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A Week in Eden
Tamsin Flower

Drama on 3

Afonica

Proteus proposal number: REQ26000197

CHARACTERS

Robin *(14) English, East Midlands*

Isa *(14) English/Bahraini*

Mr Busby *(41) Leicester, working-class*

Shona *(15) Australian*

Andrea *(15) Australian*

Mohammed *(32) Bahraini, Shia*

Hammid *(14) Bahraini, Sunni*

Khalil *(14) Bahraini, Sunni*

Izzy *(14) Kiwi*

Ms Cray *(45) English, Surrey*

Isa's Uncle *(55) Bahraini*

Mrs F *(42) Kiwi*

SCENE 1. EXT. Bahrain UAE, 1996. Izzy's compound pool, 9.30 pm. Geckos, water-sprayers and teenage girls drown out Bollywood tunes floating from the porter's-lodge. There is a tinkle of distant drinks parties.

ROBIN: (VO) I wasn't comfortable going under with them.

GANG: (Shouting) One, two, three!

The Gang: Shona, (15), Izzy, (14) and Andrea, (15), swig from bottles of Coca-Cola. They bob themselves underwater in a communal Jacuzzi before spitting coke into the froth on surfacing.

ROBIN: (VO) ...Not because I was scared, I was always scared. And not because drowning in a jacuzzi of Coca-Cola seemed likely. But because of their body fluids...

GANG: (Shout) Three, four, give us some more!

The gang swig again and duck beneath the bubbles.

ROBIN: (VO) Fourteen-year-old fluids belonging to Shona and two more harmless girls...

GANG: Five, six, show those dicks!

More bubbles, guffawing, laughter.

ROBIN: (VO)...mixing with Coca-Cola...in Izzy's compound jacuzzi. Brown started creeping up my swimming costume like an oil slick on the Amir's beach.

Robin splashes out of the jacuzzi onto the surrounding astro-turf.

I got out.

SHONA: Don't fancy swimming in our spit eh? Robin?

ROBIN: (VO) I shook my head and climbed into the arms of a nearby date-palm.

SHONA: Fair play little worm.

IZZY: Robin...birds...worms, ha!

ROBIN: (VO) Every English-speaking compound seemed to have a theme - Izzy's pool was fortified with a wooden Great Wall of China.

ANDREA: Let's run naked over the Chinese castle!

ROBIN: (VO) Andrea was Antipodean too. Year 9 of St George's School, Bahrain was famed for this freckle-skinned gang. Two blonds and a flaming red-head - Shona.

SHONA: *(To Andrea)* You're a weirdo Andy, it's the stuff you're sniffing.

ROBIN: (VO) Andy peeled her entire swimming costume off with the confidence of a glamour model.

ANDREA: Let's go...

ROBIN: (VO) She runs with mania over the Chinese ramparts.

SHONA: Put some freaking thing on! The gardeners will see you!

IZZY: Yeah, I can see one jacking off by the swings actually.

SHONA: Yeh, I see him.

ANDREA: You guys are so full of it -

Andrea runs over steps and ramps onto the battlements of 'the Chinese Castle', housing Izy's compound changing-rooms.

ROBIN: (VO) Andy flies like lumpy venus, across the roof of the changing rooms.

SHONA: Andrea...don't go down the dragon's neck...

ROBIN: (VO) The waterslide...with its painted scales.

SHONA: It's like, dark Andy!

ANDREA: Don't care...

SHONA: The flume's not switched on....oh, oh, there she goes...

IZZY: If she's stuck, my parents will blame me. *(Beat)* I'm not telling them.

ROBIN: (VO)...Then Andy appeared on the dragon's tongue, flushed pink from ear to toe and happy as a piglet.

SHONA/IZZY/ANDREA: *(Chanting)* An-dre-a (clap, clap, clap), An-dre-a (clap, clap,clap)!

The Gang stomp their feet on the poolside and holler.

SHONA: Shush! Where's that light coming from?

IZZY: Oh shit me. It's coming from our villa.

SHONA: Get that costume back on Andy!

IZZY: It's my Ma' ...I can see the purple in her crappy evening dress.

SHONA: Look casual.

ANDREA: We turned the water brown like a bunch of witches. That isn't casual.

Mrs Ferreras (42) approaches.

MRS F: What in God's name are you girls trying to do? The compound's sleeping; do you wanna wake up the little kids?

SHONA: They're all having drinks parties like you Mrs F.

MRS F: Don't cheek me Shona; I'm thirty years older than you. I'm also on good terms with your mother...Andrea, why are you wearing your swimming costume back to front? Do you want the gardeners to see your bosoms?

ANDY: I have breasts not bosoms Mrs Ferreras.

SHONA/IZZY/ROBIN Snigger.

MRS FERRERAS: Look. It's a muslim country for Christ's sake. Use your noodles please...that doesn't include showing your parts to the gardeners and bloody security men...

ANDREA: I'm sorry. Your torch is in my face.

MRS FERRERAS: Right. Everyone come back to the villa. We'll all have a game of Rummy.

The gang wetly slip their flip-flops on.

SHONA: We don't play games anymore Mrs F.

MRS F: Really? Could have fooled me Shona.

Moaning, the gang and Robin shuffle their flip-flops on. As they amble back to The Ferreras' villa, the sound of gardeners singing to Bollywood anthems drifts through sprinklers and cultivated flora.

SCENE 2. EXT. St. George's School playground, 12 noon. The Muezzin calls Midday prayers and St. George's' bell sounds. Children aged eleven to sixteen fill an expansive, dusty playground edged by a CofE cloister, (circa 1959). Just beyond is a new-build in progress and a village of portacabin-classrooms. Isa (14) is happily brushing finds in the playground-dig of his archaeologist father, Peter Rushton. Robin (14) tiptoes behind him.

ISA: (VO) *I was waiting for her. I kept busy. I knew we weren't supposed to let girls know we liked them.*

ROBIN: Boo!

ISA: (Calmly) *I knew it was you. You walk like my little cousin, Aida.*

ROBIN: I'm not that light.

ISA: *You're like a bird that comes back to the nest.*

ISA: (VO) *Robin liked this. She had been visiting my father's dig in the playground for six weeks. It had the gravitational pull of the Sun. She sat, legs over the edge, watching me.*

ROBIN: Can I come down there?

ISA: (VO) *This was new. I unfolded the step-ladder to the new trench. (To Robin) Please come in Madam! I hope you're not afraid of dust?*

ROBIN: ...I'd be stuffed if I was, wouldn't I...it's *in* the bread!

ISA: (VO) *She had an aggressive need to get to the bottom of things.*

ROBIN: I hate sugar-bread.

ISA: It's okay, dead things have different dust. It's magical.

ROBIN: Does your dad say that?

ISA: My cousin, Mohammed. He's a musician you know.

ROBIN: You look up to him.

ISA: (VO) *She could read me sometimes. It was always distracting.*

ISA: You're interested in my father aren't you?

ROBIN: There are stories about how -

ISA: He's not mad. He just doesn't like people...especially expats. He thinks they're 'ignorant and easily lead.'

ROBIN: But *he's* an ex -

ISA: He's clever. And he speaks Arabic, it's difficult for him.

ROBIN: Okay...

ISA: Did I say we don't have a TV?

ROBIN: That was the second thing you ever told me.

ISA: If we had a TV, I could watch my mom on it.

ROBIN: You see her at home though.

ISA: Some evenings.

ROBIN: Who brings you to school?

ISA & ROBIN: The Driver.

Beat

ROBIN: Why doesn't he come here anymore?

ISA: Dad? He's at the burial mounds in Saar. - It's an exciting project -

ROBIN: Burial mounds?

ISA: Yeah, he sleeps there too sometimes, at the centre.

ROBIN: Imagine the ghosts. Armies of them...

ISA: Maybe the dead think we're intruders.

ROBIN: If they're ancient Persians, yeah. I'd be five shades whiter.

