA

But what will you do if no one comes?

MENDE

I don't know.

FATIMA

I'm sorry, I have to go. I'm sure they'll be here soon. Bye-bye.

FATIMA LEAVES. MENDE WATCHES THE OTHER
PASSENGERS.

MENDE

Could she be Hanan? Or her? Or her?

What if the airport closes and they throw me onto the streets?

I have no money, I don't know anyone, I can't speak English. I
want someone to claim me – even as their slave.

PASSER-BY

Don't worry, we're all waiting for someone; they'll come
eventually, they always do.

A BLACK MAN APPROACHES HER.

PETER

Excuse me, are you Mende Nazer?

MENDE

Yes, but who are you?

PETER

My name's Peter. I've been sent to collect you.

SCREEN CONTENT? MUSIC.

CHORUS (OF LONDONERS)

This is how we live. At the heart of the United Kingdom.

MENDE

The buildings are very tall, up to the sky.

CHORUS

Our roads are wide and busy with shiny new cars.

MENDE

Everything seems to be kept inside. Even the sun seems
under cover. Maybe there is an eclipse? Surely this can't be

their Summer?

CHORUS

Our houses have gardens and hedges and trees and large driveways.

PETER

It rains here most of the time so it is very green.

CHORUS

Or we live on top of each other in tower blocks touching the clouds.

MENDE

I don't see anyone growing any food or raising any cattle?

PETER

We have supermarkets here for that sort of thing.

MENDE

I don't see anyone smiling. My father told me the khawajas don't have a sense of humour. They have long noses like the shengokor and their pale skin is like ash so they all look the same. Peter, you are a black man, but you are not African?

PETER

I was born here.

MENDE

You are British?

PETER

Yes.

MENDE

What is your job?

PETER

I am the Embassy driver.

MENDE

What Embassy?

PETER

Don't you even know who you're working for?

MENDE

I have no idea.

PETER

Mr Al Koronky is the acting Charge d'Affaires at the Sudanese
Embassy here in London. He's a very important person.

ACT 4 SCENE 2

THE HOME OF AL KORONKY AND HIS WIFE HANAN.

THE CHORUS BECOME GUESTS AT THE HOUSE.

HANAN

Ah, hello. Peter found you? Good.

Come in, come in. We have a few guests around for a little
drink.

MENDE IS UNSURE HOW TO RESPOND.

You must be thirsty?

MENDE NODS AND TAKES A GLASS OF JUICE FROM
HANAN.

How are Rahab and the children, Mende?

MENDE IS SURPRISED BY THE USE OF HER NAME.

MENDE

They are all fine...(NERVOUSLY ADDING) Hanan.

AL KORONKY JOINS THEM.

AL KORONKY

Welcome.

MENDE SMILES.

AL KORONKY

How did you find getting through customs?

MENDE

A woman on the plane helped me. She was very kind and she
showed me what to do.

AL KORONKY

Praise be to Allah.

HANAN

I have five boys for you to look after: twins aged two, the others are aged from five to nine.

THE CHORUS OPERATE THE CHILDREN PUPPETS.

You will have to look after the twins during the day and the older children, as well, when they come back from school.

After you have changed the nappies, I'll show you how to prepare their lunch-boxes, which you must do every morning.

CHORUS WEIGH MENDE DOWN WITH DOMESTIC ITEMS.

The cleaning, cooking and washing is much easier here. We have a washing machine and a dishwasher. You will clean the whole house every day and cook breakfast, lunch, dinner and supper. If you need anything or you don't understand, just come and ask.

MENDE

Yes, Hanan.

HANAN

Help yourself to tea and breakfast cereal – choose a bowl and a mug for yourself.

CHORUS ADD THE CROCKERY AND HAND MENDE THE HOOVER.

This is for cleaning the carpets.

HANAN SWITCHES IT ON. MENDE JUMPS ON TO A

CHAIR AND PUTS HER HANDS OVER HER EARS.

MENDE

It's so loud. Please, don't you have a brush I can use?

HANAN

It's perfectly safe – have a go.

MENDE

I don't like it, it looks like a snake.

MENDE HOLDS THE TUBE LIKE IT'S A SNAKE. SHE
SWITCHES IT ON AND IT SUCKS IN HER DRESS. SHE
SCREAMS AND DROPS IT.

It's trying to eat me!

HANAN SWITCHES IT OFF.

HANAN

Don't be so silly! You'll get used to it.

