

SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

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Samuel French Acting Edition

Cardboard Piano

by Hansol Jung



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CARDBOARD PIANO was developed during a residency at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center's National Playwrights Conference in 2015 (Preston Whiteway, Executive Director; Wendy C. Goldberg, Artistic Director).

CARDBOARD PIANO was first produced by the Humana Festival of New American Plays, Actors Theatre of Louisville at the Victor Jory Theatre on March 27, 2016. The performance was directed by Leigh Silverman, with sets by William Boles, costumes by Kaye Voyce, lighting by Keith Parham, sound by M.L. Dogg, original music and composition by Jason Webb, and dramaturgy by Hannah Rae Montgomery. The production stage manager was Jason Pacella. The cast was as follows:

CHRIS Briana Pozner
ADIEL Nike Kadri
PIKA Jamar Williams
SOLDIER Michael Luwoye
PAUL Michael Luwoye
RUTH Nike Kadri
FRANCIS Jamar Williams

CHARACTERS

PART I

CHRIS (sixteen) – a child in love

ADIEL (sixteen) – a child in love

PIKA (thirteen) – a child soldier

SOLDIER – a soldier

PART II

CHRIS (thirty) – a visitor

PAUL (twenty-seven) – a pastor, Soldier from Part I

RUTH (twenty-nine) – a pastor's wife, Adiel from Part I

FRANCIS (twenty-two) – a local kid, Pika from Part I

SETTING

A township in Northern Uganda

TIME

Part I: New Year's Eve, 1999

Part II: A Wedding Anniversary, 2014

AUTHOR'S NOTES

- a cut-off either by self or other
- / a point where another character might cut in
- ¶ a switch of thought
- [] things that aren't spoken in words
- , at end of a line marks an interruption of thought by another character, not necessarily a line cut-off

***LUO* TRANSLATIONS**

<i>jal – le</i>	I surrender
<i>apwoyo matek</i>	Thank you very much
<i>mzungu</i>	(light-skinned) foreigner
<i>Polo</i>	Heaven
<i>Jesu</i>	Jesus
<i>woko ki ii bal</i>	out of sin
<i>Aye tiyo tic pa lala</i>	I decide to walk with God
<i>ii kwo wa ii to</i>	until I die

PART I

(Night.)

*(A church – not one of stone and stained glass,
more a small town hall dressed up to be a church.
There's a hole in the roof of the church.)*

(Two men, two women.)

*(In separate spaces, they sing together, simple a
capella that might blow up into something bigger
and scarier.)*

ALL.

JUST AS I AM, WITHOUT ONE PLEA*,
BUT THAT THY BLOOD WAS SHED FOR ME,
AND THAT THOU BIDST ME COME TO THEE,
O LAMB OF GOD, I COME, I COME

JUST AS I AM, THOUGH TOSSED ABOUT
WITH MANY A CONFLICT, MANY A DOUBT,
FIGHTINGS AND FEARS WITHIN, WITHOUT,
O LAMB OF GOD, I COME, I COME

JUST AS I AM, THY LOVE UNKNOWN
HATH BROKEN EVERY BARRIER DOWN;
NOW, TO BE THINE, YEA, THINE ALONE,
O LAMB OF GOD, I COME, I COME

JUST AS I AM, OF THAT FREE LOVE
THE BREADTH, LENGTH DEPTH, AND HEIGHT TO PROVE,
HERE FOR A SEASON, THEN ABOVE,
O LAMB OF –

(Rain. Loud. Pours through the hole in the roof.)

* Hymn 313, Words by Charlotte Elliott, Music by William B. Bradbury.

(Pews, chair, cushions arranged to create a hollow in the middle of the church.)

(ADIEL, age sixteen, is asleep in the middle of the hollow, strewn with wild flower petals.)

(CHRIS, age sixteen, slips in, big suitcase in tow.)

(She hides the suitcase somewhere in the shadows. She tiptoes around the chairs and benches to lean into ADIEL's sleeping ear.)

(Whispers.)

CHRIS. The end of the world is near.