ISA: (VO) She came out with this stuff.

Isa passes Robin a hand-brush.

ISA: Here, hold this for me. It's not just a town of dead people you know, it's full of official stuff - merchants' stuff, shrines. It's a big discovery.

ISA: (VO) I start to play with Robin's hand. Because I can, and because I know she'll love what I'm about to say.

ISA: It's, it's probably paradise you know.

ROBIN: How's that?!

ISA: Really. They think the island was the garden of Eden. It was at the centre of the Earth right? All covered in trees and rivers and wells before they -

ROBIN: Dried out. I know.

ISA: Yeah the paradise-times people said it's the place where 'salt' and 'fresh-water' meet.

ROBIN: Wow.

ISA: (VO) Robin's head was glowing. I could get used to charming girls.

ROBIN: D'you think the paradise-people were calmer?

ISA: They still murdered each other when they had to.

ROBIN: Yeah.

Beat

ISA: The only reason Dad dug in the playground is cause' Miss Cray wants something for the glass cabinet at Reception.

ROBIN: It's not her front room.

ISA: Isn't it?

ISA: (VO) She went quiet and screwed-up her brow. It freaked me out.

ROBIN: Why has Ms Cray stopped telling you off for being here?

ISA: They're being nice to me, because... of mom.

ROBIN: What about her?

ISA: They think, they think she'll have to leave the island now.

ROBIN: Because of that story she wrote? She was doing her job. She's a journalist - they're meant to share stories...

ISA: Not here. Not anymore.

ROBIN: Freedom though.

ISA: *Dad* says it is easier for a democracy to become a dictatorship than a dictatorship to become a democracy.

ROBIN: You're sad for her aren't you?

Isa nods silently

ISA: Her people are here, she wants to talk about them, not...

ROBIN: Not?

ISA: ...exiles in Chelsea.

ROBIN: Exiles...Wha -

ISA: *She* says - 'History isn't dead. It's living all around us.'

ROBIN: But not in Chelsea?

ISA: Not really. She says.

Beat

Here, finish this one...

Isa reaches over to a ledge where one of the seals that has been found is placed.

ISA: (VO) *I gave her an undusted seal with 'Dilmun' himself on it.*

ISA: ...The bird-headed 'creation god' of the Dilmun Civilisation.

ROBIN: Is this old money?

ISA: No, it's a seal, like an ancient ID card.

ROBIN: Are you trying to say I'm a man with a bird's head?

ISA: I'm trying to say, in this trench... You are a god.

Sound of Shona's footsteps approaching.

ISA: (VO) And with that, I had her.

SHONA: Are you and the teabag playing house?

ISA: Go away Shona.

SHONA: Stop showing off in front of your girlfriend.

ISA: You're not WANTED here.

SHONA: Jeeeeeeeeeeeeesus! Don't stick that dust brush in my face! It's full of dust...

ROBIN: We just want to do our thing.

SHONA: Look who's found her tongue...I'm not here to disturb you, I just want to tell you where I've been.

ROBIN: Oh.

SHONA: I have been to Miss Cray's office. Yeah...me and the girls are in the big do-do because someone told their Pa' about our Diet Coke party last night.

ROBIN: I didn't think he'd tell her; they don't talk.

SHONA: Not the best of friends, your dad and her, are they?

ROBIN: She's mean.

SHONA: She's just a frustrated, middle-aged woman. That's why she props up the bar at The Diplomat.

ROBIN: What are they going to do?

SHONA: They've told our parents.

ISA: Your mother won't care.

SHONA: Being Chair of the Governors does basically mean that she has to care idiot.

ISA: So..?

SHONA: So *I've* 'lost privileges' - no Dairy Queen or Izzy's compound for two weeks.

ROBIN: I'm -

SHONA: Sorry? Don't...*(changes tone)* Hey. Come over here Robin. I'd really like to talk to you about something -

ISA: Don't go with her.

ROBIN: I'm fine...

Robin rises out of the trench to meet Shona, first swinging her feet onto a step-ladder and hoisting herself to playground level. Shona and Robin's jelly-shoes pater away from the dig.

SHONA: Let's go where your lover can't hear us...right. I am sorely disappointed with you.

ROBIN: Why?

SHONA: Andrea, Izzy and I tried to initiate you into our little group last night and you betrayed us. How do you think that makes me feel?

ROBIN: I'm sorry.

SHONA: Stop apologising. I need a sign. Some sign to show that you care...about being one of us. How bout' that thing in your hand?

Shona indicates the Dilmun seal.

ROBIN: This? You can't have this.

SHONA: Why?

ROBIN: It's not mine.

SHONA: I'm not saying give it to me. I'm saying, if *you* want it, take it. I can tell by the look on your face you wan't it. Do something wrong for a change...it feels right. I promise. People feel jealous like they wish they'd have the guts to do it. Do something wrong.

I'm gona' let you think about that.

SCENE 3. INT. Portacabin, St George's', 11 am. Robin's father, Mr Busby (an English & Drama teacher), finishes the register. 13 adolescents rag each other in Global English and Arabic. Paper is screwed-up and insults are thrown about boys' mothers. Girls make sounds of disgust and approval. A dubious AC whirrs in the background. Care-takers walk about the portacabin enclave, occasionally shouting in Bahraini Arabic.

MR BUSBY: Hammid?

HAMMID: Yo.

MR BUSBY: Khalil? Can't see him...

HAMMID: He's doing his homework. His maid's sick.

MR BUSBY: What *does* he do all evening?

HAMMID: It's Ramadan Sir.

MR BUSBY: Is that why you're all knackered?

HAMMID: My mom lets me party -

KHALIL: (*Entering*) Hey Sir.

HAMMID: (*To Khalil*) His mom doesn't. Ha ha!

KHALIL: (*Aggressive*) Shuttup about my mom!

MR BUSBY: That's enough boys. Isa?

ISA: Yes, Sir.

MR BUSBY: Izzy?

IZZY: Yeah Sir.

MR BUSBY: Robin, yes.

ANDREA: Are we doing that pantomime thing again?

MR BUSBY: We're doing the Pantomime thing.

KHALIL: I don't get it.

SHONA: Yeah, I don't get it either Mr Busby...two people dressed as a cow. What a waste of talent.

MR BUSBY: Granted. Who is going to voice Daisy today?

Silence

Khalil...this is a nice easy part.

KHALIL: I'm not being a cow.

SHONA: She's a good cow, she provides milk for her family.

HAMMID: *(Snigger)* Yeah, it's a girl's part.

KHALIL: So you want to milk me now?

All laugh

SHONA: How bout you Robin? Save the day...

ANDREA: Yeah, you'd be good at it.

SHONA: ...Cause' it basically involves saying nothing...except -

IZZY/ANDREA: 'Moooooooooooo'

Robin promptly gets up and leaves the portacabin. The form turn silent.

MR BUSBY: Oh what now!

ISA: Can I follow her sir?

MR BUSBY: No. You cannot. Give her a minute.

Shona, Izzy and Andrea giggle.

KHALIL & HAMMID: *(Gossip under their breath)* ...

MR BUSBY: Khalil, you can play the Dame.

HAMMID: Oh my God! Ha ha ha!

MR BUSBY: Yes, you're widow Twanky. Hammid, you're Alladin.

HAMMID: Coz' I'm a hero! Coz' I'm a hero... Alladin can fly and shit, can't he Sir?

SHONA: His carpet flies duffus!

IZZY & ANDREA: *(Singing)* 'I can show you the world...shining, shimmering, splendid...'

MR BUSBY: Okay. Girls, you're the villagers...

Mr Busby hands out scripts.

SHONA: So, I'm gonna spend the next thirty minutes being background?

MR BUSBY: Shona, don't start...

SHONA: What!? What the -

MR BUSBY: Shona, not today please.

SHONA: I'm gonna tell my Mom you -

MR BUSBY: Your mother's not teaching this class.

SHONA: This is unfair is what it is!