AL KORONKY

(HANDING MENDE HIS SHOES)

I'll need you to clean my shoes every morning before I go out
to work.

MENDE LOOKS AT THE SHOES.

AL KORONKY

What's the matter? Don't you like to clean my shoes?

MENDE

Sorry, sir. I mean, yes, sir.

AL KORONKY

Good. When you've done with the shoes, you can clean the

car. Peter will show you.

MENDE

Yes, sir.

HANAN

Mende, I'm going for my afternoon nap. The twins need their nappies changing, wake me up when the children return from school.

MENDE

Can I please ask you something?

HANAN

Yes, what is it?

MENDE

(HOLDING A PIECE OF PAPER)

I have a telephone number that my friend in Khartoum gave to me; can you tell me if it is in England? And is it possible for me to phone them?

HANAN

Let me see that!

SHE SNATCHES THE PAPER.

Who gave you this?

MENDE

She's just my friend.

HANAN

I thought you didn't have any friends?

MENDE

Her master came to master Rahab's house. She is from my village.

HANAN

What!

SHE SLASHES THE PAPER WITH A KNIFE.

You are not to contact anyone, ever, do you hear me?

MENDE

Yes, Hanan.

HANAN

You stupid yebit! Give me your bag – I want your passport.

MENDE HANDS OVER HER BAG. HANAN EMPTIES THE CONTENTS AND TAKES MENDE'S PASSPORT. HANAN IS STILL HOLDING THE KNIFE.

Listen to me, yebit: London is a very bad place; it's full of murderers and dangerous, evil people. Anything could happen to you out there. The last girl, before you, Khayria, she was a very bad girl. One day, she went outside and was never seen again. Either she was murdered or lost in this dangerous city. If you wander off, the same thing will happen to you. You'll never return to Sudan. Is that what you want, yebit?

MENDE

No, master Hanan.

HANAN

It is strictly forbidden for you to go outside.

MENDE

Yes, master Hanan.

HANAN

If you work hard and behave, when we go back to Sudan for a holiday we will take you with us. We will arrange for you to see your family – you'd like that, wouldn't you?

HANAN PUTS DOWN THE KNIFE AND EXITS.

MENDE PICKS UP THE KNIFE AND GOES TO HER ROOM.

SCREEN CONTENT? MUSIC. IT IS NIGHT-TIME.

MENDE

My life has been ruled by the knife.

NUBA MIDWIFE APPEARS, CARRYING A BLADE, AND
ARAB RAIDER CARRYING A CURVED DAGGER.

MIDWIFE

It will make you clean. And prove you are a virgin when the time comes. No Nuba man will marry a Nuba girl unless she is "narrow".

MENDE

Get away from me! Get away from me! Don't you dare touch me!

MENDE SCREAMS. THE WOMEN MAKE THEIR "ILLIL"
SOUND TO CELEBRATE.

MENDE

(SOBBING)

You lied to me. You promised it wouldn't hurt. How could you do this to me?

MIDWIFE

I'm sorry, Mende kando, it's for your own good.

CHORUS

Allahu Akhbar!

ARAB RAIDER

For us, it is a Holy War against the black tribes of Sudan. The Arab tribes have formed militias with AK47 machine guns. We wage "Jihad" for the National Islamic Front. In return, we get to keep the cattle, the goats, the women and the children. The boys make excellent cattle-herders, the girls are domestic slaves and the women, we sell their bodies. A good slave fetches 150 dollars.

MENDE

I have seen people stabbed to death. It is an easy way to kill. I could do it; stab myself here in my heart and end this pain. If I do it now, in my room, I will not be discovered until the morning.

KUJUR APPEARS.

KUJUR

What if Hanan keeps her promise and takes you to see your family?

MENDE

It is cruel for her to play these games with my feelings. She is using this to control me.

KUJUR

The hope is something to live for.

MENDE

My hair is falling out, my face is pinched and yellow, my skin is dry and scaly like a fish, my shoulders are hunched like an old woman.

KUJUR

Maybe you could escape?

MENDE

Poor Khayria, where was she from, I wonder? Did she escape? Where could she escape to? Who could have helped her? Maybe she has been murdered? Maybe she is living on the streets, lost and alone? What hope is there for me? I thought these people might treat me better, but even here I am still master Rahab's slave. Her shadow is cast over me for the rest of my life. I would be better off dead.

MUSIC ENDS.

THE NEXT MORNING, MENDE IS CLEANING.

HANAN

Yebit, I've decided to go to Sudan for a holiday with the children. You will remain here with my husband for a week until he joins me.

