

GIFT

By

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Based on a True Story

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EXT. VICTORIAN TERRACED STREET IN BRIGHTON, UK - DAY -
YEAR 2033.

The sky is lightening.

Modest, tired looking houses let out to students. More titanium bikes locked up outside than cars.

o/s a morning alarm goes off

INT. TERRACED HOUSE, BRIGHTON, BEDROOM - DAY.

A messy girls bedroom with inadequate curtains and no proper storage. A black laptop computer on the floor. A jumbled set of keys with a London souvenir teddy-bear key ring on the bedside table. A patchwork blanket lies at the foot of the bed.

A lump under the bright yellow duvet groans as a smart phone begins to ring -

A slim black arm shoots out and answers it.

This is 21 year old GIFT.

GIFT

Heya. (PAUSE) No. I told you I just don't want to go. (PAUSE) Coz it's pretty meaningless at the end of the day... (PAUSE) They post it if you don't turn up anyway.
(PAUSE) I just don't want to go.
(PAUSE) Well of course YOU should.

She hangs up, sighs and turns over, buries her head back into a deep sleep...

EXT. SCHOOL GATES, NORTH LONDON, UK - DAY - **YEAR 2018.**

Adaora, a tall elegant African woman with an innate dignity about her waits outside at the usual time to up pick her daughter, the 8 year old Gift. She carries a large hold-all bag, stuffed with their possessions.

GIFT

Mum!

Adaora hugs her hello

ADAORA

I brought you this to keep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She hands her an apple from her pocket and a little brown leather purse with a photo of her family inside. She helps her put it in her school bag.

GIFT

Thanks.

ADAORA

Do you want to go to Andy's house today?

GIFT

YES! Where are you going?

ADAORA

I need to report to the home office in Croydon.

GIFT

Okay. They're just over there I'll catch them -

She motions towards Andy and her friends. Adaora kneels down at her level. Takes a breath. She smooths her hair, touches her cheek. Stares her straight in the eye.

ADAORA

Did you work hard at school?

GIFT

Yeah. I did.

ADAORA

Don't ever be afraid to ask for help.

Picks some fluff off her red coat. She makes to leave

GIFT

Okay Mama

ADAORA

Now go on.

GIFT

I will

Adaora envelops her. She practically wraps her up in her coat.

GIFT (CONT'D)

Bye Mum!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She scampers away towards her friends Andy and Kevin, who are standing with a group of other kids and parents. Her bag jangles with a souvenir teddy-bear key ring on it.

Adaora watches her until she reaches Kevin, who turns around and waves acknowledgement. They all walk on together and are lost to her.

EXT. GOOGLE EARTH IMAGE OF THE EARTH FROM SPACE. ZOOM IN ON: NORTHERN NIGERIA, BUSH, WEST AFRICA, DAWN - EARLIER IN THE YEAR 2018.

Two pairs of bare feet run across the rich red earth. One pair of long female feet and one small pair of child's feet. This is Adaora and her 6 year old daughter Gift.

EXT. NORTHERN NIGERIA, BUSH, EVENING.

Their feet keep walking, but more slowly this time. It is raining in sheets and they splash through puddles in the brown earth.

EXT. NORTHERN NIGERIA, BUSH, NIGHT.

Now only Adaora's feet walk heavily through dense bush, labouring as she strains to keep going whilst holding Gift on her back. With each out breath she hums a Nigerian Igbo lullaby.

ADAORA

Onye mere nwa nebe akwa
Egbe mere nwa nebe akwa
Weta uzziza weta ose...

EXT. IMAGE OF THE WORLD WITH RED TRAILS DRAWN ON FROM NIGERIA TO LIBYA TO SHOW THE DISTANCE ACROSS AFRICA OF ADAORA AND GIFT'S JOURNEY.

EXT. MARKET PLACE, LIBYA, DAY.

A packed market scene. The sound of the Call to Prayer. A group of people with Adaora and Gift among them. Adaora is graceful and composed. She wears a simple wrap-a-round print skirt and a white shirt. Grace has a curious, open face and is wearing red shorts and a tee shirt. They are counting out small change together to buy some pineapple.

EXT. IMAGE OF THE WORLD WITH RED TRAILS DRAWN ON FROM NIGERIA - TO LIBYA - TO MALTA, TO SHOW ADAORA AND GIFT'S JOURNEY.

(CONTINUED)

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EXT. STREETS OF MALTA, NIGHT.

The Catholic deities, churches and winding streets of Malta. Gift and Adaora, with one canvas bag between them, walk past a pretty church. There are about 30 pairs of sandals and flip-flops lined up outside. Gift puts her toes on a sparkling silver pair. Adaora gently nudges her foot away towards the most basic ones. They try them on for size and sneak off, Adaora glancing back at the church with a deep shame.

INT. REFUGEE TRAFFICKERS BOAT, MEDITERRANEAN SEA, DAWN.

The sound of a clapped out old generator and petrol engine. This flimsy craft is crammed full of men, women and children, all fleeing Africa, Iraq and Syria. There are pregnant women, fear in their eyes. Young men hoping to graft and send money home. About 15 in total. We hear the wail of a crying infant. The low hum of an outboard engine on its last legs permeates everything. A weather beaten young man, too young to be a captain, wearing a red baseball cap, stands at the back of the craft and skilfully manoeuvres the tiller.

Adaora sits at the edge next to Gift.

She gets the blanket from her bag, it is a patchwork blend of dark reds, browns and purple, a family heirloom. She wraps the blanket round both of their knees, gives Gift a reassuring squeeze. Gift stares at the open water with trepidation, then shuts her eyes.

The sea looks unfathomable and forboding.

Day turns to night and back to day as the boat gets tossed around the inky waves, like a cork bobbing on the ocean. The moonlit sea is reflected in Adaora's eyes.

EXT. LORRY SERVICE STATION LORRY PARK - CALAIS - DAY.

Adaora and Gift lie hiding on a grassy verge, filthy and weary. They stare through the grass to the drivers, all on a break. Adaora is whispering something to Gift and pointing out a particular lorry.

EXT. LORRY SERVICE STATION - CALAIS - DAY.

They sneak inside a large French cured meat lorry - '*Delice le France*' - bound for Britain. The oblivious driver smokes a cigarette by the burger van.

INT. LORRY - CALAIS - DAY.

Gift and Adaora hide behind the pink pork meat that is hanging up like the inside of a Charcuterie shop. Adaora wraps Gift in the blanket and rubs her arms.

EXT. IMAGE OF THE WORLD WITH RED TRAILS DRAWN ON FROM NIGERIA TO LIBYA, TO CALAIS FRANCE, AND THEN FINALLY TO DOVER, UK.

EXT. DOVER UK ARRIVALS - DAY.

Boarder police concentrate on checking outside the lorry and underneath. They wave it through.

EXT. AN AERIAL SHOT OF THE LONDON SKYLINE - DAY.

Some of the major sights, Big Ben, Millennium Wheel, move across the Thames, the City, Kings Cross, Camden, swiftly towards Holloway Road, towards Seven Sisters, where it zones in on our French lorry, sitting in heavy traffic.

INT. FRENCH LORRY - LONDON - DAY.

The driver listens to a Radio 5 live phone in about whether we really are a nation of dog lovers, and he's wolfing a packet of Custard Cream biscuits.

EXT. ESSO PETROL STATION NORTH LONDON - DAY.

The driver pulls in. Gets out and walks into the garage, he doesn't look back. Adaora and Gift press the emergency release button and creep out of the refrigerated section of the lorry.

EXT. ESSO PETROL STATION NORTH CENTRAL LONDON - DAY.

This is Gift and Adaora's POV. Their first sight of Britain, an ESSO petrol Station, on Seven Sisters Road, North London.

CONTINUED:

They are transfixed by this patchwork of people.

THIS is their red carpet moment.

GIFT
Hello GREAT Britain!

She waves enthusiastically at some people waiting at the traffic lights. A grey gaunt face waves back. They glide through the sea of people.

They are HERE.

INT. PAY PHONE SEVEN SISTERS ROAD, LONDON - DAY.

Through a blur of inner city chaos Adaora is using the dilapidated pay phone with some difficulty.

Directions to their next destination are being described. She fumbles whilst writing the information down, keeping an eye on Gift nearby.

ADAORA
Did you say Hollow-way Road?

CUT TO:

Gift stands on the periphery of a small souvenir stand, admiring a key-ring with a Tower of London Beefeater teddy bear on it.

The shopkeeper looks on ruefully.

ADAORA (CONT'D)
Come on Gift. We go!

Gift struggles to get it back on the hook, so hurries over to the shopkeeper to hand it to him -

SHOPKEEPER
Keep him.

Gift is overwhelmed. She runs back to her mum, clutching her new souvenir ecstatically. The shopkeeper looks on warmly, he remembers those days.

EXT. LONDON UNDERGROUND FINSBURY PARK TUBE STATION - NIGHT.

Gift and Adaora stand in front of a large London underground tube map outside the station. Gift watches as Adaora traces the coloured lines with her fingertips.

Gift is still clutching the beefeater bear key ring.

INT. LONDON UNDERGROUND, TUBE CARRIAGE - NIGHT.

Adaora and Gift sit down inside the tube train as it bursts into a station -

GIFT

Will this be our new home mama?

ADAORA

Yes

GIFT

Where we will stay for good?

(Hesitation)

ADAORA

Is this Holloway Road station?!

The train doors open.

BRUNETTE LADY

Get off now!

Gift and Adaora hurry off the tube.

EXT. HOLLOWAY ROAD, LONDON - NIGHT.

They emerge from the bowels of the tube, to halt disorientated by the unfamiliar sight and sounds.

Adaora consults her scrawled directions, grabs Gift's hand, heads off. There is a Dickensian fog over London, making it look both ancient and modern.

EXT. THE PARADISE CAFE, LONDON - NIGHT.

The two stare up at a tawdry Coffee shop, built into the crumbling Victorian facade, a grubby Continental style cafe with a faded sign reading - 'Paradise! Pasta and Panini!'.

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CONTINUED:

Gift smiles broadly at Adaora - their new home!

EXT. THE PARADISE CAFE, LONDON - NIGHT.

Adaora and Gift peer through the cloudy window of the Coffee Shop.

INT. THE PARADISE CAFE, HOLLOWAY ROAD, LONDON - NIGHT.

Through the murky window sits Mr Aziz, a Pakistani business man in his 40's wearing a long black leather coat.

EXT. THE PARADISE CAFE, HOLLOWAY ROAD, LONDON - NIGHT.

Through the window we see Adaora shaking Mr Aziz's hand formerly and she and Gift sit down.

Negotiations are taking place as Gift plays with the salt and pepper and eventually lies her head on the table, exhausted.

Mr Aziz takes fifty pounds from Adaora. Then offers her a mobile phone. Adaora declines. Mr Aziz is relentless, telling her she knows nothing about life in the UK if she's prepared to walk away from a cheap phone. Adaora reluctantly changes her mind, accepts the phone and dishes out another twenty.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT - NIGHT.

Mr Aziz leads them up the stairs next door to the cafe and opens the flat.

It is a drab and dank bedsit, with net curtains and a dirty kitchen with a hot plate. The furniture is sparse, grubby and worn out. A dank bathroom separated by a curtain to one side. But the building itself has ancient cornicing and rotten old sash windows, like something from a Dickens' novel.

Mr Aziz hands the keys to Adaora and shakes her hand as he leaves. Adaora puts the key carefully inside the small leather purse she keeps around her neck.