MR BUSBY: I'm warning you again Shona -

SHONA: *(Leaving)* I'm not sticking around to be discriminated against! That's two out. *(Under breath)* what kinda ' of a clown's name is Busby anyways...

Shona exits, slamming the portacabin door and stomping down its steps.

Beat

MR BUSBY: Okay...Girls, you'll notice that the villagers sing.

IZZY & ANDREA: Ooohhh!

MR BUSBY: Let's begin -

Boys and girls haul themselves up from the carpet, removing chewing gum, taking shoes off etc.

KHALIL: Wi-shy wa-shey. Wi-shy wa-shey...

Hammid and the class contain sniggers.

Where is wi-shey, wa-shey when you need him?

HAMMID: *(Taking the piss)* Who? Say again...

KHALIL: I'm trying my best Sir. What is Wishy Washy like a servant?

MR BUSBY: Exactly! Now try a smaller voice, she's a mother remember...

ANDREA: I'm really glad I came in today.

KHALIL: *(In high pitched voice)* Wi-shey wa-shey, wi-shey wa-shy....

Hammid and the class burst into uproarious laughter.

Ah, no man, I can't do this. Mr Busby I'm so -

HAMMID: *(Interrupting)* But you look just like your Mom....

Khalil snaps, viciously launching at Hammid's face...

KHALIL: SHUT YOUR FACE ABOUT MY MOM!

Mr Busby rises from his seat.

MR BUSBY: Khalil. Kha -

Khalil draws an ornamental dagger from his trouser-pocket.

KAHLIL: SAY It again!

IZZY: Whoaaah! Jesus...

MR BUSBY: *(Firmly)* Put the knife away Khalil.

HAMMID: Put it away idiot... *(Rapid talking in Arabic)*.

MR BUSBY: *(Softly)* KHALIL...may I remind you, it's parents' evening soon.

KHALIL: *(Breaking down)* He keeps making fun of me sir!

ISA: This is insulting behaviour man... ! الامتناع عن السلوك الخاطئ !

KHALIL: Fine.

MR BUSBY: Good. Give it to me.

HAMMID: It's like a toy Sir.

KHALIL: It's not a toy, it's a symbol of manhood.

ANDREA: *(Contains laughter.)*

MR BUSBY: Bleeding Nora... *(sniggers from class)* Will you be quiet? Give it here, let's feel the edge...

Khalil hands the dagger to Mr Busby. He strokes it between his finger and thumb.

Put it in your briefcase. There's a good lad.

KHALIL: Yes Sir. Who's Nora Sir?

The class laugh.

MR BUSBY: ...On that note, Andrea, could you play Widow Twanky?

ANDREA: Sure thing.

The portacabin door swings open and Robin walks in.

MR BUSBY: Robin. Nice of you to join us.

ROBIN: Have I missed anything?

MR BUSBY: You've missed everything, as usual.

SCENE 4. INT. Mr Busby's car, 7 pm. The Budaya Highway. Cars zoom by on the four-lane highway, dangerously overtaking each other. Indian and Arabic pop music rattles from each. Occasional shouts from youths issue from open windows. Robin and Mr Busby sit in silence.

ROBIN: (VO) We spent so much time in the car's climate, it felt like the inside of my head - no difference. Every car on the island had a history - We knew the AC was ripped out by the villager who sold it. Replacement would cost. So, scrimping, mum decided we would melt instead. Grey Camel farms, date-palms, abandoned breeze-block palaces, some-time beaches scarred with sea-birds caked in oil - that was the visual-loop played twice a daily and still flickering in the back of my mind.

MR BUSBY: Put the tape on.

ROBIN: The Latin Rhythms one?

MR BUSBY: Yeah, m' favourite...that one.

Robin inserts the car music and presses play.

MR BUSBY: *(Singing)* Mumbo-ehya, Mumbo-eyyyyyyya! De da de da -

ROBIN: Is it from Brazil?

MR BUSBY: Its' 'world music' isn't it.

ROBIN: You're trying to pretend we're in Brazil.

MR BUSBY: I'm playing it because it cheers me up. Help me find someone to park us...there's only three blokes on.

ROBIN: Why don't you let me talk to them?

MR BUSBY: They won't listen to you.

Silence.

ROBIN: Why?

MR BUSBY: Because you're a child.

ROBIN: I'm fourteen.

MR BUSBY: You're a girl. Here we are...*(Overly loud)* Salam Alikum!...You park car for us?
Very good!

Robin and Mr Busby get out of the car, slamming doors.

SCENE 5. EXT. Downtown Manama, 7 pm - noise/dust/pollution of shops, hotels, rich high-rises/ poor slums are slammed together - hustlers line stalls in every alley around the Gold-Souq.

MR BUSBY: Are you going to enjoy yourself or have I driven to the city for nothing?

A vendor approaches.

No...thank you Sir. We have.

ROBIN: We don't have.

MR BUSBY: Fancy a Mango juice?

ROBIN: Yes!

MR BUSBY: That's more like it! Mumbo eh ya...hmm hmm...Look at that great flipping carpet in there look...

ROBIN: Next door have got two big silk ones.

MR BUSBY: They're spending their 'nest-egg.'

ROBIN: What's that?

MR BUSBY: When people save up money. We're trying to make ours.

ROBIN: To make a nest-egg?

MR BUSBY: That and to pay off what we owe.

ROBIN: Is that why everyone's here do you think?

MR BUSBY: Sort of.

ROBIN: Mum wants to stay.

MR BUSBY: Course she does, she likes lying by the pool all day.

ROBIN: You don't want to.

MR BUSBY: Why do you say that? *(To the vendor)* Two Mango please Sir...

ROBIN: Please.

MR BUSBY: I know it's not what you expected.

ROBIN: 'Be yourself.'

MR BUSBY: What?

ROBIN: Everyone said 'just be yourself...and it'll be fine...' It's not fine.

MR BUSBY: Are you being yourself? Because if you carry on looking miserable all the time, you're going to make me and your Mum very ill...and you won't make friends that way either. I'm trying my damndest for both of you...We're here so *you* can have a better life.

ROBIN: Sorry.

MR BUSBY: Just for God's sake, play the game for a while. Please.

ROBIN: Is that what you're doing?

MR BUSBY: What *I'm* doing is none of your business.

ROBIN: Why is what I'm doing *your* business?

MR BUSBY: Don't be daft.

Silence.

ROBIN: You're always talking alone.

MR BUSBY: What?

ROBIN: You and mum, you're always talking alone on the veranda.

MR BUSBY: There are grown-up things going on at school.

ROBIN: What kind of things?

MR BUSBY: Nothing for you to worry about.

ROBIN: You always look angry or sad.

MR BUSBY: Listen,

...if *you* ever...feel upset. You come and find me...yes?

ROBIN: Yes.

MR BUSBY: Doesn't matter what I'm doing...promise?

ROBIN: Promise.

MR BUSBY: Good. You know, just a suggestion but if you smile more, people'll talk to you. Try it...lets see?

ROBIN: (Smiling) Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

Robin smiles.

...shouldn't have asked.

SCENE 6. EXT. Playground dig, 11.30 am. Isa strums an oud in the trench. Robin is doing their history homework.

ISA: (VO) I remember, there was a kind of golden fury filling up my head. Mohammed, My grown-up cousin, had a habit of crashing on our sofa. But before he crashed and slept like an angel, he would talk...and talk...with more energy than any dog or politician. I took his oud to school with the intention of calming down. Questions hung between the strings. Why were all the good people losers? Mohammed, Mom. And Robin...I thought about making things better for her. I was afraid she was going to be broken by people and I couldn't change anything.

Isa plays gentle music on the Oud.

ROBIN: Question two part one: 'Was Henry the eighth a tyrant?'

ISA: Yes.

ROBIN: Why?

ISA: He killed his opposition, that's enough.

ROBIN: You're very...quiet.

ISA: I've been playing this oud for half an hour.