(ADIEL starts.)

ADIEL. Hm?!

CHRIS. Hi.

ADIEL. Where am, what,

CHRIS. It's me, just me.

ADIEL. For heaven's sake Chris. You frightened me. What is the time. You are very late.

CHRIS. Had to wait till the folks fell asleep.

ADIEL. Your parents?

(CHRIS finds party blower.)

CHRIS. Blowers!

ADIEL. Why are they still here?

CHRIS. Blue one's mine!

ADIEL. What about the party? What happened?

CHRIS. Nothing. They didn't wanna go, I guess.

ADIEL. So your parents are still in the house?

CHRIS. It's fine. They went to bed. Said they wanna be up in time to see the ball fall in New York.

Miss me?

ADIEL. I saw you just three hours ago.

CHRIS. We didn't know if the world was gonna end, three hours ago.

ADIEL. It did not.

(CHRIS blows on blower: yay!)

Shh!

CHRIS. Happy New Year.

ADIEL. Happy New Year. You'll wake them up.

(Blow.)

Chris it is not funny –

(Blow.)

Come now give it to me.

CHRIS. Make me.

(Blow.)

ADIEL. Haw this is a challenge now?

(ADIEL jumps CHRIS, misses.)

CHRIS. Prepare for battle!

(Battle trumpets blowblowblow.)

Upon my honor I shall never surrender!

(Blooouoooooooooooooooooooooooooooo –)

(Blowing stops because ADIEL kisses her.)

I surrender.

(Kiss.)

How do you say I surrender in Luo?

ADIEL. *Jal – le.*

CHRIS. *Jal – le.*

ADIEL. I am very sexy when you speak my language.

CHRIS. I am sexy.

ADIEL. You too?

CHRIS. No, I am sexy, to you. Sexy is a thing I am, that makes You want to get into My pants.

ADIEL. Why are we turning this into English lesson?

CHRIS. I am very sexy when you speak my language wrong.

ADIEL. So both ways we are very sexy.

CHRIS. Okay.

*(Hands in pants, hairs undone, shirts flung off,
skirts riding up –)*

(Thunder and lightning.)

CHRIS. Woah.

(CHRIS bolts upright like a meerkat.)

ADIEL. What is the matter?

CHRIS. Think he's mad at us?

ADIEL. Who?

CHRIS. I'd be mad if people came to my house at night,
mess it up, have sex all over my cushions in front of a
picture of me hanging naked on a tree –

(ADIEL kisses CHRIS.)

ADIEL. I think he is thrilled we included him.

CHRIS. We didn't.

ADIEL. Well I did and I think he is saying congratulations
on your big day!

(Thunder.)

(Meerkat.)

He is happy for us! He is giving us extra fireworks. He is
saying Happy happy wedding day!

CHRIS. Fuck around in my house of worship and I'll throw
a bolt in your head. Is what he's saying.

ADIEL. Ag he did not bring us together to throw a bolt in
our heads.

CHRIS. Yeh. Well. We won't know till we know will we?

ADIEL. Chris. What is the matter?

CHRIS. Nothing. Just, thunderstorms. I don't like them.

(Re: church.) This, is beautiful. When did you have the
time to set all this up?

ADIEL. You were late.

CHRIS. Candles...flowers...a, Oreos?

ADIEL. Ah that one is a gift. From Francis.

CHRIS. Francis? The guy who's crushing on you?

ADIEL. No, that is Philip. Francis is my cousin. The one who is crushing on You.

CHRIS. You brought me a cookie from your competition.

ADIEL. The competition is eight years old and he really wanted you to have this one. I am not worried. Very soon you belong only to me.

(ADIEL holds out her palms.)

CHRIS. What?

ADIEL. The rings?

CHRIS. Oh. Um.

ADIEL. What?

CHRIS. ...

ADIEL. Ag Chris, that was the one thing you were in charge of.

CHRIS. I'm sorry. My parents, found them and, took them.

ADIEL. Your parents? Why?