Adaora and Gift stand gazing at the room. Gift starts to charge from bathroom to kitchen and back to the sitting room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Adaora is more sedate and starts to methodically unpack their small bag, placing their possessions on the bed.

She puts a battered photo on the mantle piece of her, her husband and the 5 children. She takes out a battered old copy of Charles Dickens. This is 'Great Expectations.'

Gift is now excitedly turning the light switches on and off.

ADAORA

Stop that Gift.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT BATHROOM - EVENING

Old fashioned avocado bathroom suite with peeling paint and damp on the walls. A stained sink with broken mirror above it. Chunky, dripping taps. The whole room lit by a single bare bulb hanging in the centre.

Gift is there, turning the bath taps on. She flushes the loo. And she tries to do it again. The taps are running away. She tries to flush again, with little success.

ADAORA

You have to wait for it to fill up
with water. Don't waste it.

GIFT

Can we go for another look around
Mama? Please?

ADAORA

We need to wash, then eat.

EXT. HOLLOWAY ROAD, LONDON - EVENING.

Bright lights of the city at night. Busy roads and relentless bustle.

They hurry across the road. They are seeing London at it's Friday night busiest. The red buses and black taxis.

They stare at the Archway tower.

GIFT

So tall and so shiny.

Adaora can't help but giggle with exhilaration.

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CONTINUED:

They stroll up the street, stopping at a crossing. Gift presses the button. They wait with all the other people. It flashes green to cross.

An old decrepit lady is hobbling across the road, overly laden with shopping. Adaora steps up to her.

ADAORA

Let me help you please?

She tries to take one of her bags, she snatches it back.

OLD LADY

Get your hands off it! Fuck off!

Adaora and Gift back off in perplexed alarm. They watch as the old lady hurries off, looking behind her.

ADAORA

...She's proud. She needs no help from us!

They clasp each others hands and continue walking on as people of all colours and creeds push past them. Gift beginning to look perturbed -

GIFT

Why is everybody in such a hurry
Mama?

ADAORA

Because they are busy people with jobs and homes to go to -

Gift points to a bin as someone tosses their McDonald's takeaway trash in -

GIFT

What's that for?

ADAORA

It is a place to put refuse, to keep the streets nice and clean.

Gift halts, gazing at other Londoners passing them.

GIFT

Look - others like us. Shall we say hello?

She grabs her mother's hand to tug her towards a group of young black Londoners waiting at a bus stop. Adaora resists her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ADAORA

That's not how they do things here
Gift. We must wait to be
introduced.

Adaora looks uneasy. Gift has so much to learn.

ADAORA (CONT'D)

Come, let us go home.

They set off home like the people around them.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT, HALLWAY - EVENING.

Adaora carefully opens the small tan leather pouch round her neck. She removes the key to their flat just as the upstairs neighbours, Harvey and Hayley, appear with their dog Biscuit. They are both strangers to exercise. She is in an ill fitting velour tracksuit, a heart attack waiting to happen. He is in a food stained Arsenal football shirt.

The dog repeatedly barks at Gift, who hides behind her mum, it keeps barking as Hayley tries to stop it -

HARVEY

It's coz you're new... Get down
Biscuit!

They all stand inside the cramped hallway together, Gift's big eyes peering out as Biscuit goes mental -

HAYLEY

Dya want to give her a treat?

Gift's not too sure. Hayley rummages around in her bag

HARVEY

She can do paw. Sit down Biscuit.
Sit down. SIT DOWN. SIT.

Biscuit sits. Hayley passes Gift a treat, she reluctantly takes it but looks terrified. Adaora steps aside, not sure what to do next -

HAYLEY

Now paw. Paw. Biscuit, PAW!

Biscuit raises her paw. Hayley nods to Gift and she tosses the treat down to Biscuit who inhales it in one. Shy smiles all round. Hayley and Harvey bustle breathlessly up another flight of stairs, leaving Adaora and Gift.

EXT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT - NIGHT.

Adaora's apprehensive face looking out of the window, illuminated by the neon haze of the city.

The traffic roars past below her. A cacophony of drunken shouts, sirens, beeps, car alarms.

CUT TO

Gift is sleeping under the patch-work blanket, clutching her beefeater bear key ring in her hand. Their clothes have been washed and are hanging out to dry on a chair by the open window. Adaora now lies beside her, finally asleep.

A car back fires outside, Adaora's eyes leap open in sudden terror.

Gift murmurs in indecipherable fear in her sleep. She cries out the names of her lost siblings, especially her twin brother - Alfa. Adaora draws her close and rubs her tummy.

INT. LONDON UNDERGROUND, HOLLOWAY ROAD STATION - DAY.

Mother and daughter are wearing clean clothes, heading down the escalator together, enjoying the ride. They reach the tube platform.

Train comes. They find a seat in between the other passengers, staring with interest at the faces around them.

GIFT

Is it far?

ADAORA

Quite far, but nothing we can't handle!

GIFT

Maybe if we tell them where we live we can meet them somewhere closer?

ADAORA

But this way we can travel on the Underground!

Gift addresses the woman next to her

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GIFT
Is it true we are underneath the
streets?

SMILEY OLD WOMAN
Yes we are Duckie!

Gift smiles broadly and stares at the other passengers
staring at their phones and lost in their own worlds.

EXT. LUNAR HOUSE - HEADQUARTERS OF UK VISAS AND
IMMIGRATION, A DIVISION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S HOME OFFICE,
CROYDON - DAY.

A brutal grey 20 storey 1970s office block, looming
threateningly over everything around it. Ironically named
after the landing of the Apollo 11 on the moon in 1969.
Now an insult to architecture and humanity. A place where
lives are made or shattered.

Adaora and Gift stand holding hands, taking it in with
dismay -

GIFT
...Is this the place Mama?

ADAORA
There will be good people here
Gift. We just have to tell them
the truth.

This seems to set Gift's mind at rest. They set off
towards the entrance.

INT. LUNAR HOUSE, CROYDON - DAY.

They are in an institutional style waiting area with
green plastic seats stuck to the floor.

Gift watches as a woman rocks back and forth, singing to
herself. An extended Tamil family sit in a huddle and
share food.

Syrian, Iraqi, Afghani, Iranians, Palestinian, Congolese
are all here, weathered, exotic faces now strained and
apprehensive, waiting in purgatory.

INT. LUNAR HOUSE SCREENING ROOM - DAY.

Adaora and Gift sit alone in a small but brightly lit office with no windows.

Gift sits on a chair swinging her legs, she's kicked off her flip-flops and her little feet are not touching the floor.

A Home Office Official enters the room. His name is MARTIN. He is greying and overweight, brutalised by the system. He's adopted a no nonsense approach to protect himself from the suffering he encounters.

He sits, consults some papers.

MARTIN
Mrs Edochie is it?

Adaora nods.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
First we need to check we have
your contact details...
So you are staying with a friend
in Holloway?

Adaora nods again.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
And your occupation is...?

ADAORA
I am a teacher by profession, sir.
I am actually very keen to begin
teaching again...

Martin sighs deeply. He can't remember how many times he's had to repeat this -

MARTIN
Mrs. Edochie, you have to understand that as an asylum seeker, under no circumstances do you have the right to work in the UK. Not until, and if, your application to stay has been accepted.

Adaora, askance -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAORA

...But how will I make my daily bread?

MARTIN

Before you leave today you will get an ARC card, you'll be eligible for around £35 a week. Next time you will be assigned a case worker who will oversee and handle your asylum claim for the duration. They will be your point of contact. You could also get in touch with your local refugee services, find out about other entitlements.

Adaora listens intently. Gift plays with the Beefeater bear key-ring. Martin continues like an automaton.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

We will write soon to let you know when you will meet your Caseworker. In the meantime, you will report to this office every Friday at 4.30pm. We are processing cases from Nigeria quickly at the moment so be on your guard for more information.

He stands. Game over.

GIFT

It's very far to get here, sir.

Adaora robustly squeezes her arm.

MARTIN

You will be detained if you don't report here weekly. No exceptions.

He crosses, opens the door for them. Gift, about to say something else, but Adaora physically nudges her out.

Martin crosses back to the desk, staples their papers together, returns it to a file. He picks up the next file, flips it open.

INT. TESCO METRO SUPERMARKET - DAY.

The bright and crowded aisles. People mill about with baskets, absorbed in the complexities of choice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gift rushes excitedly around inspecting things. She has never seen such variety and quantity of appealing produce, all under one roof.

GIFT
Yellow Milk from some big bird?!

She is holding a carton of Birds brand Custard. Adaora looks baffled, reaches for the carton.

Gift runs away again. Custard in one hand. Beefeater bear key ring in the other.

Adaora continues wandering through the aisles. She stops by a suited and booted female shopper.

ADAORA
Excuse me Madam. Do you know where I can find some rice?

BRUNETTE WOMAN
Do I look like I work here!?

Adaora speechless, she just thought she might know where the rice is. Gift runs back.

GIFT
Can we have these to try, and these?

She is still holding the custard and other junk food that is directly marketed at kids.

GIFT (CONT'D)
They have doughnuts here like home. But their's are bright colours. Please come. They have rainbow beans on top!

She points to the KRISTY KREME selection in their own fridge. Adaora, momentarily allured by the multi-coloured sprinkles.

ADAORA
If we don't know it, we don't need it Gift.

GIFT
Please, please, I beg you...rainbow beans, mama come on!

EXT. HOLLOWAY ROAD - DAY.

They walk home through the busy grey streets with plastic shopping bags. Gift bounds along next to her mother.

GIFT

I didn't see Yam - did you? Or Okro?

ADAORA

No but we will - uncle said there are big areas with our people and our shops -

GIFT

Where will my school be mama? Can we see it today?

ADAORA

It's going to take a bit of time to get things together. Be patient my child.

GIFT

Will there be a uniform like home? And shoes. I need proper school shoes.

ADAORA

And all of this I will arrange once we know what's what.

GIFT

Tell me about the time Alfa took the eggs and mama caught him?

ADAORA

Okay but this is the last time. Absolutely the last time.

GIFT

You always say that.

ADAORA

...So in Kiloli village was a little boy, Alfa. He loved football so much that he would try and skip school to play. He stopped that when the Head Teacher found out and he was flogged.

CONTINUED:

GIFT
That's not the story, Mama!

They have reached the street door to the flat. Adaora reaches and gets the key out of her special leather pouch and lets them in.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT - DAY.

They walk up the stairs into their new home.

They take off their shoes by the front door.

ADAORA
Okay, alright! ...So Alfa was such a fan of football that he would walk all the way to the next village where they had a TV at a cafe called Sam's Place.

GIFT
Sam's Place! Sam's place! Sam's place!

ADAORA
Because Sam used to let you kids watch TV even though you weren't really allowed.

She starts to unpack the shopping and puts some bread and ready cooked chicken on a plate.

GIFT
But that's not the story! I...

ADAORA
Okay alright! So this little boy Alfa...

GIFT
My twin Alfa!

ADAORA
Your twin brother yes, he wanted a West Ham football T-shirt very badly with the name AYEW on the back...

Adaora lays out the patchwork blanket and starts laying food down on it for them to eat together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GIFT
Andre Ayew.

ADAORA
Yes Andre Ayew from Ghana. So he asked his mama but she said no. Around the same time, mama noticed that the hens were only laying one egg instead of the usual three. Mama wandered, what was going on?

GIFT
It was Alfa! He had taken them to market to sell so he could get the money to buy his tee shirt!