ISA: (VO) I wanted her to get it. To get the gravity of how I was feeling. I didn't have enough words for it.

ROBIN: ...you look like one of those heritage demonstrators in Bab Al Bahrain. Ha!

ISA Thank you.

ROBIN: What's wrong?

ISA: My cousin, Mohammed told me...

ROBIN: What?

ISA: (VO) I wanted to tell her.

ISA: They think she'll go. Just leave...The TV company's banned from the island. So...

ROBIN: The whole TV company?

ISA: Yes. All of them. They're her family in a way.

ROBIN: Will you go with with her?

Isa puts the oud down.

ISA: You're being selfish.

ISA (VO) Life in that school wouldn't feel safe for Robin without me.

ROBIN: No...maybe.

ISA: Why am I the only one going through this?

ROBIN: Other people are separated from parents...

ISA: Because of divorce not centuries of dictatorship. We mess around right? Making fun of Hammid and Khalil...and Shona and we read the Island Reporter about bake-sales and his highness going to some car show. But so many people *we* don't even see are really mad...and hurt.

ROBIN: Mad?

ISA: Mad, angry, same thing. And it's people like Khalil and Hammid's uncles who are doing it. We're all being strung along!

ROBIN: Poor and mad makes a 'Peasants' revolt'.

ISA: Exactly! That's number four isn't it?

ROBIN: Three a). We should do our homework.

ISA: I haven't looked at it...Dad's sleeping at home. People are disappearing from my mother's village.

ROBIN: *Your* mother won't be tortured or dropped in the sea.

ISA: Oh my God Robin!

ISA (VO) If anyone was going to speak the elephant in the room...

ROBIN: She's just moving away. She's married to the Archeologist. He's British...

ISA: Yes, she's 'English *by association.*'

ROBIN: Who says that?

ISA: Lots of people you don't know.

Isa exhales a long breath.

ISA: (VO) How could I explain that she was only dipping her toes in shark-infested swimming-pool huh? I couldn't.

ISA: Look at Shona doing Andrea's hair there...nothing can touch them, they can touch you but...

ROBIN: I won't let them anymore.

ISA: How? How could *you* possibly stop it without *provoking* them?

ROBIN: She's not a tyrant and I'm not dead yet.

ISA: I don't think we should use the D word. I'm worried...

ROBIN: Why?

ISA: ...for my cousin. He doesn't keep his mouth shut.

ROBIN: You need to tell him.

ISA: He's a musician and poet!

ROBIN: So?

ISA: It's not easy to shut him up!

ROBIN: He can charm people...

ISA: Bullies aren't interested in charm. It's what they don't have. You should know.

Beat

ROBIN: What?

ISA: Would you like to hear one of his poems?

ROBIN: Yes!

ROBIN: (VO) *That shifted the mood.*

ISA: It's about the paradise people, when the island looked like the vacation brochures.

ROBIN: You know it by heart?

ISA: I'm translating it.

ROBIN: Wow.

Isa picks up the Oud he has discarded and strums for effect in-between and within verses.

Ready? Okay...

*Before time began the God Eas and his wife ruled an island paradise
where the mouths of two great oceans met – the Suez and Elat.*

Strums

*And they were...(remembers) erm, 'instituted' to rule a sinless land
where animals and man lived in peace, under the sun, where myths are born, bronze
bent to shape, before Gilgamesh turned into Noah
and Dilmun became 'Eden.'*

Strums

*Wells sprung below earth from the fingers of Enki, God of sweet waters. Giant's
fountains flowed when wealth married fruitfulness.*

Frantic strumming.

*But one day, vultures swooped, hunting blood that was innocent.
Oil made sand black, black fish stank at the sea's edge,
beaches became waste.*

*Springs dried as spirit drained to nothingness.
Until white stallions rose...*

That's it...that's it so far.

ROBIN: Do the 'white stallions' save everything, Isa?

Pause

*ISA: (VO) I thought - shall I lecture this girl on Nationalist symbols of resistance? Or shall I let
the gulf flow between us? That was the first day I felt - I had one foot in my Dad's dig, one in my
Mom's study and a head full of Mohammed's beautiful, weird, fury. On a tuesday, between
Design Technology and Maths.*

SCENE 7. EXT. Andrea's Compound, the poolside area, 10 pm. Nineties rock plays. Twenty or so twelve to fourteen-year-olds drink beer, Fanta/Coke around a pool: shouting, pushing, splashing, messing around. There are snacks and a wired area where a ghetto-blasters sits. They are surrounded by date-palms, sprinklers and (oddly) doves cooing from cotts.

ANDREA: Somebody's throwing stuff at the gate!

SHONA: Everyone on the list is here.

ANDREA: Wait, the security's doing sign-language at me...

SHONA: Off his face probably.

ANDREA: I'm gonna' look.

SHONA: If it's rebels wanting to kidnap you...say hi from me.

Shona weaves through the clumps of teenagers. Bottles clink, laughter spills, intermittent shouting.

ISA: (*Banging gate*) I got a lift!

SECURITY: (*To Andrea*) He is shouting for five minutes - little boy!

ISA: Andy it's Isa! Let me in!

ANDREA: Isa? Hang-on...

Andrea searches for the coded lock on the compound gate.

the code's difficult.

ANDREA: I'm just...remembering the code.

ISA: Ask the security guy!

Andrea flops over to the porter's hut.

ANDREA: Excuse me, I know you don't understand what I'm saying, but my *friend* out *there* wants to *come in*. Let. him. in?

SECURITY: School friend?

ANDREA: Yes!

SECURITY: He's not English.

ANDREA: Half English.

SECURITY: Father English?

ANDREA: Yes, father!

ISA: I'm wearing my school uniform for heaven's sake!

SECURITY: *(To Isa)*...Okay, you can go inside.

The security guard automates the compound gates, which creak open slowly and heavily.

ANDREA: *(To others)* He's coming in!

The congregation of year nines whoop.

(To Isa) Hey, you didn't observe the dress code; you're not wearing black.

SHONA: *(To Robin)* Robin, remember what I said? Make an effort to be one of us.

Isa & Shona trample through the compound garden.

ISA: *(To Andrea)* I came from my cousin's. He gave me a lift.

ANDREA: Are you *living* with him now? In his village?

ISA: I don't know.

ANDREA: Wow...that's really something.

...This is the drinks table, don't knock it in the pool. We all brought alcohol from our parents' stashes.

Isa takes a bottle and opens it with his pen-knife.

ISA: Okay.

ANDREA: Wow. Do you always keep a penknife in your pocket?

ISA: I'm an archeologist.

ANDREA: Yeah, course you are. Does your Dad know where you are?

ISA: I don't know.

ANDREA: Don't know much this evening. Are you still hanging out in that trench in the playground?

ISA: Why?

ANDREA: I need you to keep something for me.

ISA: That depends what it is.

ANDREA: Liquid gold.

ISA: Petrol?

ANDREA: Why not?

ISA: What are you planning to run with it?

ANDREA: My boyfriend likes it. For inhaling.

ISA: I don't want to.

ANDREA: I don't want to tell Mr Busby where his daughter spends every break. But I might.

Isa breathes in and out with agitation.

ISA: Okay. Just one can!

ANDREA: You're a legend!

ISA: *(To self)* Someday. Not today.

Andrea weaves her way back into the crowd.

Andy! Where is Robin?

ANDREA: Leave her alone...she's one of us.

IZZY: Water bomb!

There is a wave of surprise and laughter as Izzy jumps, fully clothed into the pool. The others follow suit. Isa wends through the compound garden's lanes. He finds Robin.

ISA: Robin?

ROBIN: What are you doing here?

ISA: I wanted to see you actually.

ROBIN: Shona's watching.

ISA: No, she's on the inflatable ring.

ROBIN: It feels more dangerous than school.

ISA: I know. Lets go.

ROBIN: Where?

ISA: Follow me.

ROBIN: Have you got a torch?

ISA: Of course...