CHRIS. Because. For safekeeping. They're paranoid, since the news up north. The whole town's so paranoid, it's contagious. Can't wait to get out of this place where we can live like normal people.

ADIEL. This place is my home.

CHRIS. It doesn't always have to be.

ADIEL. Christina I do not want to argue about that right now.

CHRIS. Don't call me Christina.

I wanted everything to be perfect too. I wanted rings.
Champagne. Sunlight.

ADIEL. We have candlelight. And here a ring. For now.

*(The strip of aluminum from the bottle cap –
ADIEL twists it into a pretty ring.)*

CHRIS. I knew this boy back home. He'd always play with wires, bend them into goats – sometimes other things but mostly goats, he loved goats – goat tribes, goat battle scenes, little goat armies lined up and at attention. He had no friends and was bullied a lot but then one of

ADIEL. Number one, you must say this, with your name in there, and then I say the same, with My name not yours of course.

CHRIS. Wow. You are not joking around.

ADIEL. I never joke. Number two, You do the ring and say this part. Unless you want to be the bride, then I do the ring to you, and I say this part.

CHRIS. Wait, where'd you get this stuff from?

ADIEL. From our pastor.

(CHRIS takes a pen to ADIEL's vow papers.)

CHRIS. Okay, strike "lawful," strike "according to God's holy ordinance," / and strike the second part of this whole section –

ADIEL. AH! What are you doing, you are ruining the vow papers!

CHRIS. – we are not endowing anything in the name of the father the son or the holy ghost. Because they don't care. Amen should go too.

ADIEL. We must do the whole vow.

CHRIS. No we don't. It's our wedding we can do whatever we want.

ADIEL. Well that is not what I want.

(ADIEL clicks "rec" button on the tape recorder.)

This is the wedding of Christina Jennifer Englewood and Adiel Nakalinzi. January 1st, year 2000.

(She gestures to CHRIS: "Go ahead, begin the vows.")

CHRIS. What? Oh okay, me first. I, Chris Blank, take thee,

(ADIEL hits stop.)

ADIEL. What are you doing.

CHRIS. I'm gonna find another name. I've disowned my parents.

ADIEL. What does that mean? Shoo, you are making this impossible,

You have to have whole name, say I, Christina Jennifer Engelwood. Start again.

(Rewind. Rec.)

ADIEL. This is the wedding of Christina Jennifer Englewood and Adiel Nakalinzi. January 1st, year 2000.

CHRIS. I, Chris Blank, take thee, Adiel Nakalinzi, to be my wife, ugh, that's such a dumb word.

(ADIEL hits stop.)

ADIEL. Chris!

(CHRIS takes the recorder. Rec.)

CHRIS. To be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse for richer for poorer in sickness and in health to love and to cherish till death do us part, according to, I don't know, according to this dimly lit candle's holy ordinance, and thereto I give thee my troth. What's a troth? Sounds slimy.

ADIEL. I, Adiel Nakalinzi, take thee, Christina Jennifer Englewood,

CHRIS. Chris Blank

ADIEL. Christina Jennifer Englewood, to be my lawful wedded husband, to have and –

(CHRIS hits stop.)

CHRIS. Stop right there, I refuse to be a husband in this life or the next, do over.

ADIEL. What, we have two wives then? That is a house of widows.

CHRIS. I don't care, make it work, not gonna be a husband.
Ew.

ADIEL. A sad grieving house of sad sad widows.

(Sad face.)

CHRIS. Ugh.

(ADIEL hits rec.)

ADIEL. I, Adiel Nakalinzi, take thee, Christina Jennifer Englewood, to be my lawful wedded Husband,

(CHRIS leans into mic on recorder.)

CHRIS. Ugh.

ADIEL. – to have and to hold from this day, forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God’s holy ordinance; and thereto I plight thee my troth.

CHRIS. With this ring I thee wed, with my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow.

ADIEL. In the name of.

CHRIS. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

ADIEL. Amen. Now I may kiss the husband.

(Kiss. With all the nerves and rituals of the Newlyweds’ First Kiss.)

Now we must dance.

CHRIS. No. We must not.