MENDE

No.

HANAN

What? I really hope you didn't say what I think you said?

MENDE

It is wrong for me to stay alone with a man. I'm an unmarried woman and it is not allowed in Islam.

HANAN

My husband is very devout. And he's a very important man in the government. Are you saying you don't trust my husband?

MENDE

I'm not saying anything against your husband. I know you both pride yourselves on being devout Muslims.

HANAN

Yes, of course I know that. Very well, my husband will stay here with you for a few days and then you will be taken to good friends of ours until we return.

MENDE

Who is this friend? Is he married?

HANAN

Yes, he's married. He has a good Muslim wife and family.

Does that satisfy you?

MENDE

Why have you changed your mind?

HANAN

There's nothing more to discuss, yebit.

`MENDE

It is not right for me to stay alone with your husband, even for a few days.

HANAN

My husband has some very important work to do here in London. So he's staying for a few days and so are you. That's the end of the matter.

HANAN LEAVES.

ACT 4 SCENE 3

LONDON. SCREEN CONTENT? OMER AND MADINA'S
HOUSE. MENDE ARRIVES.

OMER

Welcome, welcome. Come in, you must be Mende?

MENDE

Yes, sir.

OMER

I'm Omer and this is my wife, Madina.

MADINA

What would you like to drink? There's fruit juice, tea, coffee or
milk?

MENDE

Fruit juice, please.

OMER

We've put you in our youngest daughter's room, she's sharing
with her sister. The room overlooks the park, I hope that's ok?

MENDE

Thank you. What time would you like me to start work?

MADINA

Oh, you can start tomorrow. Get up when you like.

MENDE LOOKS CONFUSED.

MADINA

It's a lovely day, I've prepared a picnic. Shall we take the
children to the park?

MENDE

I would like that very much.

SCREEN CONTENT? CHORUS JOIN THEM.

CHORUS

Madina allows her children to run along the street.

She clearly doesn't think they are in any danger.

MENDE

(TO HERSELF)

Hanan has lied to me about London.

CHORUS

Madina takes Mende to a market in Shepherd's Bush, where she buys her a white lacy bra.

MENDE

It is very generous, but I've never had a bra before, so I find it uncomfortable to wear.

CHORUS

Mende accompanies Madina on visits to her friends.

MENDE

I sit there and chat as if I was as free as the rest of them.

CHORUS

Mende is allowed to sleep until ten in the morning and join Madina for breakfast.

MENDE

Am I enjoying myself?

CHORUS

Every Saturday after lunch, Omer takes Mende back to
Koronky's house to clean.

MENDE

I watch tv. People are shown in bed together! Naked and
kissing.

CHORUS

Omer gives Mende a key to the front door.

MENDE

No one is watching me.

MENDE CRIES.

MADINA

Why are you crying?

MENDE

You've all been so kind to me. I miss my family.

MADINA

Hey, we all miss our families. If you work hard here in London,
you can earn good money and send some back to them.

That's what we're doing.

MENDE NODS.

Perhaps we could go out together? How many hours do you
work each day?

MENDE

What do you mean, "hours"? I work all the time.

MADINA

What are you saying?

MENDE

I can't tell you any more.

MADINA

Why not?

MENDE

Because I don't know if I can trust you? You might tell

Koronky - your husband works with him.

MADINA LOOKS FOR OMER TO REASSURE MENDE.

OMER

Listen, Mende, I want you to trust me. I won't tell anyone, I
promise. I might be able to help you.

MENDE

What do you want to know?

OMER

Is it true that you work all day long, every day of the week?

MENDE

Yes.

OMER

But it's your right to have days off, it's the Law. You must be
exhausted?

MENDE

Yes.

OMER

How much do they pay you for each hour you work?

MENDE

I don't get paid anything.

OMER

People here can't be made to work for no pay. You're telling me the truth, aren't you?

MENDE

You don't believe me.

OMER

Why did you come to London to work for them? And why don't you leave and get another job? Normal people don't work all the time for nothing.

MENDE

I am not "normal people". You are from Sudan, why do you think it is so?

OMER

(TO MADINA)

What can I say? It would be the end of my diplomatic career.

MENDE

(TO HERSELF)

I am grateful to Omer. I realise now that people should not be kept as slaves in this country of Britannia. I have to try and escape before Koronky and Hanan return.

CHORUS

The next morning Mende offers to do the shopping for
Madina.