Isa and Robin walk through the gardens. Geckos croak, an Indian film can be heard from the servant's quarters and the faint wail of gardeners singing along.

ROBIN: It looks like a fairytale with the paths lit...

ISA: Stupid isn't it.

ROBIN: The villas look like castles...

ISA: Look up!

ROBIN: The water tank? It's about fifty years old.

ISA: Haven't you always wanted to climb one?

ROBIN: *(Smiling)* Yes. But -

ISA: What?

ROBIN: The servants might leave the quarters...

ISA: They won't.

ROBIN: But where's..?

ISA: The ladder..?

Isa and Robin circle the metal feet of the early twentieth-century water-tower, much like the Warner Brothers' tower. It wheezes and drips. Pigeons and Doves perch and scratch about its rusted bars and inner-drum.

ROBIN: Why is it still here?

ISA: Why do they plant grass that's gonna' die? Okay -

Isa hoists himself up onto the first rung of the ladder.

Take my hand.

ROBIN: I'm fine...

ISA: Keep close to me...

They climb up the ladder to the redundant water tower.

Okay?

ROBIN: Bloody hell, it's higher than it looks...

They continue climbing the rusty iron ladder of the 1950s water tank. Isa settles on the ledge surrounding the drum.

ISA: Focus on one rung at a time.

There you go...

He waits for Robin before helping her with the last leg.

Take my hand...

Robin takes Isa's hand. He hauls her up.

There.

ROBIN: Even the big villas look like Barbie houses.

ISA: They do. Let's go inside the drum.

Their footsteps can be heard echoing on the water tank floor.

ROBIN: I feel like I'm in an egg!

Robin's words echo and reverberate around the tank. Eggg....ggggg...

Ha!

Ha! Ha ha.

ISA: (*Whispers*) You like it? It echoes EVERYTHING!

...(Echo) *Everything... everything...*

Let's sit.

Isa and Robin inhale the night air -

ROBIN: The heat always smells like drains. Why?

ISA: Because there are so few drains.

ROBIN:...Why are you smiling?

ISA: I'm just... I'm glad I'm here, with you...

ROBIN: And...

ISA: My mother left today.

ROBIN: Oh. I didn't -

ISA: No one knew until the last minute.

Beat

ROBIN: You can help your Dad with -

ISA: He's buried in that dig.

ROBIN: Can you live with Mohammed?

ISA: Yes; she mentioned something...and my aunts will be close.

ROBIN: With her family...

ISA: I mean, they're my family...

ROBIN: *(Laughs)* You'll play music and read his poetry.

ISA: He's getting married soon. His new wife -

ROBIN: Will feed you like a fat king!

Pause

ISA: I love you...

You know?

ROBIN: No...Yes...I love *you*.

but -

ISA: What?

ROBIN: I don't know what we do now.

ISA: Say it again.

ROBIN: I love you.

The words echo around the water-tank, which shakes.

ISA: I'm actually happy...

Robin goes to kiss Isa. They embrace.

ISA/ROBIN: *(Giggle)*

ROBIN: It looks like a Thousand and One Nights up there.

ISA: Stars are brighter, more religious here...

ROBIN: They feel more -

A stone hits the side of the tank with a thud.

What's..?

Another stone hits the side of the tank with a thud.

ISA: Someone knows we're here.

Another stone hits the side of the tank.

SHONA: Come out you little skanks!

Stones continues to hit the the tank with a hail of stones.

ROBIN: It doesn't matter anymore.

ISA: Maybe. I'll go down first, you can follow.

SCENE 8. EXT. St George's School Cloister, noon. The Muezzin calls midday prayers. The bell then rings for the end of lunch. Robin and Isa make their way up a corridor (*full of Arabic, Punjabi, Hindi, American-English chatter*) to class. Shona and Andrea stop them in their tracks.

SHONA: Hey earthworms!

ANDREA: Hey!

ROBIN: (*Under breath*) Isa, let's stop. They won't stop.

Andrea catches up with Isa. She is charming.

ANDREA: Isa, you never found me about that thing. I was really disappointed.

ISA: What thing Andy?

ROBIN: We're going to PSE.

SHONA & ANDREA: (*Flatly*) No, you're not.

ISA: What are you doing?

Andrea pulls Isa aside as Shona corners Robin, her back against student lockers.

ANDREA: Come ere' Isa, I wanna' talk to you in private...you're looking sharp today. Did you lose your virginity?

ISA: Ha. Ha.

ANDREA: Like I said last night, I would *really* appreciate it if you'd keep something for me...

SHONA: What kind of a stunt was that at the party Robin?

ROBIN: You said do something wrong...we climbed a tower.

SHONA: Who cares about climbing that old tower? Hmm, love-birds?

ROBIN: We're friends.

SHONA: You are turning so red right now...What you've got to understand is that by our standards he's a jerk-off. We can't be friends with someone who shares his saliva.

ROBIN: He's like a brother...

SHONA: Wow, this place is so incestuous...I'm gonna' need something else from you Robin. A sign. To show you're willing...How are you going to prove to us that you want to be our friends?

ROBIN: I'll think of something.

SHONA: Yes, use your imagination.

Andrea and Isa approach, talking. Andrea is happy. Isa mutters, acquiescing.

ROBIN: Okay.

SHONA: Good man!

ANDREA: *(Releasing Isa)* Sweet!

Shona and Andrea join forces again.

SHONA: Alright girlfriend?

ANDREA: Sound!

SHONA: *(To Isa and Robin)* Well hurry up kids, you'll be late for Personal Social Education!

Shona and Andrea make their way to class. Isa and Robin are left in silence.

ISA: Well what did she want?

ROBIN: Just the usual, Just...just -

Robin runs down the corridor in the opposite direction.

ISA: Where are you going?

ROBIN: Carry on!

ISA: But -

ROBIN: Go without me!

ISA: I'm worried about you.

ROBIN: Don't be!

SCENE 9. INT. St George's main corridor. cont.

ROBIN: (VO) A murky kind of light-bulb switched on in my head. I knew I had to make something change, to have a stab at changing something. The corridors started zeroing into tunnels. I wanted my Dad. I would tell him about feeling stupid because they weren't actually hurting me, but it felt like it...and anger was spilling from every pore at ninety miles an hour...

MS CRAY: Er! Where are you going? *(Beat)* Robin Busby, I said where are you going?

ROBIN: (VO) Ms Cray blocked my path. I didn't want to meet her eyes; they were cold.

MS CRAY: Where are you going? You have PSE. It's in that direction.

ROBIN: I -

MS CRAY: Were you going to see your father?

ROBIN: (VO) I nodded. It was enough. Her green gaze narrowed.

MS CRAY: No, no, no. We can't have this -

ROBIN: (VO) She steered my shoulders towards her office.

MS CRAY: Come with me...

Ms Cray and Robin make their way sharply towards her office.

I'm fed up of this bombing down corridors with no regard for other people.

ROBIN: (VO) I wanted to say - It's how people walk when we're trapped.

MS CRAY: In here, quickly...

Ms Cray shuts the door behind her.

SCENE 10. INT. Ms Cray's Office. Cont.

ROBIN: No.

MS CRAY: Yes, you did. Sit down.

Ms Cray drags a chair up to her desk.

ROBIN: (VO) She pointed to a low chair opposite her desk. I sat like a puppy.

MS CRAY: What's this all about?

ROBIN: (VO) As Ms Cray leant backwards in her wheely-chair, she scanned my pubescent body - Tiny ankles, striped skirt, small hands. I felt deep guilt. But for what, I didn't know.

MS CRAY: It's a funny thing about shy people.

ROBIN: (VO) She fixed the green eyes on mine again.

MS CRAY: People think they don't care about how they look, but actually, they care an awful lot about how people see them...

ROBIN: Shame blossomed down my arms and legs.

MS CRAY: They're incredibly self-conscious...