*(ADIEL begins to sing “Unchained Melody”** by The Righteous Brothers. CHRIS laughs out loud at the song choice, but soon surrenders to ADIEL’s insistence.)*

CHRIS. Seriously?

ADIEL. Yes.

(ADIEL continues to sing, pulling CHRIS into the performance.)

(They dance together, like people in love, soaking in the cheese and tender, all of it.)

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(Just as they're about to reach the end of the second verse, a noise.)

(!!)

(Scuffling of feet on dirt, random shouts, coming from outside.)

CHRIS. What's the time?

ADIEL. After midnight at the very least.

CHRIS. It must be people getting out from the party. Blow them out, the candles!

(Silence.)

(Then doors opening, slamming, feet shuffling on dirt, whispered sounds.)

ADIEL. Did you lock the door?

CHRIS. I'm getting it now

(Bang, gunshots. CHRIS and ADIEL duck.)

Jesus!

ADIEL. Chris!

CHRIS. It's alright I'm fine are you? Are you okay?

ADIEL. Get over here, get over here right now!

CHRIS. I know, okay I'm [gonna lock the door first].

(Door opens, PIKA leaps in, grabs CHRIS, hand over mouth.)

PIKA. Shh!

(Points bloody gun toward ADIEL, then to CHRIS' head.)

(Motions to CHRIS to lock the door. She does.)

(More footsteps, pad pad pad past the door, and away.)

(Wait wait.)

(Wait wait.)

(Wait wait.)

(PIKA leans against a wall, exhausted, out of breath, faints.)

(CHRIS leaps back away from him. ADIEL leaps forward toward CHRIS.)

ADIEL. Are you okay.

CHRIS. Mm. [yes]

ADIEL. Did he hurt you? Any –

CHRIS. Mm-mm. [no]

ADIEL. Okay good okay. Hold on.

(Checks pulse. Breath.)

CHRIS. Is he [dead]?

ADIEL. He's okay.

(CHRIS looks for a rope-type thing.)

(ADIEL pries gun from PIKA, wipes the blood off.

CHRIS has found a rope-type thing, gives it to ADIEL.)

What?

CHRIS. For [tying him up].

(ADIEL hands gun to CHRIS while she ties up PIKA.)

ADIEL. Okay.

CHRIS. Okay.

ADIEL. Sit there take a breath / and I will go bring your parents.

CHRIS. Okay.

My –

ADIEL. You said they were still here, right? They did not go to New Year Party.

CHRIS. No.

ADIEL. So I will bring them down.

CHRIS. You can't. You can't bring them. You can't wake them up.

ADIEL. Chris we must. That child is hurt.

CHRIS. You can't.

ADIEL. He cannot do anything to us now, I promise.

CHRIS. No it's not that.

ADIEL. What is it then?

CHRIS. You can't call them.

ADIEL. We need a grown up, Christina. That child needs help.

CHRIS. That child tried to kill me.

ADIEL. He was only asking for help. He –

CHRIS. He tried to kill me.

ADIEL. He is a rebel soldier, he is hurt. He needs bandage, doctor, do you understand Christina, if we do not wake up your parents that boy might die while we watch.

CHRIS. We can't.

ADIEL. I will not argue about this

CHRIS. No we seriously can't, they won't wake up. They won't wake up, Adiel, I –
I drugged them.

ADIEL. What?

CHRIS. Sleeping pills. In the tea, not very much just, two more than what they usually take,

ADIEL. You did what?!

CHRIS. I needed the car keys. He sleeps with them Velcroed in his pockets, I didn't know how else to –

ADIEL. Every time? Every time we met, you were poisoning our pastor?

CHRIS. It's not poison! And of course not every time, just tonight, I needed the keys, time to pack and –
Look, I think there's a first aid kit in the office,

ADIEL. Pack?

CHRIS. We have to leave tonight. I have everything we need here, in this bag,

I meant to tell you as soon as –, but you were so cute and happy and the vows and song, I didn't want to ruin, I wanted to get through the –

ADIEL. What are you saying?