ADAORA
That's correct. Which was very dishonest behaviour. So dada confronted him and Alfa admitted it straight away and was very, very sorry. And dada was very pleased that he had told the truth.

Adaora passes Gift some food.

GIFT
She was so pleased that she bought him the tee shirt!

ADAORA
That's right Gift, honesty will be rewarded.

But Gift has stopped listening, she's tucking into the food. There is a knock at the door.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT - NIGHT.

Hayley from upstairs stands there blushing with a few items, a colouring book and random coloured felt tip pens and a board game of Connect 4.

HAYLEY
Hiya, don't know if you want these bits but I was going to take them, and I thought you might like em. There's a game here, Connect 4 -

Intrigued faces, unsure -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAYLEY

Shall I come in and show you how
to play?

ADAORA

That would be most helpful, Mrs
Hayley, thank you.

Hayley sets up the game as Gift excitedly gets
involved...

HAYLEY

So basically you just make a line?
And then try and block each
other..

GIFT

Uh huh! I know a similar game from
before. I can certainly do that...

Adaora smiles, proud.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT - NIGHT.

It is dark but streetlight shines through the net
curtains, providing an eery glow. Shadows from the road
dance across the walls.

The patchwork blanket is laid out on the floor and on it
are the dinner left-overs of chicken bones and bread
crusts.

Gift sleeps in the bed, Adaora beside her, awake,
listening to the alien street sounds which never seem to
stop.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT BATHROOM - NIGHT.

Adaora is brushing her teeth. With some difficulty she
removes her shirt.

Her back is etched in horrific scabs and scars from
recent machete wounds. She reaches around to stare at
them in the mirror.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT - DAY.

Golden morning light bleeds through the curtains as day
begins.

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CONTINUED:

We see the two curled together in bed, bathed in warm light... A battered copy of the bible by Adaora.

GIFT
It's a new day Mama.

ADAORA
Are you sure about that?

She rubs her tired eyes. She has not slept well.

GIFT
Yes. I'm hungry!

ADAORA
So I will make it.

JUMP CUT TO:

Adaora making porridge on the old fashioned hob. The gas is complicated to light. Adaora fumbles with a battered steel pan. She tips it into a bowl. She has only made enough for Gift.

GIFT
One meal can set you up for the day you know mama -

Adaora smiles to have her own wisdom quoted back at her

ADAORA
I don't feel like breakfast today.

GIFT
Well you must drink then. Because (she sings) "Dehydration, is every-bodies business!"

ADAORA
Do you remember that?!

They sing it together and Gift does an African dance move

ADAORA AND GIFT
"Dehydration is every-bodies business!!"

Adaora fills up a glass, smiling, tears in her eyes.

EXT. RED CROSS REFUGEE UNIT, ISLINGTON, LONDON - DAY.

The Red Cross refugee unit, a surprisingly smart, glass fronted modern office front in Angel, Islington, next door to solicitors and architects.

This is where advice and help is given to refugees.

INT. RED CROSS REFUGEE UNIT, ISLINGTON, LONDON - DAY.

Adaora and a homely woman in her mid thirties are sitting on a sofa chatting, in a glass tube within another office.

Gift is eating a biscuit and looking at a BBC kids magazine on the floor outside the cube. There are other people at desks beyond, with potted plants and cluttered pin-boards. It is completely the opposite to Lunar House, the Immigration office.

The woman is Anna, a Red Cross Caseworker.

ANNA

And I can come with you to register at the doctors if you need me. And we need to en-roll Gift in school. We'll contact Islington Council, get that process going for you. ...If you'd like to come with me?

She opens the door of the cube, Adaora follows her out.

INT. RED CROSS REFUGEE UNIT STORAGE ROOM - DAY.

Anna leads the way into store room crammed full of second hand clothes on hanging rails and baby equipment. Adaora and Gift beside her.

ANNA

This is where we make up your emergency clothes parcel...

She grabs a plastic bag and starts to put things inside. Shirts, trousers, tee shirts, occasionally holding them up against the pair to ensure they will fit. Lastly she pushes in a handful of women and girls' knickers. Adaora looks away, embarrassed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA (CONT'D)

It can get very cold here so you should choose some coats while I grab some food vouchers. And help yourself to some new shoes too.

She motions towards a rail of second hand coats, with boxes of shoes beneath. She senses Adaora's reticence.

ANNA (CONT'D)

It's not charity, Mrs. Edochie.
It's just to get you started.

Adaora briefly meets her eyes, takes the bag of clothes. She exits. Gift and Adaora start to rummage through the winter coats. They settle on one each and Anna returns with the vouchers. Gift has chosen a bright red duffel coat and mum a big Black pufa jacket.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Good choice Gift!

She hands the vouchers to Adaora, who signs on a clipboard.

ADAORA

Say thank you Gift.

GIFT

Thank you, Gift.

Anna smiles at her natural cheekiness, Adaora is disapproving.

EXT. OUTSIDE YERBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL GATE - DAY.

Gift and Adaora stand, dumbfounded by the noise of the children in the playground. It is a traditional Victorian school building with the playground out front. Playtime is in full swing and the activity is overwhelming.

Gift slips a hand into her mother's.

INT. YERBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY.

The Head of Year Camilla, is showing Adaora and Gift around. She is an attractive brown-skinned woman in her early 40s with kind eyes.

They pass through the wide hallways decorated with children's artwork.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There are big arched windows, ancient radiators and brown Parque floor. Gift and Adaora are rapt.

CAMILLA

There's 30 children in each class,
1 teacher, Miss Gay, and 2
assistants Mel and Lynda. Mel has
had a few children like you
before, Gift.

Gift looks at Adaora, what does she mean?

CAMILLA (CONT'D)

And this will be your classroom.

She enters the classroom. Adaora and Gift halt, staring in.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)

Come on in!

They enter, enthralled.

ADAORA

This whole area is just for the
children? Paid for completely by
the government?

Camilla nods emphatically

ADAORA

May I assist you here in anyway I
can, if there is a need, in my
country I was a teacher -

CAMILLA

Well that's wonderful to hear!
Actually, we are looking for
parents to assist with guided
reading in year 3 - might be a
good place to start

ADAORA

Oh yes, that would be a good place
to start, with many thanks

Camilla nods with encouragement and walks to the back of
the class, Adaora rushes with excitement

CAMILLA

So Gift, Lynda sits at the back
here. You can sit right here next
to her until you feel comfortable.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAMILLA (CONT'D)

Then she's close by if you need to
ask her anything.

Gift, taking in the big colourful paintings on the walls,
the collages of volcanoes and the quiet reading area.

CAMILLA (CONT'D)

We have a garden too. And pets.

Gift rushes to the window.

GIFT

I love goats! Do you have goats?
Is that pit full of dirt? Is it
for planting? Can I see what
tools we have?

Another child, Andy enters the classroom. A tall red
headed boy with pink freckles, wearing a miniature
Arsenal football kit.

He carries a Star Wars backpack, hangs it up on his peg.

CAMILLA

Andy! Come over here and meet
Gift..

Andy walks over to the new kid in town. A grumpy
reluctance to him.

ANDY

'Lo.

Gift looks at Adaora, who nods to him. Gift confidently
sticks out her hand.

GIFT

I am Gift.

EXT. LUNAR HOUSE, CROYDON - DAY.

The familiar bureaucratic facade of Lunar House. Long
lines of IMMIGRANTS and FOREIGNERS flowing out the door
waiting in the cold. Adaora bypasses them, walking
straight up to reception. A grim faced RECEPTIONIST
behind the desk, old before her time, looks up.

ADAORA

I have an appointment at 2 to meet
my caseworker? Here is my Home
Office card.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RECEPTIONIST

Take a number. Wait your turn at
the back of the line.

Adaora, disconcerted.

ADAORA

But I left my daughter at school
today, I need to get back in time
to collect her...

A glimmer of humanity from the worker. She glances around
to see if the Security Guards are looking.

RECEPTIONIST

Wait in that line over there then.
Quickly does it.

She points to a group of people seated in the corner.
This is the fast track line.

She looks anxiously up the clock - 2:20pm.

JUMP CUT TO:

A sallow blonde Scot in his late 20s, calls Adaora's
name.

This is MATTHEW. He is officious and fair, already
tarnished by a system that will not allow him to use his
own discretion. If he is to further his career he
realises he must go by the book.

INT. LUNAR HOUSE INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY.

An anonymous windowless interview room with grey walls
and strip lighting. A black table and office chairs.
Adaora and Matthew sit at a desk opposite each other.

ADAORA

...I left my daughter in school
today, sir. In North London. I
must be back to collect her.

MATTHEW

They'll hold onto her. Don't
worry.

But Adaora is worried. She watches as Matthew examines
the paperwork.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

Okay, Adaora, I'm to be your Home Office Case Worker, which means I am your point of contact here and I oversee the process of your application. It can take 3 weeks in some cases, but I have to warn you it can take up to 3 years. Soon we will send out a letter with the date and time of your interview. Will you be needing an interpreter?

ADAORA

I have been speaking English all my life, sir.

Matthew starts ticking boxes on forms.

MATTHEW

No interpreter needed.

A pause as Matthew examines the next forms to fill in. Adaora takes out a small pad of lined paper and pen, ready to take notes.

ADAORA

Will my child be present at the interview?

Matthew glances at her.

MATTHEW

We can make provision for them during the interview if necessary.

He presses on.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

You may want legal representation while you explain your case. There isn't legal aid available but there is the refugee council who can give you advice.

He looks at Adaora, as if to emphasize what comes next.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

The interview is really your only opportunity to tell us your fears about returning home.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

You need to gather up all the evidence of your persecution to prove that you are who you say you are and your story is genuine. You must bring all the relevant paperwork and personal documents like passport, birth certificate along to your interview.

ADAORA

Women and girls from my area are being kidnapped and disappeared. You must have heard of the Chibok girls? Some have returned. Some girls are sex slaves, servants, cooks in the military camps. Some are being brainwashed. Turned into suicide bombers. I have no paper evidence of that. I have no personal documents. All I have is my word and what I can show you.

She rises, starts to take off her coat.

MATTHEW

That won't be necessary.

ADAORA

It will only take a minute, sir.

He's starting to undo her shirt now. Matthew begins to panic. This wasn't part of his training.

MATTHEW

Don't do that, Mrs Edochie.

ADAORA

Please. It's my back. If you can just look then..

Matthew seizes control

MATTHEW

You need a doctor to examine you and verify any injuries you might have. They'll have to provide a certified statement for us. The Refugee Council will put you in touch with one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ADAORA

I'm happy for you to look just now, it's only my back, it is not indecent...

MATTHEW

If you take your shirt off I will be forced to call security.

Something in his tone halts Adaora. She sinks back down to her chair, does up the fiddly buttons on her shirt.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT, BATHROOM - EVENING.

Adaora's hands are now unbuttoning Gift's shirt, she wriggles free and jumps into a bubble bath in a state of some excitement describing her day. Adaora leans back on the loo seat, drained.

GIFT

There's plenty of chicken for lunch. I can go back for more when I finish! I do not need money to pay!

She puts the bubbles on her head

GIFT

I am a Chief with a feather in my hat! Can you see mama - do you like my feather?

ADAORA

Yes, yes I do. And did you say you played football?

GIFT

Andy asked me to play on Saturday and afterwards we will eat fish and fried plantains together...

Gift picks up some more bubbles and blows them towards Adaora.

ADAORA

They call them Chips.