MADINA

You're sure you'll be all right on your own?

MENDE

I'm not going far.

MADINA

Be careful of the traffic.

MENDE

I see a black man looking in a shop window who might be
South Sudanese, like the nurse Nungha. But I am too
frightened to speak.

KUJUR APPEARS. MENDE TAKES A DEEP BREATH AND
SPEAKS TO THE MAN.

"Assalam alaikum".

LONDON MAN

Hello?

MENDE

Do you speak Arabic?

LONDON MAN

What? I'm sorry, I don't understand you.

MENDE

Sorry, sorry.

CHORUS

In two days, Koronky will return with his family.

Mende tries again at a garage where a man is fitting car tyres.

MENDE

Assalam alaikum.

ALUAN AKUAL BOL

Alaikum wassalam, little sister. Where did you come from?

MENDE

I am from Sudan, from the Nuba Mountains.

ALUAN AKUAL BOL

I meant where did you appear from just now. I'm also from Sudan, but from the South, so we're like brother and sister. I am Aluan Akual Bol.

MENDE

My name's Mende.

ALUAN AKUAL BOL

How long have you been in London?

MENDE

I've been here for three months. Do you know any Nuba people in London?

ALUAN AKUAL BOL

I know one Nuba. I can call him if you like?

MENDE

Really?

ALUAN AKUAL BOL

I can see you are desperate, little sister. I will call him now.

(ON MOBILE)

Babo?

CHORUS

The same name as Mende's brother – her heart is racing.

ALUAN AKUAL BOL

(ON MOBILE)

Yes, I have someone here who wants to speak to you.

MENDE

Hello, Babo? I need your help, you have to believe me, I don't have anyone to turn to -

CHORUS

Mende blurts out her whole story to Babo.

Babo agrees to help her escape. He gives Mende his mobile number and promises to phone her at Koronky's. Mende should answer the phone by saying "hello" in her native Nuba tongue. If anyone else answers he will hang up.

Back at Omer and Madina's house, Mende asks the children to teach her how to use the phone.

OMER

It's time to go, Mende.

MADINA

We'll miss you.

MENDE

You have been so kind to me. I can't thank you enough.

OMER

I really wish we could do more.

MADINA

Don't be a stranger.

CHORUS

Omer takes Mende back to Koronky's.

AT KORONKY'S. THE PHONE RINGS.

MENDE

"Kenwengiero".

LONDON BABO

Mende, can you talk?

MENDE

Yes, there's no one here.

LONDON BABO

I've found the address and been over to take a look at the house. Are you still sure you want to do this?

MENDE

Yes! I have to get out of here.

LONDON BABO

Why don't I just come over and get you now?

MENDE

You can't. If I escape now, Omer and Madina will get the blame. I have to wait until the Koronkys return.

LONDON BABO

Very well, I'll come to the house on Monday 11th September at 3pm. It's the first day I've got free. Another Nuba friend, Monir, has a car. This is what we'll do...

HANAN AND AL KORONKY RETURN.

HANAN

The children are all well – they were asking after you.

MENDE

How is Nanu?

HANAN

Who's Nanu?

MENDE

The Nuba girl who replaced me.

HANAN

Oh, her. She's fine, I guess; I didn't really notice her.

CHORUS

Monday 11th September.

But Al Koronky does not leave for work, as usual.

MENDE

Oh no, he's not leaving!

CHORUS

Mende is ironing clothes and checking the clock.

She is faint with anxiety.

MENDE

What if Monir isn't there? What if I'm caught?

CHORUS

The time has come.

HANAN

Yebit, we're going to fetch the kids from school. I'm leaving the twins here with you. (CALLING TO HER HUSBAND) Are you ready to take me, darling?

CHORUS

Mende grabs her teddy, Uran, and shoves it down her knickers.

Al Koronky is coming down the stairs.

Hanan is opening the back door.

MENDE

I have to go now before it is too late.

KUJUR APPEARS AT THE END OF THE DRIVE.

CHORUS

Mende grabs a sack of rubbish and heads for the bins outside.

MENDE FREEZES AT THE BINS FOR A MOMENT. SHE SEES KUJUR AND RUNS TOWARDS HIM.

She drops the sack and runs down the drive.

She looks back, expecting them to chase her.

There's a man across the road, waving at her.

LONDON BABO

Come on! Run, Mende, run!

MENDE

They're coming! They're coming! You have to hide me!

LONDON BABO

Don't worry, I won't let them get you.