CHRIS. Escape.

ADIEL. Escape.

CHRIS. We have to escape. This this place, this prison of –

ADIEL. We are in a church Chris.

CHRIS. I mean metaphorically.

ADIEL. So, escape metaphorically?

CHRIS. No that part is real. The prison is metaphor, the escape is real.

ADIEL. You are muddling my brain, there's a boy bleeding over here,

CHRIS. We'll fix it. We can fix it, we'll find the first aid kit, fix the guy who tried to kill me, then we'll get in the car drive to the check point –

ADIEL. Get in the car and drive to the – you can hardly find the way to the bus stop, how –

CHRIS. We'll figure it out!

ADIEL. Why?!

CHRIS. They know. My parents. They know.

ADIEL. About –

CHRIS. Us.

ADIEL. Ha.

CHRIS. Yep.

ADIEL. How?

CHRIS. The rings. I had our names written on the inside, as a surprise for you,
She asked about – so I told.

ADIEL. And?

CHRIS. They didn't.

ADIEL. Of course not! Why did you / do this, this this –

CHRIS. It's not safe, not safe here anymore, I couldn't just / leave, didn't know if –

ADIEL. Without even one word / to me, did you,

CHRIS. I thought they might take you too, if I, for us, oh come / on, Adiel,

ADIEL. My auntie is going to have me killed. Killed, Christina, did you even think about that what it means

to me if the people here find out do you know what that means for me?

CHRIS. It won't mean anything, because we are going to live in Tunisia.

ADIEL. Tunisia?

CHRIS. We'll patch up the kid, pack up the car, and drive past the checkpoint, you can hide in the trunk till we get to the border –

ADIEL. You, are the missionary pastor's daughter!

Missionary pastor's daughters do not do this way, poison their parents and then run away to –

CHRIS. They're leaving. Moving boxes, plane tickets, really leaving Adiel. With me.

I had to tell them, they are these people who are supposed to love me the most in the world

I thought maybe they would, understand, thought they'd –

But it went wrong, okay, it just went wrong and –

ADIEL. So we must go to Tunisia?

CHRIS. Adiel if we are gonna do this, each other is all we're gonna have left, we have to put everything on the line.

I mean EVERYTHING. I have to put my God on the altar, you have to put your country on the altar, and say, none of these things matter more to us than each other, each other is our everything, for each other we are willing to burn them destroy them / to to to give them up –

ADIEL. Chris you are not making any sense,

CHRIS. Whatever "them" is for either of us. You know that game, that game where they ask you, if you were stranded on an island, and you get to take just the one thing, what would you take? Except it's not a game, we are stranded on an island, we are all stranded on an island on our own, and we get to choose one thing just the one thing that we will carry with us always.

My parents chose God your parents chose country and look what happened to them! Mine are forced to box

up their house and dreams in a weekend, yours are dead.

I can't do that, I can't be stranded on an island on my own, I Choose You. But it only works if you choose me too.

ADIEL. So you poisoned them?

CHRIS. Adiel!

ADIEL. This is too much Chris.

CHRIS. They were making me leave you.

ADIEL. We had a plan, we were getting married –

CHRIS. That's not a real plan! What's the point of getting married when I'm eight thousand miles away –

(PIKA comes to, finds his bearings, discovers bondage. Frantic, he tries to grab his pocket knife to undo bondage. Girls lunge away from him.)

Get in, get in, back of the,

PIKA. Let me go.

ADIEL. We are here to help.

CHRIS. Adiel!

PIKA. You tied me up.

ADIEL. You were being difficult at first. Look. Medicine.
For you.

PIKA. Stay there. Let me see inside the box first.

ADIEL. See, just bandages and ice packs.

CHRIS. I say we go inside the office and lock the door.

ADIEL. You do that if you want to.

PIKA. They cut off my ear.

ADIEL. Yes, I know.

CHRIS. Adiel this is not safe.

ADIEL. You are bleeding. We can help you stop the blood.
Can I come closer? We can help you.

(PIKA lowers the blade.)

Can you put that down please?