ROBIN: (VO) It was both painful and a relief to be seen. A release of some sort - maybe I deserved punishment. She continued -

MS CRAY: You know, I was *so* excited to find that your mother and father were bringing a new young person into our little community. I can't stress how disappointed I am...

ROBIN: (VO) I had nothing left to say. She tipped her head.

MS CRAY: Is it Shona?

ROBIN: *(Quietly)* Yes.

MS CRAY: Tut. Ignore her. She's angry...with everyone.

ROBIN: (VO) We were all angry. We were all homesick...for types of bread and chocolate and jelly and boring people speaking in familiar dialects.

MS CRAY: Why were you looking for your father?

ROBIN: I wanted to tell him something.

MS CRAY: Hmm. Did he tell you you could look for him?

ROBIN: (VO) I firmly nodded.

MS CRAY: Your father...

ROBIN: (VO) Why was she taking her time? Was it a punch she was pulling or a help?

MS CRAY: Your father is here to do a job. Interrupting his job is not going to help him. That was a selfish decision Robin.

ROBIN: He said -

MS CRAY: I can guess what he probably said...But what you don't understand yet, although some people your age have got it actually... is that -

ROBIN (VO) She was definitely teasing something out...

MS CRAY: We're the only ones who can take care of our emotions.

Other people can't do it for us.

And it's not fair on them.

Beat

Do you understand me?

ROBIN: (VO) If this was adulthood, adulthood was a really lonely place.

MS CRAY: So be an adult about this. Now, don't worry. I know you're embarrassed. There's no need for this to go any further than this room. I Promise. *(Beat)* Do you understand?

ROBIN: Yes.

MS CRAY: Yes, what?

ROBIN: Yes Ms Cray.

MS CRAY: Good girl. You can't put your emotions on your father...He's lucky to be here. My predecessor was very taken by...personality. He needs your help.

ROBIN: (VO) All of a sudden she brightened.

MS CRAY: Okay?...Next time I hear your name...it'll be about something good...contribute, participate. Think about what you give back to the school.

ROBIN: Her eyes x-raying still.

MS CRAY: And remember what I said...They're yours, keep them to yourself. We'll say no more about this.

Ms Cray shuts her office door behind Robin.

Beat

ROBIN: (VO) I walked back to class with a new kind of loneliness. It didn't cry. It didn't say a word.

SCENE 11. EXT: St George's School Playground, 2 pm.

ROBIN: (VO) The next lesson swept over like a fog. I could feel Isa follow me out into the playground. I paused. I wanted, (so badly), to look at everything as if for the first time. The super-rich Arab boys play-fighting on the hall steps, pretending to hate when they couldn't bare to be apart. Popular, mixed race beauties called Xena and Tanzina paraded the square, smiling at boys who ventured into the heat to make them laugh. Misfits stuck to the cloister. Each alcove - an exhibit of oddments - The sad Greek girl who self-harmed because she disappointed her glamorous mother. A South African boy called 'The Mad Professor' pacing in and out to the rhythm of his ticks. Before Isa and the dig, I sat in number five...hugging knees, watching all of them.

ISA: There you are! Are you excited?

ROBIN: (VO) He looked messy and haunted.

ROBIN: About what?

ISA: My cousin's wedding. Of course!

ROBIN: (VO) A wedding. Something pure and beautiful - I'd like that. (To Isa) That's...that's amazing. I'm invited?

ISA: Robin, listen...

ROBIN: (VO) He took me by the shoulders like Ms Cray, but tenderly. And looked at the lower part of my eyes - his, brown and wider than I'd ever seen them.

ISA: Please make your father come. It'll be better for everyone if you're both there.

ROBIN: I'll try. When is it?

ISA: Friday evening.

ROBIN: I'll try but he's depressed. I think.

ISA: He'll love it. All the dancing, all the food. It will be like a 'cultural experience' for him.

ROBIN: He'll like that.

ISA: Promise you'll tell him.

ROBIN: Of course I will!

ISA: Where did you go Robin?

ROBIN: Ms Cray's office.

ISA: What did you do?

ROBIN: Nothing...

ROBIN: (VO) I felt guilt all over me again.

ROBIN: I just...was thinking about...where we fit-in here. Where our place is.

ISA: In the dig you mean?

ROBIN: Maybe we can just blend...become invisible.

ISA: Do you know what you're saying!

ROBIN: No...not really.

ISA: You're saying forget yourself for an easy life.

ROBIN: People do.

ISA: My Mom would have a lot to say about that.

ROBIN: She's not here though.

ROBIN: (VO) Then all the light went out of his face.

Beat

ISA: Let's rewrite St George's code of conduct!

ROBIN: That's fun but -

ISA: It could be useful!

ROBIN: (VO) Where was this passion coming from?

ROBIN: Yes. Let's pretend it's the first day we met.

ROBIN: (VO) I swivelled onto The Dig's steps.

ISA: Watch your feet, the ladder's breaking...Listen....we can sit here, and moan, and do nothing...and moan. Listen -

ROBIN: (VO) He kept saying that.

ISA: Let's design a new Eden, right here. A proper one.

ROBIN: Rules for paradise?

ISA: Rules for paradise.

ROBIN: Okay - *think before you open your mouth!*

ISA: *Use kind words.*

ROBIN: *Celebrate differences...instead of -*

ISA: Three: *Save competing for sports day.*

ROBIN: *Abolish Sports Day!*

ISA: Yes, *Abolish Sports Day!*

ROBIN: (VO) I was enjoying this.

ISA: Don't bring fake weapons to school. It's stupid.

ROBIN: Or real ones. That's more stupid.

ISA: It doesn't happen that much.

ROBIN: Shona's tongue's a weapon.

ISA: Ha ha ha!

ROBIN: (VO) His head was shining with joy again. It was beautiful.

Khalil approaches kicking sand/rocks around the dig.

KHALIL: Hey Isa, man, can I copy your history homework?

ROBIN: What happened to your maid?

Hammid approaches the group, interrupting.

HAMMID: *(To khalil)* Yo, Khalil, why are you talking like Widow Twanky?

KHALIL: I'm not, I'm getting my homework.

HAMMID: Copy mine.

KHALIL: I'm not copying yours, it sounds like a retarded monkey's done it.

ROBIN & ISA laugh.

KHALIL: ... 'In old days in Eng-land there was a king Hen-ry who took lots of wives.'

Hammid suddenly snatches the piece of paper.

HAMMID: Well if this shit's so good, we're taking it.

ROBIN: Give it back! It's mine!

HAMMID: *(Reading it.)* What the fuck? Are these rules? There are five... *(Beat.)* Are you screwing with the articles of faith? You dirty bastard...

ISA: No! You know I'm not.

HAMMID: You're screwing with my faith...

ROBIN: No! Hammid!

HAMMID: You think you can do anything because you're friendly with her?

ISA: Shut your fat face.

HAMMID: You're a dirty A-hole, you and your cousin...

ISA: He's cleaner than you'll ever be!

ROBIN: Give my work back! Just...STOPIT!

HAMMID: *(Leaning into Isa)* At least I don't try to fuck an English girl 'cause I miss my mommy' ...

ROBIN: *(Shouts)* STOPPIT!!

ROBIN strikes HAMMID across the face. He screws up the piece of paper and thrusts it in his pocket.

HAMMID: Bitch! Oh My God! Who do you think you are?

Khalil leads Hammid away.

KHALIL: Come on man...

HAMMID:...(Hollers) I'm keeping this!

KHALIL: *(To Robin & Isa)* You guys think you're really smart. You're not...

SCENE 12, EXT. Brit-Club, 6pm. The British Club boasts an indoor restaurant, cafe, pool, recreation area, games room and library. British/US pop music filters onto the poolside where the island's upwardly mobile expats spend their surplus income on eating and drinking in notable clusters.

ROBIN: (VO) The Brit-Club was heaving that Friday. Corporate cliques getting obliterated, tipsy teachers, international medical tribes eating burgers mixed...with the smell of imported baked-beans. Teenagers too young to drink, quietly watched parents lose their inhibitions.