SF/X SCREECH OF CAR PULLING UP.

MONIR

Get in, quickly!

SF/X CAR PULLS AWAY.

MENDE

I'm afraid, I'm afraid – see if they're following us? Please, please, look out of the window.

MONIR

You're safe, little sister. We've rescued you.

LONDON BABO

We'll protect you, no one can get you now.

MENDE

You don't understand, Koronky will be after me. He is the government, he is the Law.

LONDON BABO

Not here, he isn't. I'm taking you to a lawyer, she's going to help you. And there's a journalist, Damien, he is going to meet us there.

MONIR

You can stay with me and my wife and family, we have a room at the top of the house. You're free now.

ACT 5 SCENE 1

MUSIC. LONDON 2000. MENDE'S ROOM AT MONIR'S
HOUSE. MENDE HAS FALLEN ASLEEP BY THE GAS FIRE.

CHORUS

Where is the little one?

Where has she gone?

Where are you Mende kando?

DAMIEN GENTLY WAKES HER.

DAMIEN

Mende? Mende? I have a surprise for you.

MENDE

Damien? I must have fallen asleep.

DAMIEN

There is someone on the phone.

MENDE

For me? How can this be?

DAMIEN HANDS HER THE PHONE AND LEAVES HER IN
PRIVATE. BABO, IN SUDAN, IS ON THE OTHER END OF
THE PHONE. BA AND UMI ARE WITH HIM.

MENDE

Hello?

BABO

Mende?

MENDE

Babo? Is it really you?

BABO

Hello, little sister.

MENDE

Babo, are you safe? Has anyone hurt you?

BABO

I'm fine. Your friend, Damien, has told me everything.

MENDE

I have a room in a safe house with a Nuba called Monir, one of the men who rescued me. His family are very kind.

BABO

I have spoken with Monir. He is a good friend also.

MENDE

Babo, I am so very sad and lonely.

BABO

You are alive, that's the most important thing. The Arab government in Khartoum, they told us you had been kidnapped and sold to Christian extremists. They said you had converted from Islam to Christianity and that we are all in danger from the Christians.

MENDE

How can they tell these lies?

BABO

They said you had a new name, a Christian name – "Caroline".

ENTER BA AND UMI, WHO JOIN BABO.

MENDE

Caroline? What kind of a name is that? It has no meaning.

You must tell Ba and Umi it's not true.

BABO

Tell them yourself, they are here with me.

BA AND UMI SHARE THE PHONE.

BA

Mende?

MENDE

Ba!

UMI

Mende kando?

MENDE

Umi!

BA

They have tried to trick us into not speaking to you.

MENDE

You musn't listen to them. I am safe, I am free.

BA

But when will you come home?

MENDE

I don't know, Ba.

UMI

Your voice has changed, little one. We can hardly recognise your accent.

MENDE

I'm all grown up, Umi, you wouldn't recognise me.

BABO LEANS INTO THE PHONE.

BABO

Mende, we have to go, it's not safe to talk for long. We will
phone again soon, I promise.

MENDE

I love you all, love to all my family.

BABO

We love you too, little sister.

MENDE

Babo? Please, did you hear what happened to my little friend,
Kehko?

BABO

I'm sorry, Mende, Kehko was killed the night of the raid.

THE PHONE GOES DEAD. MUSIC.

ENTER RAHAB AND AL KORONKY.

CHORUS & MENDE

Where is the little one

Who fetches water from the river?

Where is the little one

Who fetches firewood from the forest?

Where has she gone?

Where has she gone?

RAHAB, IN KHARTOUM, IS ON THE PHONE TO AL
KORONKY IN LONDON.

RAHAB

How could she do this to us?

AL KORONKY

We treated her like a member of the family.

RAHAB

After all I've done for that yebit.

AL KORONKY

She ate the same food as us, slept in our house.

RAHAB

I gave her work, shelter, food, a nice clean home to live in –
not some mud hut in the middle of a field.

AL KORONKY

I've heard they're moving her to an asylum centre.

RAHAB

How dare they? She's mine, I own that woman.

ACT 5 SCENE 2

SCREEN CONTENT? ASYLUM CENTRE. LONDON 2001.

DAMIEN IS VISITING.

DAMIEN

It's a bit grim, this place.

MENDE

I can't sleep. It's so cold I have to wear my clothes in bed all night long.

DAMIEN

How's the food?

MENDE

I can't eat it.

DAMIEN

Neighbours?

MENDE

A black woman tried to recruit me for prostitution.