(PIKA puts the blade down. Close, though.)

Thank you. I am Adiel. What is your name?

PIKA. Pika.

ADIEL. Okay Pika, let us sit you up, can you lean your head this way, good. You must not lie down, okay?

(ADIEL unties him.)

CHRIS. Adiel what are you insane?

ADIEL. You poison your parents and I am insane?

CHRIS. This is a bad idea. Worse than my Tunisia idea, in fact, we won't have to go to Tunisia, because we will be dead anyway.

ADIEL. Come here.

CHRIS. Dead!

ADIEL. Chris I need your help, come here.

CHRIS. Dead.

ADIEL. Stop saying dead and keep this rag on his head. You must apply pressure, we cannot do anything until he stops bleeding.

We cannot go to Tunisia until he stops bleeding.

(CHRIS reluctantly goes to ADIEL and the boy.)

(Takes over the rags.)

CHRIS. Oh god oh Jesus this is oh wow.

ADIEL. You can put more pressure, you must be firm.

CHRIS. How do you know all this.

ADIEL. In my country, you have to learn to do more than just make pretty things.

CHRIS. That's why I'm saying, we should go to Tunisia. Where are you going!

ADIEL. To get water!

CHRIS. Come back here. Come back here! Adiel, get back here right –

(She's gone.)

(Silence.)

Let's just, get this...

(CHRIS pushes the blade away kinda sorta subtly,
PIKA is rigid.)

No, I'm not gonna, I just wanted to,

(The blade is out of easy reach.)

I'm Chris.

PIKA. Yes.

CHRIS. What happened? Your [gestures, ear], I mean you don't have to say if you don't want to –

PIKA. I tried to run away and then he catch me and then I run away again.

CHRIS. Does it hurt?

Do you want something? Lemonade?

Or, Oreo?

(PIKA stares at the Oreo for a bit before taking it.)

(He eats the Oreo in silence.)

PIKA. There is a hole in the roof.

CHRIS. Yep.

PIKA. What happened?

CHRIS. Don't know. We woke up one morning and there was this dead bird on the pews, and a hole in the roof above it. I like it, kinda like a skylight. Lets the breeze in, and you can see the stars in the night,

(ADIEL's back with a bucket of water.)

ADIEL. How are we doing?

CHRIS. Great.

(She checks beneath the rag.)

ADIEL. Little bit longer.

(ADIEL preps the bandages, alcohol swabs.)

PIKA. I like it too. The people in this church can pray, see God directly, and pray.

ADIEL. Hm?

CHRIS. The hole. He likes the hole in our roof.

ADIEL. Do you like to pray?

PIKA. The Commander, he makes us pray very very much.
In the morning, in the night, the other children, they
are not so committed. I am committed. But I want to
look at the sky when I am talking to God. Not to close
my eyes, or bow my head like the Commander wants.

CHRIS. What do you pray about?

ADIEL. You can let go now.

*(CHRIS lets go. ADIEL wets the rag, cleans the clots
of blood around his lobbed-off ear.)*

PIKA. My soul.

CHRIS. Your soul?

PIKA. I pray for my soul. I have done many bad things.

ADIEL. Now this will hurt a little, hold on to Chris if you
want to.

(He does.)

*(Alcohol swabs. Dab dab, while blowing gently,
wince wince.)*

Good boy, almost finished. Good boy.

PIKA. I am not a good boy.

ADIEL. No? Chris can you help me cut this tape.

CHRIS. Yeah. Of course.

PIKA. In the bush, I dream, my soul is shrinking, like a little
raisin, tiny like one rain,
and it disappears away into the ocean. God does not
hear me in this ocean. I do not hear Him.

ADIEL. Well you are not in the bush, you are not in the
ocean, you are here with us, in our church. And He is
very happy you are here, Pika.

PIKA. No. I am lost. I am surrounded by bad souls and I
cannot breathe cannot remember who I am and now
I am also bad soul. I am a very bad soul and cannot
remember how to pray I cannot remember His voice
I cannot remember how to talk to him. I am a terrible
bad soul and so He has forgotten about me. He has
forgotten.