GIFT

Chips, plantains, french fries, Crisps, who cares mama?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAORA
It's a long time until Saturday

GIFT
No Mama it's just the day after
tomorrow!

Adaora gets the threadbare towel and Gift steps out of the bath

ADAORA
I would like to walk to some of Charles Dickens's old haunts. We can do that in the morning perhaps

JUMP CUT TO:

They lie next to each other asleep in the middle of the night.

A shard of light shines through the window onto Adaora's face, Gift is tossing and turning in her sleep having nightmares about Alfa being lost. Adaora leans over her, stroking her head in comfort. She starts to hum the Igbo lullaby.

ADAORA
Onye mere nwa nebe akwa
Egbe mere nwa nebe akwa
Weta uzziza weta ose...

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT, KITCHEN - DAY.

Adaora is making porridge again. She sits down with Gift, who eats hungrily. Adaora stares out of the window and drinks two glasses of water in quick succession.

GIFT
Where do you think they are now mama? They won't know we are here, will they?

ADAORA
No they won't. But all being well we can send for them.

EXT. YERBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL GATES - DAY.

Children and parents rush through the playground into school as the bell rings. Adaora crouches down by Gift, holding her hands

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAORA
I'll try not to be late today.

GIFT
I can walk back with Andy, don't worry.

ADAORA
Please wait for me.

EXT. LONDON STREETS - DAY.

Adaora walks through the mayhem of central London navigating the traffic, pedestrians, shops, bikes. Everybody rushes around her with places to go, people to see.

Her pace is listless, she's preoccupied and isolated by her thoughts.

INT. REFUGEE LEGAL CENTRE - DAY.

A run down modern building all on one level, crammed full of refugees. Adaora joins a queue waiting for free legal advice.

There are signs on the wall about cuts in legal aid and information for unaccompanied minors.

She watches as a middle-aged white woman comes in with a young black teenager, clearly her adopted or foster daughter.

Adaora can't help but listen in as they discuss applying for indefinite leave to remain as soon as she turns 18, it's like she is taking notes in her head.

EXT. URBAN GREEN SPACE - DAY.

A central London green space, where pigeons and Plane trees abound. Adaora sits on a bench, huddled against the cold, eating some grapes out of a brown paper bag.

She is watching a group of black and white teenagers, hoods up, gloves on, playing football. So this is multiculturalism.

EXT. KENTISH TOWN HIGHSTREET - DAY.

Adaora wanders down the squat narrow highstreet, past colourful fruits stalls and a mobile posh coffee shop 'Bean about Town'. It is shabby old London at its best, complete with drunks and junkies.

She stops outside a dilapidated modern building, with green Camden Council sign.

Kentish Town Library.

INT. KENTISH TOWN LIBRARY - DAY.

A hodgepodge community library. Floor to ceiling shelves stuffed full of colourful books in varying states. A computer area with printer. A toddler corner. Grey rectangular tables for communal reading.

Adaora wanders around the shelves in heaven. She enters the history section, eyes wide at the quantity of books. She can't stop smiling. She glances at a few Dickens's novels.

She sits down at a shared table to look at a local history book, 'Holloway Road Past'.

She glances around at myriad people sitting around, reading broadsheet newspapers, academic journals, romance novels.

At last, she has found refuge.

EXT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT - DAY.

Adaora gets back to the flat and fumbles for her key in the little leather pouch and let's herself in.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT, HALL - DAY.

The scruffy shared hall with wood-chip walls and dark red carpet. There are takeaway menus, flyers, free papers, letters, all thrown on a dark wooden console table and scattered all over the communal floor.

Adaora's neighbour Harvey is rifling through the flyers and menus. Today he wears the same old food stained Arsenal football shirt, grey tracksuit bottoms and grotty old slippers.

CONTINUED:

HARVEY

A. Edochie?

Adaora, about to ascend the stairs, glances back at him. Harvey is holding out a letter in an official looking brown envelope.

ADAORA

For me?

She takes the letter with some trepidation.

HARVEY

It never stops piling up down here!

Adaora tears it open there and then. Harvey mutters a goodbye as he goes upstairs with a fist full of his own red letters.

Adaora stands, gazing at the letter. It gives the date of her Home Office interview. In panic, she grabs the free London paper among the flyers. Checks it against the letter. It is today. Her interview is today.

A flash of despair. Then resolve.

She rushes out of the door, fumbling with her mobile phone -

ADAORA

Hello. It's Adaora here, Gift's mother. I was supposed to come in to juniors to read with Louis today but I have been called to the Home Office. I'm terribly sorry...

EXT. YERBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL BOG GARDEN - DAY.

It's a drab afternoon threatening rain. The children are pottering around the school garden in red raincoats and wellington boots. There are barrels of green plants and a toy filled sandpit. Some rabbit hutches in the background.

They are listening to a science class. Andy and Gift stand together, they are friends now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMILLA

Now we are all going to collect our own mini-beast and put it in one of these jars, to examine it under the microscope. It could be an insect or arachnid or another type of invertebrate. Just look around the garden, see what you can find.

The children scatter, hunting through undergrowth and examining the earth.

GIFT

I've found an Invertebrate!

Andy doesn't hang about -

ANDY

I'll get the jar!

EXT. LUNAR HOUSE, CROYDON - DAY.

The monochrome building, jutting against the cobalt sky.

More people lining up outside, they wind around crash barriers, waiting to make it through the revolving door.

Adaora looks at them with despair. Please god don't let this be the line.

She weaves through them and approaches the glass doors.

INT. LUNAR HOUSE, CROYDON - DAY.

Adaora picks up a ticket. She is sweating. She waits. And waits. A voice breaks through the general waiting room sounds

MATTHEW

Adaora Edochie?

Adaora rallies and rises, approaches to follow Matthew.

INT. LUNAR HOUSE, CORRIDORS - DAY.

Adaora follows Matthew through a maze of neon lit corridors.

He walks fast and Adaora struggles to keep up.

INT. LUNAR HOUSE, LIFT - DAY.

Adaora and Matthew step inside a stainless steel lift. The doors shut. Matthew presses the fourth floor. He is careful not to meet Adaora's eyes.

They ascend in uncomfortable silence.

EXT. LUNAR HOUSE INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY.

We see Adaora's back as she follows Matthew into the interview room; beads of sweat are forming on the nape of her neck.

INT. LUNAR HOUSE INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY.

Another generic, windowless interview room with no personal effects. On the desk is a tape recorder and a pad of paper.

It will be recorded, reminiscent of a police interview.

Matthew motions for her to sit down.

MATTHEW
You have no legal representative
with you?

He crosses something off a questionnaire.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
I'm going to press "play" now
Adaora Edochie. That means we are
being recorded.

He presses it.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
Please begin by stating your full
Home Office number, name,
nationality and the situation in
your country before you fled.

ADAORA
My number is 2045324. My name is
Adaora Edochie. I am Nigerian. A
school teacher, my husband a human
rights activist. We have 5
children. They started coming to
the village and -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATTHEW

- Be specific. Who are they?

ADAORA

Boko Haram. Or Fulani militia.

Matthew writes this down.

ADAORA (CONT'D)

They had been stealing food, animals and kerosene. We felt threatened but hoped it would be the last of it. This one day, it had been particularly hot so we retired to bed early. That night they came and stormed the village.

MATTHEW

Who came?

ADAORA

We had heard they were part of Boko Haram, the Islamic Militarist group based in the North East of my country...they were on the move after making problems over there...

MATTHEW

You had heard that from whom?

ADAORA

One of the village elders had spoken of it. We heard that they had taken hostages, from a neighbouring village.

MATTHEW

Do you have any written documentation to verify this?

Adaora shakes her head. Matthew, a glimpse of humanity there.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

Really? You have nothing? It would really help if..

ADAORA

I have nothing.

Matthew looks frustrated. He begins to write on the form.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MATTHEW
No evidence submitted to substantiate claim.

ADAORA
But on the BBC, on the radio world service they talk about it. Inside Africa. Some think us Igbo's should be relocated to the South. Have you heard it? And I have evidence here, sir.

She taps her heart.

ADAORA (CONT'D)
They raided our houses. They took my husband. They killed him in front of me.

MATTHEW
How did they kill him?

This is matter of fact, all emotion restrained.

ADAORA
With a machete.

MATTHEW
You witnessed this?

ADOARA
Yes, as did my daughter Gift, and my other children.

MATTHEW
Gift is the child you have with you here?

Adaora nods. Matthew makes another note.

ADAORA
We ran, Gift in my arms. They were killing many people and setting fire to the village.

Her voice trembles. Matthew waits.

MATTHEW
Then what happened?

Adaora composes herself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ADAORA

They took my 2 sons, Gift's twin brother and my teenage daughter. Gift and I fled. We stayed close to their camp for many days, hiding in the bush. I waited to see my children again. Until Gift could not stay any longer.

During that time we saw a military plane drop off supplies. It is my summation they came from the Sambisa Forest where they have fortified camps. But they kept moving every week, killing and setting fire to villages and it was hard to keep hidden without arousing suspicion. And Gift was growing weaker by the day.

I was waiting for my eldest daughter. They have been taking girls and forcing them into marriage. Sometimes they make them into cooks or sex slaves. They do not want women to be educated. They want us to speak Arabic. They hate women to leave the home. They hate progress and they hate Christians.

CUT TO:

EXT. YERBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL GARDEN - DAY.

The children all sit in a circle on pint sized plastic garden chairs looking at the creatures they have collected in glass jars.

CAMILLA

Did you know that the largest invertebrate in the entire world is the African giant earthworm. It can grow to be 6.7 Metres long. That's as big as a bus!!

The children shriek and squeal

ANDY

Have you seen one Gift?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GIFT
Of course. I ride one to school!

Much laughter and screams.

INT. LUNAR HOUSE INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY.

The light in the room has taken on an almost greenish hue, as if the memories being recalled are colouring the air. Matthew sits in shadow.

Adaora, tenser than before. Furrowed brow. The interview is moving too fast. Her leg shakes underneath the table.

MATTHEW
How long were you in the bush for?

ADAORA
5 weeks I think. I did not see my other children even once. So we walked from North Eastern Nigeria to my uncle in the South.

MATTHEW
Surely that's hundreds of miles, Adaora. You're sure you walked all that way?

ADAORA
Yes we walked. We had no choice but to walk. We survived on leaves, berries and rain water. It took weeks. At night my daughter has stomach parasites even now. But I feel lucky. We did not perish.

Matthew, taking notes.

ADAORA (CONT'D)
My uncle hid us but was afraid because he is Yoruba, we are Igbo. I wanted to leave Gift with him to go back and find my children but he wouldn't agree. I couldn't risk taking her back. They smuggle abducted girls out of the country, to Chad and Cameroon. Many children from my tribe had been taken as child soldiers and I feared this is what had happened to my sons.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAORA (CONT'D)

I started washing clothes for people in Lagos. Making some money of my own. I had been prosperous, so I knew how to work. Then another gang from Boko Haram came, they beat us and threatened us for not speaking Arabic. They hate my husband for the work he does in Sokoto. My Uncle sold what was left and gave us the money to flee the country.

CUT TO:

INT. YERBURY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY.

It has started sleeting in the garden, it is trickling down the classroom windows as the children flock inside to take off their waterproofs. There are puddles on the floor and damp clothes being hung on pegs.

Gift sits on a blue plastic chair as Andy tries to help her pull off her wellington boots.

CAMILLA

It's freezing out there children!
Hope everyone is okay - it's time
for warming up a little now!

GIFT

Do you like playing Connect 4?