DAMIEN PICKS UP MENDE'S CUDDLY TEDDY, URAN.

DAMIEN

That's not very neighbourly.

MENDE

I'm frightened to leave my room. There are people crying in their sleep.

DAMIEN HOLDS URAN BY THE WINDOW.

DAMIEN

(AS URAN)

"It's too much to "bear" – I'm going to end it all!"

MENDE

Stop it, Damien!

MENDE APPROACHES HIM.

DAMIEN

(AS URAN)

"That's close enough – come any closer and I'll jump!"

MENDE

Damien!

DAMIEN

Let me hear you laugh – or the fluffy creature gets it!

MENDE LAUGHS.

That's better.

DAMIEN THROWS URAN TO MENDE.

Have they said how long you have to stay here?

MENDE

No. Always the forms to fill. I can't answer these questions. I don't know how old I am. How many times must I tell them, I don't have a Date of Birth.

DAMIEN

Just write "I don't know", like you usually do. Or make one up.

MENDE

When can be my Date of Birth?

DAMIEN

The date you escaped?

MENDE

Escaped to what? To this prison?

Very well: 11th September, this is my Date of Birth.

DAMIEN

Happy birthday, Mende.

MENDE

Why am I applying to live in this country? I want to return to the Nuba Mountains. I want to live with my family. I want a husband and children of my own. What is there for me here?

DAMIEN

We need to get you out of here.

MENDE

They're sending me to Scotland.

DAMIEN

But all your friends are in London?

MENDE

I realise I am one of the lucky ones. There are people here who have no one.

DAMIEN

You can't go to Scotland, we have to fight your case here.

MENDE

I want to work, to stay in London, but I am not allowed.

DAMIEN

Have you seen a doctor yet from the Medical Foundation?

MENDE

Yes. The doctor said I am suffering from P.T.S.D., but I don't know what –

DAMIEN

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – it's what soldiers get after going to war or prisoners wrongfully convicted or victims of torture or human beings kept as slaves. That's it, you can't stay here any longer.

MENDE

Where will I go?

DAMIEN

You'll have to stay at my house.

MENDE

But what about your family?

DAMIEN

Don't worry about it.

ACT 5 SCENE 3

LONDON 2001. DAMIEN'S HOUSE.

DAMIEN IS LOOKING AT PHOTOS WHEN MENDE
RETURNS. SHE IS CUT AND BRUISED.

DAMIEN

What the hell happened to you? Are you all right?

MENDE

No, I'm not all right. Would you be all right if you had been
dragged along the street by a Number 38 bus?

DAMIEN

Ah, London buses – I forgot to warn you.

MENDE

It pulled away as I was stepping on to it. I was hanging on to
the rail for dear life, screaming for the bus driver to stop.

DAMIEN

Didn't you have your running shoes on?

MENDE

I can't get used to proper shoes.

DAMIEN

Sandals and London buses – not a good combination.

Didn't any of the passengers help?

MENDE

They were staring out of the windows at me. Two black men
were arguing. One of them was shouting, calling me a stupid
girl; the other one was saying it was an accident and I was

hurt. I was sat on the roadside sobbing.

DAMIEN

Men fighting over you – what are you like?

MENDE

Policemen arrived in a car with flashing blue lights and a siren. I was very frightened.

DAMIEN

That's when they arrested you, right?

MENDE

They were very kind.

DAMIEN

Just like the police in Sudan?

MENDE

No. They asked me if I needed to go to the hospital; but it wasn't serious. They asked me where I live? I said, "I don't know."

DAMIEN

I bet they were thinking, "We've got a right one here."

MENDE

I told them, "I know where to get off the bus. I walk down the hill for ten minutes." I told them it was a yellow house with a blue door and red steps.

DAMIEN

You think they'd know from that description whereabouts it was in Hackney, wouldn't you?

MENDE

Yes, I thought so. I told them the house was opposite the tyre-fitting shop.

DAMIEN

So they gave you a lift home?

MENDE

No. They put me on the next 38 bus and waved me goodbye.

DAMIEN

You see, even the Metropolitan Police are your friends now.

MENDE

I don't know what is a friend any more. I have learned not to depend on anyone, not to allow myself to get close to anyone.

DAMIEN HANDS HER PHOTOGRAPHS OF HERSELF.

DAMIEN

Are you telling me a woman like this can't make friends?

MENDE

Is this really me?

DAMIEN

Yes. Pretty little thing, aren't you?