ROBIN: We can still make the wedding party!

MR BUSBY: Let's put that one to bed now Robin.

ROBIN: He wanted us to be there!

MR BUSBY: This is work! You'll understand when you're older.

ROBIN: I don't like the way Ms Cray is looking at you.

MR BUSBY: She's looking at the man behind me, talking to the waiter. *(Whispering)* Very quickly, take a look.

ROBIN: (VO) The man instructing the waiter - His face, red-walnut, his clothes right out of the 1940s film we were watching in English - khaki shorts, beige shirt, belt. Straight out of The Bridge over the River Kwai.

ROBIN: He's got a face like a walnut.

MR BUSBY: He's got responsibility for policing the island.

ROBIN: But he's -

MR BUSBY: British through and through. 'The Butcher' they call him.

ROBIN: Why?

MR BUSBY: Go and sit at the children's table Robin.

ROBIN: I'm not a child. I want to be at the wedding.

SCENE 13. EXT. Mohammed's new house, 6 pm. Isa sits alone in the decorative peace of Mohammed's roofed courtyard. The family celebrate within. Although modest, it is a spacious, affluent household for a Bahraini village.

ISA: (VO) Mohammed's new house was warm and practical. The old family treasures were displayed in a glass-case snaking the inside-courtyard. To begin, I was stuffed with lamb, nuts, saffron cake and fried biscuits. So...I'm sitting there, taking a breath before the women come in. There sounds would have made separation from mom seem okay: my girl cousins giggling, painted like dolls. Mohammed found me. He was happy as a lunatic, singing at the moon.

MOHAMMED: There you are, my little historian!

ISA: I'm actually happy.

MOHAMMED: You should be. This place is maxed-out with food and women.

ISA: It feels like home...

Beat

MOHAMMED: What's the matter?

ISA: All this is so illegal.

MOHAMMED: No, no, no. Village parties happen after dark all the time. It's nothing unusual.

ISA: Not all the time...not in this village.

MOHAMMED: Why would they pick on us now hmm?

ISA: If Mr Busby had come I'd feel safer.

MOHAMMED: Such a worrier! You're missing your girlfriend.

ISA: What's the point? It's not like we're going to grow-up, get married and have children!

MOHAMMED: I've known Fatima since we were eight; we got married. But, you, you're the future, you can do what you like.

ISA: I feel like the past.

MOHAMMED: Come here...let me hug you. Sensible little man...

Mohammed kisses Isa's head & squeezes him.

SCENE 14, EXT. The Brit-Club, poolside, 8.30 pm.

MR BUSBY: *(To Ms Cray)* All this emphasis on numbers...this is teaching! It's about relationships...

MS CRAY: As the Americans would say, be schooled Simon. St George's existence is dependent on numbers.

MR BUSBY: This all sounds very Thatcherite.

MS CRAY: I think you're an exponent of the old world. Like Bannister.

MR BUSBY: Yes, what happened to The old Headmaster?

MS CRAY: He's living out his champagne socialism in Wiltshire.

MR BUSBY: He had the human touch. I liked him.

MS CRAY: *(Sharply)* But you can't go around offering people jobs just because you like them.

MR BUSBY: Meaning? Adele? Meaning?

MS CRAY: I'm just saying we need to assess what we're doing.

MR BUSBY: What about what the kids are doing outside of lessons?

MS CRAY: Compound life doesn't really allow for going off the rails does it.

MR BUSBY: Cause' keeping people contained has always worked.

SCENE 15. INT. Mohammed's new house, 9.30 pm.

ISA: (VO) Now, I am sitting in the family room, singing songs, telling almost dirty jokes and smoking hubba-bubba. This is a world without teenagers, we are all adults. Mohammed leaves the mess of fifty men to invite all the women in. They huddle at one door. Shy or pretending to be shy? I don't know - it feels like a performance. And before I can study how they move without Abayas, they scatter around, throwing herbs. The music starts again, coins on their dresses shake, and I feel dizzy and full. Uncles begin clapping like circus seals, I join in, my cousins and other girls from the village seem to know how to dance in a formation...it is a riot of happiness organized by tabla drums, drumming...louder...and faster...then Indian policemen with guns push through both doors, shouting pigeon Arabic, I can't understand. Girl cousins scream. Maybe twenty black-shirted men pull five men from the floor, where they are eating. Girls run back to the other room screaming and I flatten my back against the wall, fixed, watching, no longer dizzy, wired, catatonic. They take Mohammed, (who is crying to God), by both hands, clasped behind him and they are all dragged through the door. Gone. We weep. We cry for the world we knew ten minutes ago. Uncles start praying desperately. I see my grandfather, my mother's father clasping his bony face, hoping his old eyes will not fall out and I know - he's seen this before. Every time the cruelty is blinding.

Chaos. Many voices directing each other in Arabic. Those of women shriek and cry. A man addresses Isa.

ISA'S UNCLE: I get you home.

ISA: (VO) Mom's brother drives me back to Isa Town in his beaten Mercedes, acting cool and in-charge. But his eyes are red and leaking. He can't blink.

SCENE 16. INT. Isa's uncle's car, The Buddayah Highway, 10 pm.

ISA'S UNCLE: I talk to your father. We get this ended now. We get this ended! Enchalla.

ISA: Will...they come back?

ISA'S UNCLE: I've never heard them not come back in our village. They come back...My boy is strong...my boy -

ISA: (VO) Uncle Naveed bit his lip and sucked in tears all the way up the highway. I never knew his face so opened up.

Compound gates open, the car stops, one door slams. Birds coo in the dovecot preparing for sleep.

The garden doves were cooing in our compound. How stupid. And odd - that my father is out of his chair and at the door, shaking the hand of a man wearing the kind clothes English men wore in The Bridge over the River Kwai...his half-face lined and red. My father glances at me with worry I've never seen. There is a page with pink lines on it sticking out of his shirt pocket. Could that be mine and Robin's rules? Maybe. No, it can't. She feels like a character from a book now. The nutshell leaves tipping his panama hat and striding through the compound gate. No car, no armed police. Nothing. He moves like a human ghost but with bulging blue veins. My father looks down at me with a new expression like every person that night. It's soft.

ISA'S FATHER: Do you want to come to work with me tomorrow?

ISA: (VO) He says. 'Yes.' I nodded and hugged him around the waist. 'Yes please.' And for the first time, he kisses my head.

SCENE 17. EXT. Playground dig, 8.45 am. Robin is sitting on the edge of the dig, kicking it. She hears heavy-shoed footsteps.

ROBIN: (VO) I was kicking the side of the dig to send shockwaves through the ground...

Robin's father, Mr Busby, approaches.

MR BUSBY: I've been wondering where you go to at break.

ROBIN: How?

MR BUSBY: Shona told me.

ROBIN: Course she did. There's nothing wrong with it.

MR BUSBY: Hiding underground?

Beat

Mr Busby sits next to her, wheezing as he lowers himself.

ROBIN: Is he going to...are they going to -

MR BUSBY: What you've heard is probably wrong.

ROBIN: I've been praying. I don't usually...

MR BUSBY: I know. Why would you.

ROBIN: The police -

MR BUSBY: They did a raid his cousin's village last night...they took twelve men.

ROBIN: (VO) Dad put his arm around my shoulders. Kindly.

MR BUSBY: He's alright Robin. They wouldn't do anything to Jonathan's son.

ROBIN: The rest of them -

MR BUSBY: Hmm...They're still there. We'll try our best to get his cousin out.

ROBIN: So...why isn't he at school?

MR BUSBY: His father wanted to spend some time with him.

ROBIN: That's -

MR BUSBY: He thinks...we think... you need to take some distance from all this.

ROBIN: What do you mean? Are we going home?

MR BUSBY: No, we have bills to pay remember. What do you talk about in here?

ROBIN: Everything.

MR BUSBY: How mean everyone is?