(PIKA cries, and cries. Cries like a thirteen-year-old boy cries when he is very scared.)

(He cries, and cries.)

CHRIS. Pika how old are you?

PIKA. Thirteen.

CHRIS. Okay, so when I was a kid, even younger than you, I had this thing about a piano. Obsession.

One day, my dad's like, Chris, I got a surprise for you, I'm like, IT'S A PIANO. He reaches behind and gives me, well, he's cut out a cereal box, and built a small piano out of the cardboard.

He plays, singing the notes he's playing, like,
"doon doon doon doon doon doon doon doon,"

what do I do? I snatch it, tear it all up.

Soon as I did it I knew I did something bad, because the look on his face was –

And I watch him pick up the pieces, go to his office, close the door.

I'm thinking, he's gone. He hates me. He'll forget me and find another daughter in my place,

Finally I can't take it anymore so I go knock on his door, crying Daddy I'm sorry.

Door opens, and you know what I see? The piano.

He's been in there this whole time, putting the piano back together.

He goes, "doon doon doon doon doon doon doon doon," and while I'm crying snot and tears, he lifts me onto his lap, says, "Chris, this is all we have, for now. It's small and fragile, so easy to break.

But look, I fixed it.

Every time we break something, it's okay, long as we fix it. And I did. So it's okay."

(The boy has stopped crying.)

PIKA. That is the most bad thing that you did?

CHRIS. Ha. No. I wish.

PIKA. I do not know how to fix my soul.

CHRIS. Maybe someone else is fixing it, you just can't see yet.

(CHRIS finds a blanket or throw, wraps it around the boy.)

(ADIEL activates an ice pack and places it on his wound.)

ADIEL. Here, this is cold, press it to your bandages, yes like that. The blood is not completely stopped, so you must not lie down yet, alright?

PIKA. Thank you.

(ADIEL waits for PIKA to settle, and then takes CHRIS aside.)

ADIEL. If we go, you might never see your father again.

CHRIS. I know.

ADIEL. You might never be able to fix it, with either of them.

CHRIS. I know.

ADIEL. Once we leave, we cannot return. We cannot undo what we are about to do. Do you understand this?

CHRIS. Adiel, once I get on that plane with them I cannot come back.

ADIEL. Okay.

CHRIS. !

ADIEL. Not Tunisia. We can go down to the city. It will be easy for us to find something to do in the city. Much easier than me trying to cross the borders without a passport.

CHRIS. Great. Yes. Okay.

ADIEL. First I must go home.

CHRIS. What? No.

ADIEL. I cannot just leave,

CHRIS. I don't think it's safe to be outside right now,

ADIEL. I have to let them know that I am leaving, that I am not, Taken,

CHRIS. We could leave them a note, here?

ADIEL. My auntie will be very heartbroken, she must be allowed to be so, in private.

CHRIS. I'll come with.

ADIEL. No.

CHRIS. I don't think this is a good idea Adiel.

ADIEL. I know this town. The shadows, the paths. I'll be fine.

(CHRIS takes the gun from where it was hidden.)

CHRIS. Take this.

ADIEL. Chris –

CHRIS. Just, in case. Please be careful.

(ADIEL leaves. With gun.)

PIKA. You are leaving?

CHRIS. Yeah. Do you think she'll be okay?

PIKA. Why are you leaving? Is this a bad township?

CHRIS. No. No, it's pretty great, nice township – the men that you were running from, they've gone? You think?

PIKA. Maybe. Are you running away too?

CHRIS. Kind of.

PIKA. You do something bad?

CHRIS. No. Yes, maybe, I don't know, depends on what you decide is bad.

PIKA. I did something bad. I did many things bad. I do not want more bad things, so I run away. They catch me, but then I run away again. If they catch me again, I will be like meerkat –

(PIKA does an unexpected impression of a meerkat.)

– two big black holes at the side of the head.

CHRIS. Oh.

PIKA. You said you are going to the city.

CHRIS. Yes.

PIKA. Can I come with?