MENDE

Am I?

DAMIEN

I think you know it.

MENDE

I like the colour of my skin.

DAMIEN

Me too.

MENDE

I have never had proper photos of myself before.

DAMIEN

You can keep them. I'll make copies. We need to select one for the cover of your book.

MENDE

What book?

DAMIEN

The book you're going to write.

MENDE

How can I write a book? I can hardly speak English.

DAMIEN

I've found you a school, where you can learn.

MENDE

At my age?

DAMIEN

And while you're studying, I'll help you with the book.

MENDE

But Nuba never write anything down.

DAMIEN

You don't get out of it that easily.

MENDE

Ours is an oral tradition.

"Slave" by Kevin Fegan (c)

Email: kev@kevinfegan.co.uk Tel: 07904111671

DAMIEN

That's okay – you talk and I'll write. I have a friend in the country; we can go there for a few months to write. The world needs to hear your story, Mende.

ACT 5 SCENE 4

LONDON. OCTOBER 2002.

SCREEN CONTENT?

MENDE IS AT HER DESK AT THE ADULT ENGLISH SCHOOL. HER TEACHER IS AT THE FRONT WHILE THE OTHER ADULT PUPILS (PLAYED BY THE CHORUS) WORK QUIETLY ON THEIR ESSAYS. MENDE'S MOBILE PHONE VIBRATES. SHE CHECKS TO SEE WHO IT IS AND DECIDES TO ANSWER. SHE TRIES HARD BUT FAILS TO KEEP HER VOICE DOWN. OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM DAMIEN IS ON THE PHONE TO HER.

DAMIEN

I have to see you right away.

MENDE

I am in school.

DAMIEN

I know, I'm outside.

MENDE

What's wrong? I can hear the fear in your voice.

DAMIEN

They've turned down your claim for asylum – I've only just found out.

MENDE

Oh my God! Please, no, it cannot be! Why? Why have they done this to me?

THE TEACHER AND PUPILS REACT TO HER DISTRESS.

TEACHER

Mende, what's going on?

DAMIEN

I don't know why – I have the documents with me, I thought we should read them together.

MENDE

They will send me back to the Sudan.

DAMIEN

God knows we're going to make them pay for this. We have to start preparing your answers.

MENDE

When will they send me back?

DAMIEN

We have ten days to mount an appeal.

MENDE

Ten days! It can't be done.

DAMIEN

You have to be strong, we have a lot of work to do and we can't do it without you.

MENDE

If I am sent back, they will kill me.

THE OTHER PUPILS ARE OUTRAGED BY WHAT THEY'VE JUST HEARD.

TEACHER

Mende, you're disrupting the class.

DAMIEN

No one's sending you back. You have the right to appeal and there are so many people who won't let that happen.

TEACHER

Mende, could you please come off the phone or go outside?

DAMIEN

There's your lawyer, your publishers, Human Rights organisations, journalists, politicians and peers (AS HE ENTERS THE CLASSROOM) And there's me!

PUPILS

And us! We'll help!

MENDE IS SURROUNDED BY THEIR SUPPORT.

TEACHER

Who are you?

MENDE

He is "Corba – he who can do many things".

CLASS APPLAUD.

DAMIEN

Believe me, it really doesn't feel like that at the moment.

DAMIEN SHOWS MENDE THE DOCUMENTS. THE REST OF THE CLASS AND TEACHER ALSO LOOK AT THEM.

Look at this – the bastards! How can they write this bullshit and think they can get away with it?

TEACHER

It says here that "slavery is not considered to be persecution".

MENDE

Then clearly I have not suffered for ten years, have I?

PUPILS

It says "The Sudanese government is not involved in the slave trade".

MENDE

Then the Arab raiders did not take us to a government army camp. And I was not held as a slave in the house of a Sudanese diplomat in London.

TEACHER

It's unbelievable.

PUPILS

(READING)

"Sudan is a big country – they won't notice you return".

MENDE

(HOLDING HER BOOK)

So the government won't be waiting for me at the airport with a copy of my book exposing their role in the slave trade.

TEACHER TAKES A LOOK AT MENDE'S BOOK.

PUPILS

(READING)

"There's a ceasefire in the Nuba Mountains".

MENDE

And I suppose the government militia have never broken the ceasefire? And the village where my family live is not under government rule?

PUPILS

Look, they're so stupid they've written about you returning to "Somalia".

MENDE

There seems to be no difference in their minds between Somalia and the Sudan.