ANDY

Yeah fink so

GIFT

I bet I could beat you...

ANDY

A fight to the death!

Camilla over hears and looks concerned, but Gift is laughing...

INT. LUNAR HOUSE INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY.

The room is darkening as the interview progresses. The tone is more confrontational now. A detailed line of staccato questioning continues.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATTHEW
And where is your uncle now?

ADAORA
Because of the troubles he has fled to Ghana, he has family there.

MATTHEW
Do you have family in Ghana?

ADAORA
No, my only family is in Northern Nigeria or here -

MATTHEW
You have family here?

ADAORA
My daughter Gift, yes

MATTHEW
But this man, you said he was your uncle?

ADAORA
He is.

MATTHEW
But he is not from your tribe?

Adaora
No.

MATTHEW
But he is a blood relative?

ADAORA
... He is my friend, an old friend of my family.

MATTHEW
You said earlier, that this man was your uncle. Now you say he is a friend of your family. Which is it Adaora?

Adaora looks uncomfortable

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
Is he the brother of one of your siblings or isn't he?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ADAORA

No, he isn't.

MATTHEW

Yet you call him "uncle"?

ADAORA

It is our custom to call our
elders uncle.

Adaora hangs her head

MATTHEW

Okay, lets move on. How did you
and your daughter get here and why
did you come?

A pause.

ADAORA

We took that perilous journey by
boat from Libya, but we were
lucky. Our craft was small.

MATTHEW (CUTS IN)

Did you stop in any other
countries on your way to this one?

ADAORA

No, we came directly here, to our
former mother country

MATTHEW

Mother country?

ADAORA

We only became independent of you
in 1960...

The school teacher in her is coming out -

ADAORA (CONT'D)

We consider the UK like a mother,
protective of her children...

MATTHEW

Let's stick to the facts here.
What did you bring with you?

ADAORA

I brought the clothes on my back
and my daughter Gift.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ADAORA (CONT'D)

My copy of Charles Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities. A bible from our local church. One photo. Of ADAORA and our children. Before Gift was born. And we have our blanket.

Matthew makes a note of this. Adaora, anxiously watching him.

EXT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT - NIGHT.

The flat is bathed in ambient city light. The constant sounds of the road and people outside sift through the air.

Adaora and Gift lie asleep under the patchwork blanket. Adaora begins to sing the Igbo lullaby, the same one that she hums at the beginning of the story and when Gift can't sleep.

ADAORA

Onye mere nwa nebe akwa
Egbe mere nwa nebe akwa
Weta uzziza weta ose...

EXT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT - MORNING.

Bright white sunshine lights up the room. Everything looks faded, but loved. More personal things are accumulating in the space. A few more battered Charles' Dickens novels on the table.

Adaora is pouring the porridge for Gift into a bowl. Gift is packing her bag for school, she carefully puts in the Connect 4 set.

GIFT

Come on Mama?!

ADAORA

I'll have mine later

Gift walks over and picks up another spoon and scoops porridge onto it, hands it to her. Forcing her to share her bowl. They sit in silence eating together.

EXT. HOLLOWAY ROAD, LONDON - DAY.

Gift and Adaora step outside and the whole of London has been transformed into a mystical winter wonderland under 3 inches of settled snow.

Stepping cautiously at first as it's their first time, the beauty and consistency of it overtakes them.

They start picking it up and playing with it, making snowballs, touching cars, writing in it. Adaora makes a quick snowman, taking off her hat and resting it on its head.

We've never seen her being silly before. They are both laughing with exhilaration and unbridled joy.

They wonder at icicles hanging off the trees.

They pass a fruit-stall and stop to stare at tropical mangoes covered in snow; there are tramps gathered around a fire in a rubbish bin, other kids being dragged to school on sledges, people smiling and commenting to each other. Gift and Adaora look back at their footprints in the snow -

GIFT
It's like sand, only white and
cold!

ADAORA
Everything looks the same, nothing
is better or worse, just
beautiful, as one!

They rub their hands together, laughing at their freezing breath, and hurry on. Their feet walking through the white snow are reminiscent of their feet walking through the rich red earth at the start of their journey in Africa.

The beefeater bear key ring is attached to its zip at the back of Gift's rucksack, tinkling away.

EXT. YERBURY SCHOOL GATES - DAY.

The usual morning chaos on stilts, because of the unexpected snowfall.

GIFT
I can walk back with Andy today,
we can play in the snow!

CONTINUED:

ADAORA

I will come and walk with you. As Dickens's said - the pain of parting is nothing to the joy of meeting again -

Gift, raises an eyebrow, curbing disappointment.

Adaora watches from a distance as Gift walks through the throngs of children and into the school building.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT CORRIDOR - DAY.

Adaora rushes into the hall, shaking snow off her shoes and bumps into Harvey, taking Biscuit to the park.

ADAORA

Have you seen it Harvey? Will it be like this for Christmas day?

HARVEY

Nah love - don't think we've had a white Christmas for years. Off to work today lovey?

ADAORA

No, no. I wish -

HARVEY

What is it you do?

ADAORA

I'm a teacher. And you?

HARVEY

I'm on the sick, me. (PAUSE)

HARVEY (CONT'D)

How's the kid getting on with school?

ADAORA

She loves the place. It's a great school -

HARVEY

Where was it then? Where you lived before?

ADAORA

It was Northern Nigeria.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARVEY
Must be good to be here then!

ADAORA
It is something of a relief

HARVEY
Are you sending for the others
then or what?

ADAORA
My husband...

HARVEY
It's not like you people to just
have one...!?

ADAORA
I have many kids, but my husband
was killed.

They both avoid eye contact.

HARVEY
Bloody hell love (PAUSE, AWKWARD)
Have you been to the library? You
might like it, being a teacher and
that. They do English classes come
to think of it. On the High
Street. It's got computers too,
which I use.

She nods and smiles.

ADAORA
I wish you better soon.

HARVEY
You too. Cheerio. Bye...

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY.

Adaora is collecting her refugee entitlement money from
the window.

EXT. KENTISH TOWN HIGH-STREET, MONTAGE - DAY.

Adaora comes out of the pound shop with her weekly
shopping.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She stands outside a big green-grocers shop with different vegetables stacked up outside. She examines a large Yam. A Cassava. Chooses some bright green Plantains and some grapes, doesn't quite have the right change, the guy doesn't mind, hands over the goods and smiles and waves her on.

She nearly walks past the library. Stops, turns back, heads inside.

INT. KENTISH TOWN LIBRARY - DAY.

Adaora sits alone at a large grey table in a corner of the crowded library, surrounded by books. She looks more at ease than we've seen her. Her brain relaxed now she's found distraction. Harvey was right - this is the sort of place she feels at home. She reads the local paper - The Camden New Journal - and nibbles on a few grapes. She blends in.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT - DAY.

Light shines through the murky windows of the flat. Adaora is washing clothes in the sink with her bare back looking red and raw in the morning light. She wrings them out and hangs them over the chairs in the main room.

She sits down next to a sleeping Gift and takes out a bible and reads Psalm 91:

ADAORA
If you make the Lord your refuge,
if you make the most high your
shelter, no evil will conquer you;
No plague will come near your
home. For he will order his angels
to protect you wherever you go.

EXT. OUTSIDE YERBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL GATES - DAY.

A typical grey London day, ominous clouds above. Most of the snow has melted to mush. Adaora gives Gift her school bag and waves her off

ADAORA
Say hello to the earth worms.
Tomorrow is Saturday, we can be
together all day!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gift smiles and waves, trundling through the playground to her classroom. She looks back and waves one final time before she disappears inside the main school building. Adaora waves back.

EXT. STREETS OF LONDON - MONTAGE - ADAORA'S DICKENS'S TOUR - DAY

- Adaora and Gift walk holding hands in the sunshine to 48 Doughty Street to look at the blue plaque outside. Adaora has a notebook with 'Charles Dickens addresses' scribbled inside and an A to Z map.
- They now arrive at Crossbones Graveyard where social outcasts were buried between the 16th-19th centuries and read the grave stones - Gift is particularly intrigued by this place, Adaora unsettled...
- They wander through Borough High Street, looking through a muddled maze of cobbled yards and passage ways at a blue plaque on a building where Dickens's used to write.
- They take in Borough Market and stop to try cheeses, salamis and olive tasters on offer.
- Finally they head to London Bridge, to the famous steps where Nancy met Bill Sykes in the story of Oliver Twist.
- They stare out over the river. They both wave at a boat full of tourists.

EXT. OUTSIDE YERBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL GATES - MORNING.

Adaora drops Gift at school again for the start of the new week.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT, HALLWAY - DAY.

Adaora is in the shambolic hallway on her hands and knees, going through flyers, menus, junk mail searching for a letter from the Home Office. Nothing. She leaves the flat.

INT. DOCTOR'S SURGERY, FINSBURY PARK - DAY.

A white spacious doctors office with big wooden desk and various medical machinery around.

CONTINUED:

Adaora is lying on her front on an examination table, being looked at by a male doctor, who is measuring her scars and notating them. He shakes his head, saddened by the suffering he sees

DOCTOR
Do they bother you?

ADAORA
Only when I see them. I try to forget they are there.

He makes sympathetic noises, whilst gently touching her back -

DOCTOR
If you can massage the skin every morning and night and use Vitamin E or some light oil, it will help ease the marking as it boosts the blood supply and helps healing. Can your daughter help you with that?

ADAORA
She's so young, it's fine, I can find another way -

The Doctor pulls the curtain around her again so she can put her clothes back on in private and sits down at his desk and starts taking notes

DOCTOR
I can certainly verify in writing that these are machete wounds, which corroborate your description of the attack on your family. I do hope it helps. We've become quite a vicious little place lately...

CUT TO

Adaora leaves with an official brown envelope to submit to the Home Office to add as evidence on her asylum claim.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT HALLWAY - DAY.

Adaora comes through the front door. She glances down at the mail again. Right at the top she finds a letter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She sits on the stairs, puts her brown envelope carefully to one side and braces himself, tears it open. We see the top right corner. It is from the HOME OFFICE.

Through a blur certain words stand out.

Insufficient evidence of persecution. Unreliable statement. Lacks credibility. Possible family connection in Ghana. Inconsistent witness. Yarls Wood Immigration Removal Centre. Compulsory Deportation.

Adaora, bows her head, despair crushing her. Harvey lets himself in with Biscuit, balks at the sight of her.

INT. HARVEY OKINE'S FLAT - DAY.

A flat in a time warp. Inherited from his late mum and not changed since. Peeling flowery wall paper. Nicotine stains. Pale blue shag pile carpet. A 1970s style fitted kitchen with pink lino floor. The only modern touch, a flatscreen TV which dominates the wall above the kitchen table.

Harvey is stirring a cup of strong builders tea, hands it to Adaora. She sits down opposite at the table. He lights up a cigarette and cracks open a can of Coke.

HARVEY

Worse than bad news, eh?

ADAORA

...They don't believe me. We are being sent back to our country. If we go near to the North they will likely take Gift into slavery. If we stay South we will have nothing and have to keep watching our backs. My husband had enemies, you see.

Harvey, unable to compute this.

HARVEY

But the little girl's settled now.
Did you tell them that?

Adaora nods.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Can't you get them at work to speak up for you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He reaches for the ashtray.

ADAORA

It's illegal for me to work here.

HARVEY

They must let you work. They're
crying out for teachers. Seriously
...they need their heads checked -

Harvey is trying to take this all in...