CHRIS. With us? Huh, wow, I don't know, Pika.

PIKA. If I stay in this township, or alone somewhere else, they will find me. And then I become meerkat. Or maybe they kill me. Mostly they kill second time finds.

CHRIS. Where's your home? Wouldn't it be better to go home?

PIKA. I do not remember, I was taken when I was ten. Three years ago. Even if I do find my home again, my family will not want me because I am bad.

CHRIS. Look, that's tough, but –

PIKA. If I am with other people who are family, they cannot make advance.

CHRIS. We aren't your family.

PIKA. I can help with many things. I am trained for battle I can steal foods or climb over walls and trees I can defend you and your friend Adiel. I can do many many things. If you are worried about my bad soul, I promise you I will fix it.

CHRIS. How do you fix a bad soul?

I mean, it's not about your soul, good or bad, it's just, we don't know each other, we can't just start living together. Maybe if you stay here, talk to my dad in the morning, he might help you out, but maybe not, our pastor won't be in such a soul fixing mood after his only child runs away.

PIKA. Your dad is the pastor?

CHRIS. Yup.

PIKA. Why are you running away? All your problems can be solved here.

CHRIS. Yeah, no. Look, I don't know how God or pastors do it, but I know how the real world does it.

PIKA. Do what?

CHRIS. Fix your soul.

PIKA. The real world has powers to fix the soul?

CHRIS. Sure.

PIKA. Who is the real world?

CHRIS. You know, countries, governments, people. In South Africa, they had a truth and reconciliation committee, they made it international, everyone could tap in on the hearings. It was super successful and nearly everyone's souls were fixed. The president won the Nobel Peace Prize for it.

PIKA. How is it done? Do you know how to do it?

CHRIS. Sure. It's not that hard. It's just some people listening to other people after a time of, bad things, and then, for the criminals – deciding whether or not to forgive, for the victims – deciding how to rehabilitate, restore, make better. They also decided who were the criminals who were the victims.

PIKA. Who has the power to decide?

CHRIS. The people.

PIKA. There is just two of us.

CHRIS. So I will be the people. And we can put your hearing on tape, and if we find more people, they can weigh in.

PIKA. I don't understand why you have the power.

CHRIS. Me neither, but it seemed to have worked for them, it's worth a shot? I mean, I am the pastor's kid so maybe I can gather forces from the real world and the God world.

PIKA. I did many bad things.

CHRIS. Here, put your right hand on this bible.

PIKA. More bad than breaking a piano.

CHRIS. Come on, can't hurt to try?

(He does.)

(CHRIS hits rec.)

CHRIS. Do you, Pika the ex-soldier, solemnly swear to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you God.

PIKA. Okay.

CHRIS. It is January 1st, year 2000, we are gathered here today for the public hearing of ex-soldier Pika, who has applied for absolution from the bad things of his past. My name is Christina Jennifer Englewood and I will be representing the people. Pika, tell us what you have done.

PIKA. Everything?

CHRIS. Everything.

PIKA. I cannot remember everything. It is very very long list.

CHRIS. Then pick one of the worst.

PIKA. I do not want to tell. You would not like me. You would not want to take me with you.

CHRIS. Pika we're doing this so we might be able to.

PIKA. Okay.

CHRIS. Go on.

PIKA. There was a man, he was a soldier of the army too. He was high ranks, he ate with the Commander but he was discovered, of helping girls escape the army. The man was tied up to a tree. The Commander called some names, and each soldier whose name was called must come and cut a piece of the man off with the machete while the man was still alive. When My name was called, there was not very much left to cut off so the Commander order me to cut off the head. I did. It was not easy because I was still new and did not have strength with machete. And then after I cut off the head the Commander order me to throw the head in the air and catch it three times, like this, like this, like this. And then kick it like a soccer ball like this. Then we sing the song,

Polo polo yesu olara, eh.

Yesu olara woko ki ii bal

Aye tiyo tic pa lala ii kwo wa ii to.

His head roll on to the road, that is where we left it.

CHRIS. Wow.

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