ROBIN: Sometimes. Not you.

MR BUSBY: You have to be careful Robin. It might be just words to you, but...words get around. They mean a lot to a lot of people.

ROBIN: Ours don't.

MR BUSBY: You'd be very surprised.

Beat

Hammid told Ms Cray that you hit him.

ROBIN: I...I...

MR BUSBY: I *know* you're not a violent person...my daughter is not a violent person.

ROBIN: He took my homework and -

MR BUSBY: And?

Beat

ROBIN: When is Isa coming back?

MR BUSBY: Look, when he does come back, just give him a wide birth.

ROBIN: Why?

MR BUSBY: I'm not asking you to stop being friendly. But maybe it's time to find other people...being with one person all the time, it can be very...intense.

ROBIN: (*Goes to speak.*)

MR BUSBY: Uh uh. Use today to think about what *you're* going to do. Are you going to make history or stay in this rut the rest of your life?

ROBIN: Neither.

MR BUSBY: Just play the game for a while. Alright?

ROBIN: Alright.

SCENE 18. EXT. St. George's Playground, 8.15 am.

ROBIN: (VO) *The next morning before assembly -*

SHONA: You're boyfriend's back.

ROBIN: (VO) *I knew he was safe but the lump in my stomach made me pray to his God anyway. 'Allah, make him not be sad. Make him as happy as he was when we sat in the water-tower. I ran to the dig and see Isa's brown hand curl inside the trench. Something was different.*

Robin's light footsteps approach the edge of the dig. Isa is heard singing Mohammed's song in Arabic.

ROBIN: Where's the ladder?

ISA: I trashed it. It's dangerous.

ROBIN: What have you done to all the findings?

ISA: They're inside the awning. I labelled them.

ROBIN: Isn't that your Dad's job?

ISA: He showed me how.

ROBIN: You were with him at Saar?

ISA: It's not just a graveyard you know.

ROBIN: I know.

ISA: It's the imprint of a whole civilisation.

Beat

ROBIN: Did you -

ISA: I can't talk about it.

ROBIN: I prayed...for those men.

ISA: There's nothing you can do...Er, thank you.

Beat

ROBIN: I'm so glad you're here...

Robin goes to hug him.

ISA: Don't touch me please, Robin.

ROBIN: Sorry.

ISA: You didn't come.

ROBIN: What?

ISA: You didn't come to the wedding. You and your family.

ROBIN: There was a thing at the Club.

ISA: Do you know what would have happened if you came?

ROBIN: What do you mean?

Beat

Why aren't you looking at me?

ISA: Don't you think it's time we stopped this?

ROBIN: This?

ISA: You know. This!

ROBIN: Hiding here, you mean.

ISA: Hiding behind each other. It's childish.

ROBIN: But in the water-tank...

ISA: I wanted something to fix everything. I think. But now I know we can't.

ROBIN: I don't believe that.

ISA: Because you're a child.

ROBIN: You *know* I'm not.

Beat

I know you care a lot about Mohammed and the other men.

ISA: They're my family.

Isa begins to cry in a short, sharp inhalation. He puts his hand to his mouth.

ROBIN: I'm sorry! I don't know what you want me to say...

ISA: Nothing.

ROBIN: Let me hug you -

ISA: NO!!

ROBIN: This isn't right.

ISA: You're fourteen. We're not in love. We're in hell.

ROBIN: It doesn't have to be like that.... I didn't feel like a proper person until you.

Beat

I love you.

ISA: I know.

The bell sounds.

ISA: I don't feel what you feel...I'm going to the National Stadium. It's Sports Day.

Isa leaves, his plimsolls pattering across the Cloister. Robin's breathing becomes irregular and desperate. The bell sounds. Students' feet scatter across the playground to the doors in excitement. Robin starts kicking the side of the dig and findings table.

ROBIN: (VO) The pain felt was the colour of bruises or the sole of a shoe and there was nowhere to put it. I couldn't keep it to myself. I could not be the robot they - Ms Cray, Dad, Isa...wanted, it all looked, felt and smelt wrong...I remember my mind dissociating from my body....hovering somewhere above the cloister, near the bell. I jumped into the trench, yanked out Andrea's gas can and the lighter hidden next to it. Science was boring, but I knew about fuel...The other kids'

parents were corporate slaves to fuel. Our governments cared we were here because of fuel. It was ripped out, sold and transported to random corners of the earth like we were. I wrenched around the lid, tilting it...I poured slathers of the stuff around the dig's parameter...I remembered that word from maths, then I bent over to set it...

alight.

I liked watching the orange chains circle mine and Isa's world. They were gilding a moving picture. Power rose in my belly. A transcendent feeling. There. This is what it means to DO something! To make something happen...the chains rolled towards the findings table, eating each artifact whole in seconds. History means nothing to fire. History means nothing to boys. My heart sank, I felt love and loss again...rise and sink and rise again.

Shona enters from inside the school, wrapping her eyes around the spectacle.

SHONA: *(Shouting)* Robin! Robin?...

for fuck's sake!

LISTEN!!!

ROBIN: *(VO)* I woke from my trance.

SHONA: What the fuck have you done Robin? Get away from there!

ROBIN: *(Shouts back)* I'm fine!

SHONA: Fine!? No you're not! Get away!

ROBIN: You told me to do something wrong!

SHONA: You know you're going to have to leave? Like, your whole family?

Isa enters. Looking for Robin, he approaches Shona.

ISA: Shona have you -

Isa clocks the fire. He escalates into panic breathing.

SHONA: I'm getting Ms Cray...

ROBIN: Isa...

ISA: No...no...no, this is NOT happening!...Why hasn't someone put it out? Rob- ...

ROBIN: *(Cries)* It's too late.

ISA: ...all my father's work?

ROBIN: *(Feintly)* I'm sorry...

Ms Cray enters with Shona.

MS CRAY: ROBIN, ISA - GET YOUR BODIES OVER HERE RIGHT NOW!

ROBIN: (VO) Dad was the next to see us. We must have looked like urchins walking out of a great fire...on an old Persian island, in a modern Christian school. He rubbed his face and cried too, then took my hand and gripped it tightly... He was asked to leave and take us with him. That was the end of the debt plan. Mum wouldn't talk about it, but she was kind. Dad wouldn't talk about it and bought me a laughing Buddha from the Souq. We packed over a week, had our last supper in Dairy Queen and took a budget flight home. I felt guilty for stealing Isa's grief for his cousin...wherever he was. I felt Isa's quiet, philosophical healing was ruined by me.

SCENE 19. Isa's letter.

ISA: (VO) 1st August, 2000.

Dear Robin, It has been four years and it has been school corridors, exams and burial mounds. I grew up. I think I'm probably taller than you. The new Emir will be in power soon and he will quieten things down with gifts and freedoms. He'll start a speech which begins 'I am a leader educated in Cambridge and America, admire my brand. (This letter will be read. You know what I mean.) We need to remember that we know something else. And not turn into lots of invisible versions of him. I've been thinking about entitlement a lot. What can we expect when we hit eighteen? You will go to university and so will I. My cousin, Mohammed, is working as an Oud teacher at the school now. He was thin after eighteen months in prison. His wife was so grateful to have him, she hasn't stopped feeding him since. Do you have an email address? We all have one now. When the IT suite was opened by his highness, they put on a mini show of 'Grease, The Musical.' I have no idea why. Another reason I am writing is - I will go to the LSE in September. I will live with my mother. She's excited. There's a weird kind of optimism here and maybe I can learn something useful to bring back? Khalil (the guy with the toy knives) is volunteering at the society for the prevention of animal cruelty. I hope you are laughing. At least forty men have been killed by the government since you left. I hope that they are the last. I hope that we can be friends and that you have plans for the millennium. I hope you didn't think I hated you. I hated you for ten minutes. I think I was scared that I could forgive you. If Eden is a place where we go to fight snakes, maybe we were both there.

Yours sincerely,

Isa.

END