DAMIEN

Morons! We'll make them look so stupid, they'll beg you to stay.

CLASS CHEER.

MENDE

(TO DAMIEN)

You are frightened, aren't you Corba?

DAMIEN

Yes, I'm frightened for you, Mende. We have to win.

MENDE'S BEGINS HER CAMPAIGN BY ADDRESSING THE AUDIENCE.

MENDE

I believe that Britain is a democratic country that respects human rights, justice and freedom. Since my escape, I have started to feel safe in this country. I cannot believe the British

government wants to send me back to face the horrors that, for certain, await me in Sudan. I am shocked and shaken to the core by this asylum decision.

CHORUS

Front page stories around the world condemn the British government's decision.

The Guardian publishes a major investigation.

The Voice runs a "Let Mende Stay" campaign.

Mende appears on German TV, Sky and the BBC.

Amnesty International, Anti-Slavery International and Germany's Society for Threatened Peoples support her asylum claim.

Baroness Cox leads a cross-party group of MP's to lobby the government to reverse the decision. Letters and emails of support from the public flood into the Home Office.

A 15 year old German boy writes: "Dear Mende, there are too many people who are chased, killed or bullied by others.

I wish that all people could live together and not fight each other. Good luck, Yours, Tim."

MENDE

I meet a young woman from Somalia whose asylum claim has also been refused. She feels she is going mad. "You're so lucky," she says, "You have so many people supporting you: powerful people and the media. There's no one helping me. I feel so alone and so afraid."

CHORUS

A German couple from Munich write: "Dear Mende, we are willing to adopt you and give you German nationality. Kind regards, Angelika and Thomas Kaubisch."

MENDE

I am scared about the trouble I am causing the British government.

DAMIEN

Anonymous death threats continue. Letters, phone calls, surveillance of all those close to Mende.

MENDE

Two years after my escape, I am still struggling to be free.

ACT 5 SCENE 5

SCREEN CONTENT? MUSIC.

23rd DECEMBER 2002.

IN A FIELD IN THE NUBA MOUNTAINS BA, UMI, BABO
AND OTHERS ARE COLLECTING GROUNDNUTS.

IN LONDON, MENDE IS IN HER BEDSIT BY THE GAS
FIRE, WHICH IS LIT. SHE IS HOLDING URAN.

CHORUS

Pull and throw, pull and throw,

Pile the groundnuts high,

Pull and throw, pull and throw,

Stack them to the sky.

Pull and throw, pull and throw,

In the scorching sun,

Pull and throw, pull and throw,

Until the day is done.

Where is the little one?

Where has she gone?

Where are you Mende kando?

BA

One day the khawajas will come out of the sky and they will
bring Mende.

UNI

She will return with a family of her own.

BABO

To make up for the years which were stolen from all of us.

KUJUR APPEARS IN MENDE'S ROOM.

KUJUR

My little gazelle, know that you will return to the knife-sharp peaks of the Nuba Mountains.

MENDE

How can I feel free when so many of our people have been enslaved? There will always be a shadow over my life.

KUJUR

The nightmare of your slavery has not ended, only the nature of your suffering has changed.

MENDE

What am I supposed to do with my life now?

KUJUR

Do what the Nuba have always done: tell your story and the story of countless others.

KUJUR DISAPPEARS AS DAMIEN ARRIVES. HE HAS BROUGHT HER POST AND HANDS IT OVER.

DAMIEN

Post.

MENDE

I daren't open it.

SHE HANDS IT BACK TO HIM.

Please?

DAMIEN READS IT AND HANDS HER THE LETTER.

DAMIEN

Congratulations, Mende, you're a refugee – it's official.

MENDE

I can stay for five years.

DAMIEN

Then you can apply for British citizenship.

MENDE

A new identity.

DAMIEN

How does that make you feel?

MENDE

So many good people have helped me; how can I thank them all?

DAMIEN

By accepting your freedom.

MENDE

Inshallah – God willing.

MUSIC. A FLASH OF CAMERAS AS A CHORUS OF
JOURNALISTS FIRE QUESTIONS AT MENDE.

CHORUS

Mende, what do you say to those people who believed they
had the right to keep you in slavery?

Now you're free, what are your hopes for the future?

What gave you the strength to carry on?

"Slave" by Kevin Fegan (c)

Email: kev@kevinfegan.co.uk Tel: 07904111671

What would you like to tell the world about slavery today?

Why can't you return to the Sudan?

Would you like to go home?

PLAY ENDS