HARVEY (CONT'D)

I don't get it. You've not caused
any trouble. You're the quietest
neighbour we've had...I'll talk to
H. We'll do one of them
'change.com' internet petitions,
you know, get the school involved
and that -

Adaora drinks her tea as fast as she can, rises from the table.

ADAORA

Thank you Mr Harvey. I appreciate
your kindness. Now I mustn't be
late to collect her.

She gets up to go. Harvey's eyes well up with tears -

HARVEY

So sorry love. It's not fair. Let
us know what happens. If there's
anything we can do...

Adaora exits. Harvey ponders the conversation, grabs the remote and flips on the TV. An appeal is on to donate for starving CHILDREN IN YEMEN.

He shakes his head, rattled by all this reality, and changes the channel to 'A PLACE IN THE SUN'.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT, HALLWAY, DAY.

Adaora lets herself back into her own flat.

She walks around. It looks lived in now. The picture they arrived with is in a cheap frame on the wall. They have a potted plant. A rack for hanging washing. Towels and toothbrushes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORE CLOTHES, Fruit and VEG in a bowl, more drawings that Gift did at school on the wall. The patchwork blanket on the bed.

This is now a home. Their home. She grabs a few hard boiled eggs from a pot by the sink and leaves.

INT. YERBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL - READING RESOURCE ROOM - DAY

Adaora sits quietly with Louis, a big over-weight boy who is struggling to read, she points to the words in a Tom Gates book as he sounds them out -

LOUIS

My very big plan: Write more songs
about very im...im...por...tant
things like tea and bis...cuits.

He shuts the book

ADAORA

Well done Louis. I'm very much
looking forward to reading with
you next time.

His grumpy tough front cracks into a broad, open smile.

EXT. WHITTINGTON PARK NEAR SCHOOL - DUSK.

An urban green space. Adaora sits on a municipal bench, her back to a graffiti covered wall.

She stares as Gift runs around playing football. Gift is competitive and quick, tackling and getting the ball whenever she can.

Gift runs back to her. Andy not far behind. Andy takes out some sandwiches, they are overly wrapped in clingfilm which he struggles to unwrap to pass them around. They all take a bite at the same time -

GIFT

Like I said. Definitely hate it.

ANDY

Try it again. And remember it is
nothing to do with chocolate.

Gift reluctantly sinks her teeth again into the Marmite sandwich.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GIFT
It's so salty and burnt, it's not
right -

She hands it to Adaora. Andy laughs. Adaora tries and
nearly gags.

ADAORA
Oh no, I don't like it. I prefer
the chicken.

Adaora gets out her bag with some boiled eggs inside and
hands them around.

ADAORA (CONT'D)
There's no need for wrappers here,
nature provides the best packaging

They make agreeable noises, peeling them methodically,
Adaora collects the shell from the other two

ANDY
Can Gift come to mine to see the
fireworks tonight?

ADAORA
If your parents don't mind.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT BATHROOM, NIGHT.

Adaora steps out of the shower and stands at the small
bathroom window, staring out at the fireworks. We see her
scarred back. The banging of explosions and rockets is
making her feel edgy.

O/S Her phone rings in the kitchen.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT, KITCHEN, NIGHT.

Adaora rushes towards her ringing phone

ADAORA
Gift? Oh hello. Yes. Just give me
2 minutes to compose myself
please.

Adaora puts her shirt back on, without her bra this time.
She goes over and opens the front door.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT, NIGHT.

The landlord Mr Aziz is there. A strong physical presence in his long black coat and is taller than Adaora.

Adaora reaches out to shake his hand, Mr Aziz clasps it fleetingly and goes to stand in the main room.

Mr Aziz looks around. The place looks more homely than he's ever seen it.

MR AZIZ

Sorry about this, you've got to shift out. Some Moldovans are coming over

ADAORA

...What?

MR AZIZ

I came earlier but you weren't here. I can give you one more day, that's it. There are 6 of them, the need is greater...

Adaora looks desperate. She goes against his nature and begins to beg

ADAORA

I've had some bad news. Please. Give us a week? Just a week. Gift's in school, she needs time to...

A loud rocket goes off outside. She jumps, visibly.

ADAORA (CONT'D)

I can pay. Can I give you money to stay for a week or two?

MR AZIZ

And how are you going to do that?

An awkward long silence between them as he looks her body up and down, stops on her breasts which now feel too prominent under her thin shirt as he touches them hungrily with his eyes

ADAORA

I - I am trying to...

He gets a grip and suddenly softens

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR AZIZ

Look - I can extend you for 24 hours, that's it..it was never a permanent arrangement - remember? You need to think of a way to bring in some proper dosh, know what I mean?!

He looks at her body again and half winks, turns round, goes.

Adaora sits on the bed in humiliation.

The door bell sounds abruptly once again.

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT, DOORWAY, NIGHT.

Adaora aghast as a very happy looking Gift appears coming up the stairway, with Kevin, a gawky middle-aged red head wearing an anorak.

GIFT

Hi Mummy! The Fireworks were cool!
So loud! Zoom, BANG!!

Adaora summons a smile.

ADAORA

You weren't scared then?

KEVIN

Not once! She loved every minute of it.

Gift rushes to take off her coat. Kevin smiles at Adaora.

ADAORA

Thank you for walking with her Mr Clarke.

KEVIN

It's Kev, please. No problem, she's good company. Bye Gift. See you on Saturday!

JUMP CUT TO:

Gift and Adaora are getting ready for bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GIFT

This one was like a silver star waterfall, falling down on our heads.

ADAORA

Was it?

GIFT

It is because the Houses of Parliament were attacked. So cool!! Next week there is a trip to the Museum of London.

ADAORA

That might be difficult.

GIFT

No, Mrs Bolt said we will all go together in a crocodile!

ADAORA

A crocodile?

GIFT

Not one to eat us! A line we must walk in together.

ADAORA

Where is the Museum of London?

GIFT

It is by the docks, in the place where all the spices from Africa and India was brought to London...

Adaora lies on her back on the bed. Gift burbles on incessantly

GIFT (CONT'D)

It is not the Tower of London where the Beefeater bears live.

She clutches her bear key-ring close. Puts it to bed inside 2 tissues on the floor.

GIFT (CONT'D)

But I would like to go there too to show bear his place. Can we go there, Mama?

ADAORA

Hush, sleep now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Gift gets in and turns over to obey. Adaora just lies there, fighting back tears.

INT. RED CROSS REFUGEE UNIT, ISLINGTON - DAY.

Adaora is talking to Anna, describing the predicament she is in. They sit in the glass cube, with a map of the world on the wall and a massive Foxes biscuit tin on a table.

She is looking at the Home Office letter.

ADAORA

He says we must leave today, Anna.

ANNA

We can apply for emergency accommodation but it's in Glasgow. You'll have to stay in a hostel until we sort something. Try the Holy Trinity in Stockwell. It shuts at 6.00pm so you must get there by 10 to.

ADAORA

Near Brixton - Is it on the Victoria Line I believe? Now, I have something new to add -

ANNA

Good because they will be coming to take you on Monday if you don't go for voluntary return. You can appeal, it normally has to be lodged within 10 days. We'll need to submit fresh evidence. It's the Tory government's new HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT you see - they don't want Britain to be a safe haven anymore -

Adaora shakes her head in disbelief -

ADAORA

A doctor has written a letter and looked at my injuries. Is that enough?

She goes into her bag and takes out the brown envelope with the documents the doctor gave her. She hands them over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA

It's a long-shot Adaora, but there's no harm in trying. I'll photocopy these, we'll start processing the appeal.

Adaora clasps her hands together in earnest prayer -

ANNA (CONT'D)

We're not done yet, Adaora...Make sure you keep your phone charged and your pecker up!

She smiles reassuringly. Adaora swallows hard - a glimmer of hope.

INT. YERBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL - DAY.

The kids are all gathered in the hall singing the Beatles song "When I'm 64" with musical instruments and drums. Camilla is at the front being conductor. Gift beams and can't stop moving to the music with Andy, thick as thieves -

KIDS VOICES

*When I get older losing my hair
Many years from now
Will you still be sending me a
valentine
Birthday greetings, bottle of wine
If I've been out til quarter to
three
Would you lock the door?
Will you still need me, will you
still feed me, when I'm sixty
four...*

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT - DAY.

Adaora runs around the flat, stuffing everything into a large bag. The blanket. The picture. The clothes. She picks up her Dickens' novels and stuffs them on top.

Everything they have built up and created is crammed into a plastic holdall.

She leaves with their worldly possessions over her shoulder.

EXT. HARVEY'S FLAT HALLWAY - EVENING.

Adaora stands at the door of Harvey's flat. The sound of the TV blaring into the corridor. She is holding her little leather pouch and handing over the key to him -

ADAORA

He will be here in a couple of hours I assume. There's some Moldovan's who need the place.

HARVEY

Blimey - here we go - how bloody many?!

She balks - has no clue...he realises -

HARVEY (CONT)

What will you do darlin?

ADAORA

There's a woman helping us at the Red Cross. It'll be sorted. God willing.

She turns to jog down the stairs. Harvey gazes after her, shakes his head...

HARVEY

God love, it doesn't rain for you - it pours!

EXT. YERBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL GATES - NIGHT.

It's dusk as Adaora rushes to the school gates.

INT. YERBURY SCHOOL HALL - NIGHT.

The after school club; Gift is in the hall making a collage of 'Foods of the World' with the other kids. There is a giant sign being drawn for an 'INTERNATIONAL EVENING'.

CAMILLA

What Nigerian dish are you going to make Adaora? There's a float from the office if you need help with the shopping? It's next Thursday so there's plenty of time to prepare!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Adaora is glazed but tries to crack a smile, she pulls Gift on her way. Gift protests. Camilla looks on, this is the only time she's seen her dragging Gift out of the door.

EXT. STREETS OF SOUTH LONDON - NIGHT.

It is a dark blustery night and they arrive at an address in an unfamiliar neighbourhood South of the river.

Adaora's face is wracked with guilt, Gift looks more solemn than we've seen her. They stand at the back of a massive line of down and outs, looking out of place.

They reach the front of the line.

EXT. OUTSIDE HOLY TRINITY HOSTEL, STOCKWELL - NIGHT

A converted church hostel, red brick and ornate. There is an arched doorway, where a middle-aged man with a big woolly jumper and a clipboard stands.

HOSTEL MAN

Only got space for one more.

ADAORA

I have my child here with me. We can share.

The man shakes his head - no.

HOSTEL MAN

Can't have you two together.

ADAORA

I beg of you. Please. It's late. It's too cold to sleep on the streets tonight!

The hostel man looks genuinely torn. Looks at his watch. Looks at Gift. Shakes his head.

He motions them inside hurriedly.

INT. HOLY TRINITY HOSTEL BATHROOM, NIGHT.

Adaora and Gift brush their teeth and wash their faces in the dank old fashioned bathroom. The water is freezing and the copper taps leak.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gift is silent.

INT. HOLY TRINITY HOSTEL DORMITORY, NIGHT.

Adaora puts their patchwork blanket on the grey flannel blanket to remind Gift of home.

They get into bed, top and tailing. There is the muffled sound of a drunk woman singing 'Oh Danny Boy' echoing around the halls.

GIFT
Are you okay there mum?

Adaora takes a while to answer -

ADAORA
Yes my dear. You don't normally call me mum -

GIFT
True. But I like it. (PAUSE) Lucky for you it wasn't fish and chip Friday today...

Adaora chuckles beside herself

ADAORA
That is some blessing! Is your belly okay?

GIFT
Yeah. But my feet are freezing.

ADAORA
You can put them in the foot warmer if you like -

The blanket lifts as she traps Gifts feet between her legs to warm them up.

GIFT
That's better, thanks.

ADAORA
Night night my funny daughter.

GIFT
Night night my nice warm mum.

INT. HOLY TRINITY HOSTEL BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING.

They sit around a thick wooden table with the other inmates eating porridge. There's something of the Victorian workhouse about it. Adaora eats too, brow furrowed in concentration

ADAORA

Dickens lived and worked at a Blacking Factory as a child, it inspired him to better himself and write Bleak House -

Gift's raises an eyebrow, they both know this really isn't the time for a Dickens lecture.

JUMP CUT TO:

Leaving the breakfast room they are pulled to one side -

HOSTEL MAN

You'll have to go back to the Red Cross, find some somewhere else tonight. We can't have the two of you in together again, it breaks all the rules. I'm sorry - do you understand?

Adaora meets his eyes, she knows.

EXT. LONDON STREETS, EARLY MORNING.

A frosty morning. They begin the long journey to school from South to North, holding their heavy bag and Gift's school bag. They get on a bus.

GIFT snuggles into her mum as she stares with determination at the City out the window.

INT. YERBURY SCHOOL, CLASSROOM DOORWAY, DAY.

Camilla stands in the doorway of her bright and colourful classroom, greeting her pupils. Gift runs off to play with her friends.

Adaora avoids Camilla's face as She turns to leave.

Kevin, Andy's dad, appears.

KEVIN

Morning Adaora!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Adaora digs deep, tries to perk up.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
 You and Gift going to come to ours
 on Saturday? We are having a party
 for Andy's birthday..

ADAORA
 With luck, we will be there.

She shuffles away.

INT. RED CROSS REFUGEE UNIT - DAY.

Adaora sits in the quiet room, holding a cup of tea warming her hands, waiting to meet with Anna. She has their holdall bag with their worldly possessions in it by her side.

There are red chairs in a circle, mugs on a coffee table, information to read on the walls. A hot drinks vending machine bubbles away in the corner. It is welcoming and comfortable.

Anna enters.

ANNA
 ...Adaora?

She meets her eyes.

INT. RED CROSS REFUGEE UNIT, UPSTAIRS, DAY.

They are back in the same glass room, sitting on the sofa.

ADAORA
 We can't go back to the hostel
 tonight. We have nowhere to go.

ANNA
 Where is Gift now?

ADAORA
 At school.

Anna senses her despair.

ANNA
 It must be hard to tell her what's
 going on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

All Adaora can do is shake her head and look at the floor. She keeps shaking it, repetitively -

ADAORA

Can the social services not help?

ANNA

They focus on unaccompanied minors. The state has no choice then but to look after them.

She rises to her feet.

ANNA (CONT'D)

...We need to apply for section 4 emergency support, in the meantime there's another refuge by the river you can try. I'll call ahead, see if they have any places.

She exits. Adaora just sits, head in hands.

INT. OUR LADY OF HELP CHRISTIAN CHURCH HALL, HOLLOWAY - DAY.

Adaora kneels at the back of the municipal inner city church reading Psalm 91 to herself again

ADAORA

If you make the Lord your refuge,
if you make the most high your
shelter, no evil will conquer you;
No plague will come near your
home. For she will order his
angels to protect you wherever you
go.

Adaora takes out a pen and a piece of paper. She makes a small sign saying "English Teacher. Children or Adults £15 per hour. Call Adaora on 07984883221" She places it on the church notice-board.

INT. YERBURY SCHOOL LUNCH HALL - DAY.

Gift lines up with her friends for lunch, chatting and laughing again. The dinner ladies dole out the pasta and meat sauce. Gift opens up her bag and they put two extra bread rolls, an apple and a pear inside for her to take away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A big West Indian dinner lady gives her a big hug, scooping her close and smiling broadly. Gift is loving the attention whilst the other ladies look on, warm smiles all round.

EXT. WOMEN'S HOSTEL, DUSK.

A large Victorian terraced house with a bright purple door. A brass plaque on the wall that says 'A place of Sanctuary'. Gift taps it and they share a hopeful smile. Adaora rings on the bell.

EXT. WOMEN'S HOSTEL, DUSK.

Adaora is imploring the gatekeeper woman on the door.

ADAORA

Anna at the Red Cross said she had called ahead about us?

GATEKEEPER

Nope, I don't know who she spoke to, but we're full capacity.
Sorry, love. I'd like to help but..

A helpless shrug, the door is closed on them.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. THE 134 NIGHT BUS - NIGHT.

Adaora holds Gift's head in her lap as she sleeps on her, hidden away upstairs at the back of the bus, using the patchwork blanket as a pillow. She rests her feet on their bag.

INT. RED CROSS REFUGEE UNIT - OFFICE - DAY.

The smart refugee service offices in Angel. Adaora, looking and feeling destitute, stands reading a sign on the wall.

It's about unaccompanied children. It explains how they will have access to services and be offered protection until they turn 18.

Alex, a delicate young white man with limp brown hair scraped back into bunches, enters

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALEX

Adaora, is it? Sorry to keep you.
Anna's on a training day today.
What can I do for you?

Adaora, swallowing her pride.

ADAORA

Anna said they would take us in at
the hostel. But they didn't. My
daughter and I had nowhere to rest
our heads last night.

ALEX

...I'm so sorry. Anna didn't
mention anything -

He looks through her file, for something to move things
forward more positively.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Now how are you checking your
mail? They will be sending you
information about your appeal any
time now.

ADAORA

It will be going to the flat in
Holloway...

ALEX

Can you get access there to check
the post?

Adaora nods.

ALEX (CONT'D)

I'll call Islington Council. I
think there is some emergency
accommodation for under 18s. Your
child could go there and you could
try one of the women's refuges?

ADAORA

We must not be parted.

Alex nods sincerely.

ALEX

...I'll see what I can do. I'll
call you on your phone later on.

EXT. LONDON STREETS - DAY.

Adaora walks the streets. She checks her phone. Nothing. She walks to the Holloway Road flat and rings on the buzzer.

MOLDOVANS

Hallo please?

ADAORA

Hello Sir. I used to live here. I need to check the post. Can you just buzz me in for one moment?

MOLDOVANS

Me don't speak Engerlish, hallo please -

ADAORA

Can you buzz me in please Sir? I need to check for a letter from the Home Office?

Long pause - panic in his voice

MOLDOVANS

Home Office? No please. No. Home Office. No Please. Hallo. Goodbye.

She realises she will get nowhere. She tries Harvey's buzzer - no joy. So she can't check her mail today. She checks the phone again and walks on, big bag in hand.

INT. OUR LADY OF HELP CHRISTIAN CHURCH NOTICE-BOARD - DAY.

Adaora pops in and checks her poster is still there. It is. She nods to the vicar who picks up on something and says -

VICAR

Anyone bitten?

ADAORA

Not yet -

VICAR

I'll have a think if there's anyone I know -

CONTINUED:

ADAORA

That would be most helpful.

VICAR

God does not give us tests we can not pass. He gives us tests as an opportunity for us to show our true character. If you are more like Christ the world will see God's greatness revealed in you...

Adaora exasperated -

ADAORA

If you know anyone who might be able to help please give them my number. We have nowhere to stay, I'm trying to remain confident but -

She leaves abruptly.

INT. YERBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL - READING RESOURCE ROOM - DAY

Adaora sits with Louis reading Tom Gates again. He stumbles through the last page whilst she grabs another biscuit from the box on the table, she's starving.

LOUIS

I set about drawing my family tree but what was that sq...ue...king sound coming from my shoe?!

He closes the book.

ADAORA

Well done Louis. You have persevered and prevailed.

He looks seriously pleased -

LOUIS

What we gonna read next time?!

She smiles, but there is reticence there.

INT. YERBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY.

Adaora wanders through the school to the front to wait for Gift.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Camilla approaches her from behind -

CAMILLA
Just a quick word please Adaora?

Adaora backs away, not wanting to get too close as she hasn't washed for days.

INT. CAMILLA'S OFFICE - DAY.

A bright and homely office. Pictures by the kids on the walls and photographs of their achievements. A flowering cactus in the corner. Camilla bustles in and they sit down.

CAMILLA
Gift fell asleep today in class.
She needs to be in bed at a
reasonable time. I think 8pm
really, at her age. Do you have a
set bedtime routine?

ADAORA
Yes - yes, I'll see to it she gets
to bed earlier.

She makes to leave. Camilla senses something of her desolation.

CAMILLA
And your asylum application?

ADAORA
We're just waiting to hear back on
the details.

CAMILLA
Sounds promising. You've got a
resilient little girl there
Adaora, with a bright future ahead
of her.

Adaora gathers herself as tears threaten at this. She nods her thanks, shakes her hand and quickly exits.

Camilla watches her go, concern lingering.

EXT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT, NIGHT.

Adaora and Gift at the door. Adaora press the buzzer and are buzzed in. Adaora immediately starts searching through the post as Harvey lumbers down the stairs.

HARVEY

You two!

Adaora doesn't even look up

GIFT

We have no home again!

Adaora winces with shame at hearing it spoken out loud. She continues looking downwards, silently rifling through the litany of paper -

HARVEY

I thought someone was helping?
Didn't you say, Adaora?

She looks up, faux cheerful, for Gift -

ADAORA

Yes, and in fact they are about to call us about where we will stay tonight!

HARVEY

Come in and wait for the call with us then. Hayley's up there. Making some tea. I was about to get some chips for dinner.

GIFT

Chips, Mama!

Adaora is too distracted to refuse, Gift gallivants up the stairs like a hungry wolf.

INT. OKINE'S FLAT - NIGHT.

The Okine's kitchen is far too small for this unlikely foursome, squeezed around the kitchen table. The TV is off for once and Hayley is there.

HAYLEY

Do you like pizza and chips? Stick another one in Harvey. I went to Iceland.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAYLEY (CONT'D)
 Loads of two for one deals. Should
 we do some corn too? Or peas?

Adaora's phone suddenly rings, She rises hurriedly to cross into the hall to answer it but she can't hear the person -

ADAORA
 Hello? Hello Madam, can you hear
 me?

HAYLEY
 Stand in the hall, or in the
 corridor, its rubbish reception in
 here...

ADAORA
 Hello? I can't hear you?

Hayley guides her out to the corridor then comes back in to the kitchen, tinkers with the oven. Smiles at Gift -

HAYLEY
 We can play Connect 4 if you still
 have it?

Gift gives a thumbs up. Harvey comes back in with the wrapped chips.

HAYLEY
 ...Why don't you just sleep here tonight, love? There's room in the hall for you and mum, Scaffold Steve slept months there when he was doing a job

HARVEY
 She's right love. Can't have you out on the streets, can we?

GIFT
 Can we watch TV?

They laugh. Adaora comes back in.

ADAORA
 We are off to Crystal palace.
 They've found a place for us there.

She starts gathering their coats, Gift's school bag

CONTINUED: (2)

HARVEY

That's the other side of London
Adaora! Take you over an hour to
get there, then you'll be back
again in the morning for school!

ADAORA

On the train it's very efficient -

HAYLEY

Just stay with us. Both of you.
Please.

Adaora hesitates. Hayley adds more food to the pan.

GIFT

Mama?

ADAORA

You are very kind, but ...

HAYLEY

We've got two spare pillows and
blankets and there's plenty of
room in the hall...we'll keep
Biscuit in the kitchen, if that
bothers you -

GIFT

I don't want to be too tired or
late for school again mum.

ADAORA

(relenting)

Ehhm...

GIFT

Then you can check the post
tomorrow morning can't you mum

ADAORA

Okay.

She nods.

GIFT

Now who would like a fight to the
death on Connect 4?

She gets the set out of her bag and starts setting it up.

INT. HARVEY AND HAYLEY OKINES' LOUNGE, NIGHT.

MONTAGE - we see them all sitting on the battered brown checked sofa in the tiny 1970s style lounge with pictures of spaniel dogs framed on the walls. An electric fire with fake glowing logs and dusty fake flowers on the mantle.

Gift sits on the floor about a foot away from the TV with Biscuit the dog. Adaora sits bolt upright on the sofa nursing a cup of tea - she observes how happy Gift is, how relaxed. Hayley lies eating Celebration sweets and handing them to Gift or Adaora every now and again. Harvey drinks cans of lager, lining the empty tins up carefully next to him at the foot of his chair.

INT. OKINES HALLWAY. NIGHT TIME.

Gift and Adaora are laying in the hall with the dog Biscuit at their feet. Adaora takes the patchwork blanket out of their holdall bag and folds it over Hayley's cushions to use as a pillowcase

GIFT

When we have our new place Mum,
can we get a dog?

ADAORA

Absolutely not!

GIFT

How about a TV for Christmas?

ADAORA

You know my thoughts on TV. We will read A Christmas Carol together. I've been looking forward to doing that.

Gift rolls her eyes and closes them. Adaora lies awake, staring at the peeling flowery wall, the sound of the TV blaring next door.

TV VOICE

The million pound giveaway! Will you win everything you've ever wanted? A holiday? Some self improvements? A new car?

INT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT, FRONT DOOR, DAY.

Adaora, back from dropping Gift at school, approaches the outside steps of the flats as the postman arrives. The postman hands her the letter she's been waiting for and gives her a nod of acknowledgement.

INT. YERBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL - DAY.

Gift recites her 3 times table in front of the class using a long ruler. She takes away answers and the class recite back. She's confident as she learnt her tables by rote years before in Nigeria. The other kids are impressed.

GIFT

So lets begin again - $1 \times 3 = 3$, 2
 $\times 3 = 6$, $3 \times 3 = ?$

CLASS

9!

She smiles and continues...Camilla cheers her on

GIFT

Yes! $4 \times 3 = 12$, $5 \times 3 = ?$

CLASS

15!

EXT. HOLLOWAY ROAD FLAT - DAY.

Adaora leans against the wall next to the front door, by the cafe, the roar of Holloway Road morning traffic all happening around her.

She opens the letter and reads it.

The application for appeal has been denied. MOTHER AND DAUGHTER CAN INTEGRATE BACK INTO NIGERIAN COMMUNITY. COMPULSORY DEPORTATION TO NIGERIA SCHEDULED ON MONDAY AT 11am.

Adaora's hand starts to shake. She looks up at the bright blue sky as a load of pigeons take off from the roof opposite. The sound of an ambulance shrieks past. Hold on her face imploring the heavens.

INT. OUR LADY OF HELP CHRISTIAN CHURCH HALL - DAY.

Adaora sits with the Vicar, her worldly possessions at her feet

ADAORA

I'm struggling to understand why
God turns his back on people when
they need him most?

VICAR

I know you're hurting Adaora. I'm
sorry. It's a testing time for
humanity. We are lost. But that's
not to say we can't be found.

It's too late for his platitudes. She stares straight ahead, frozen.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES - DAY.

Gift's POV this time as she waits outside at the usual time to collect her. She has their hold-all bag with him. This is all from her point of view, as she runs towards her mother, arms out for a hug.

GIFT

Mum!

Adaora hugs her hello

ADAORA

I brought you this to keep.

She hands her an apple from her pocket and a little brown leather purse with a photo of her family inside. She helps her put it in her school bag.

GIFT

Thanks.

ADAORA

Do you want to go to Andy's house today?

GIFT

YES! Where are you going?

ADAORA

I need to report to the home office in Croydon.

CONTINUED:

GIFT

Okay. They're just over there I'll
catch them -

She motions towards Andy and her friends. Adaora kneels down at her level. Takes a breath. She smooths her hair, touches her cheek. Stares her straight in the eye.

ADAORA

Did you work hard at school?

GIFT

Yeah. I did.

ADAORA

Don't ever be afraid to ask for
help.

Picks some fluff off her red coat. She makes to leave -

GIFT

Okay Mama

ADAORA

Now go on

GIFT

I will

Adaora envelops her. She practically wraps her up in her coat.

GIFT (CONT'D)

Bye mum!

Adaora watches her closely as she runs excitedly towards her friends, the tinkering sound of the beefeater bear key ring bouncing up and down on her bag.

Adaora turns and walks.

INT. KENTISH TOWN TUBE STATION - DUSK.

Adaora, with an expression we've never seen before, travels down the escalator, holding the holdall bag with all their worldly possessions in one hand, and the refusal letter in the other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A fake blonde female busker in a pink cow-boy hat sits in the hallway between the platforms, her voice wafts through the airy corridors onto the platform

BUSKER

Workin 9 to 5 what a way to make a living, barely gettin by, it's all takin and no givin, they just use your mind and they never give you credit, it's enough to drive you crazy if you let it 9-5 for service and devotion you would think that I, deserve a fat promotion...

Adaora joins the crowded tube platform with everybody. Her brow furrows in determination. We notice a working woman in a suit standing near by. Adaora stands in the biggest gap she can find, isolated among the crowd, waiting for the tube.

We hear the sound of a rumbling train in the distance. Adaora puts down the holdall bag with her current Dickens's novel, 'A Tale of Two Cities,' about a man who sacrifices himself for love, crammed in at the top and stuffs the home office letter between the pages.

ADAORA

"It is a far, far better thing
that I do, than I have ever done;
it is a far, far better rest that
I go to than I have ever known."

(A quote about self sacrifice from 'A Tale of Two Cities').

Then she starts walking towards the edge. She steps off the platform into oblivion.

Someone screams. We see the suited and booted woman's face descend into horror and hear the screech and jarring of breaks.

The screen goes black to the sound of this mechanical mangled nightmare.

INT. TUBE CARRIAGE, NORTHERN LINE.

People sit on the tube, staring at the Metro or their phones as the tube comes to a standstill between stations.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DRIVER

Apologies for the delay here
Ladies and Gents. This is due to
person under the tracks at Kentish
Town.

One woman mutters 'selfish' under her breath. Suddenly we see that among the general commuters sits Camilla the school teacher. Anna the Red Cross worker. Hayley is there too, standing up with Biscuit on her way home to Harvey with a shopping bag from Iceland.

BLACK SCREEN.

EXT. ANDY'S HOUSE, LONDON - NIGHT.

An ex local authority house on a quiet street. A woman wearing a thick coat and gloves knocks on the door. This is the POLICE FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER. She carries Adaora's holdall. She is accompanied by a Social Worker wearing a red coat and black trousers.

Kevin answers -

POLICE FLO

Mr. Clarke? ... Can we step inside
a moment?

Kevin senses something from her tone.

INT. ANDY'S SITTING ROOM - NIGHT.

A family room, pictures of Andy and his big sister in school uniform on the mantle. A real fire burns in the grate. Colourful Ikea rug with pine coffee table.

Kevin and his partner Graham sit on the sofa in desolate shock.

GRAHAM

...What will happen to Gift?

SOCIAL WORKER

She'll stay with a foster family
near school until a long term
solution can be found. Adoption or
Children's home...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A moment before anyone speaks.

KEVIN

Do we know why she did it?

POLICE FLO

There was a letter from the Home Office in her bag. It has been taken in as evidence for the inquest.

She reaches for the holdall bag. The patchwork blanket can be seen poking out of the top. So too can the copy of Charles Dickens' - A Tale of Two Cities.

POLICE FLO (CONT'D)

This is her possessions.

Graham is speechless, hand over his mouth. Kevin struggles to control his emotions. He crosses to the window.

The two kids are outside in hats and scarves swinging on a tyre swing.

Gift is laughing uncontrollably as Andy pushes her.

Kevin walks behind him and reaches for Graham's hand as they stare out of the window, neither wanting to confront what they must do next.

INT. TERRACED HOUSE, BRIGHTON, BEDROOM - DAY - **YEAR 2033**

Gift's eyes suddenly ping open and she leaps out of bed and rushes out of her bedroom door.

INT. TERRACED HOUSE, BRIGHTON, BATHROOM - DAY - **YEAR 2033**

She is wrapped in a bath-towel with a sense of urgency. She is looking in the mirror, putting on make-up with precision. She stops and speaks firmly to her reflection, with her mother's voice blended in -

GIFT & ADAORA

Now GO ON!

INT. TERRACED HOUSE, BRIGHTON, BEDROOM - DAY - YEAR 2033.

Gift stands in front of a half length mirror, hanging on the back of a dilapidated wardrobe door. She is struggling to do up an extremely loud red, yellow and green African print dress.

She slips on some killer high-heels and slams the door behind her.

INT. THE BRIGHTON CONFERENCE CENTRE, MAIN HALL,
GRADUATION CEREMONY - DAY - YEAR 2033.

An imposing hall with white tiled ceiling, tiered seating and unforgiving lighting, packed full of proud families, many with camera phones and tiny ipads clamped to their eyes.

The graduation ceremony is in full swing, individual students in mortar boards going up on stage to collect their scrolls and have their hands shaken.

JUMP CUT TO:

In the wings waits GIFT, she is only just containing her nerves, almost saying 'now go on' under her breath. Her boyfriend has his arm around her and gives her an encouraging shove.

Her name is called, she proudly walks on stage to the raucous applause of her student peers. She shakes the hand of the university chancellor.

As she exits she turns and bows to her other friends who are all chanting her name, allowing a glimpse of a secret smile.

EXT. ROYAL PAVILION GARDENS, BRIGHTON - DAY - YEAR 2033.

Excited students stand with their relatives having photographs taken. Gift stands on the periphery observing her friends and their families.

A sense of introspection about her but without self pity.

Andy, her childhood friend and university buddy, notices her standing alone. He pulls her over to have photographs taken with his family, a much older Kevin and his dad Graham. They give her a warm hug - "Cheese!!"

CUT TO:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gift and her friends have peeled off, the parents are huddled together nearby, exchanging proud small talk.

A waiter appears with glasses of champagne. ANDY passes them around.

ANDY
Sparkles?

GIFT
Cheers!

They toast each other.

ANDY
There's a little surprise for you over there...

Gift looks over and walking through the throngs towards her are a much, much older Harvey and Hayley, both dressed up to the nines, beaming and proud as anything -

GIFT
You didn't come all this way!

HAYLEY
Andy rang and told us and we wouldn't have missed it for anything

HARVEY
Nothing in the world love, nothing in the world!

Their voices are overlapping with emotion. They melt into a massive group hug. Gift's face appearing over Harvey's shoulder says it all.

INT. TERRACED HOUSE, BRIGHTON, BEDROOM - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT - YEAR 2033.

Gift is curled up back in the safety of her bed again, with the battered old Beefeater bear key ring on the bedside table, the patchwork blanket over her and her boyfriend in bed beside her. They sleep peacefully and deeply amongst the disarray, their whole lives ahead of them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE END

*Tracy Chapman's hit - 'She's got her ticket' plays over
the closing credits.*