Acting Edition

ONE WAY OUT

by Montel Douglas

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SAMUEL FRENCH

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ONE WAY OUT received the 2023 Untapped Award and was produced by NO TABLE Productions and New Diorama Theatre at the Edinburgh Fringe on 3 August 2023. The production was directed by Montel Douglas. The assistant director was Emily Olum and the creative producer was Nora Lempriere. The cast was as follows:

DEVONTE . . . . . Shem Hamilton
SALIM . . . . . Adam Seridji
TUNDE . . . . . Marcus Omoro
PAUL . . . . . Sam Pote

ONE WAY OUT was produced by NO TABLE Productions and New Diorama Theatre at Brixton House on 18 June 2025. The production was directed by Montel Douglas. The assistant director was Emily Olum and the creative producer was Nora Lempriere, lighting design by Jahmiko Marshall, sound design by Francesca Amewudah-Rivers, projection design by Gisela Mulindwa, production management by Corey Bovell, movement direction by Yemurai Zvaraya. The Stage Manager was Sy Supersad. The cast was as follows:

DEVONTE . . . . . Joshua-Alexander Williams
SALIM . . . . . Adam Seridji
TUNDE . . . . . David Alade
PAUL . . . . . Joe Deighton

CHARACTERS

DEVONTE – Eighteen, leader, black, Jamaican, confident, charismatic, impulsive, emotionally complex, loyal. Playing age sixteen to nineteen.

SALIM – Eighteen, Muslim, North African or South Asian, Joker, emotional, easily influenced, idealistic, expressive. Playing age sixteen to nineteen.

Actor must be from a Muslim background. Please adapt text based on actor's casted ethnicity.

TUNDE – Seventeen, black, Nigerian, Devonte's best friend, intelligent, cautious, sincere, ambitious, introverted. Playing age sixteen to nineteen.

PAUL – Eighteen, Cockney, English, funny, laid back, emotionally intelligent, dreamer, underachiever, nurturing. Playing age sixteen to nineteen.

SETTING

St Thomas Cathedral Sixth Form College
Adventure Youth Club

TIME

The play is set in present day South London.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

A dash (–) is used to indicate an interruption and a slash (/) denotes an overlap in dialogue.

Dialogue side by side is to be spoken at the same time.

Pauses and silences are important but are not fixed. Each pause and silence should be considered at that moment. However, more often than not, a silence should be longer than a pause.

A swooshing sound should be used to indicate a new day.

migrant
noun
a person who moves from one place to another, especially in order to find work or better living conditions.

immigrant
noun
a person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country.

MONTEL'S WORDS

One Way Out was born from a place close to home. Like many families, mine is layered and complex, full of love, tension, humour, and hardship. I spent my early years as a fly on the wall, quietly watching, always thinking, "One day, I'm going to write a play about you lot." Lockdown stripped away all acting opportunities, and I found myself creatively stuck, until I watched Daniel Kaluuya accept his Oscar for *Judas and the Black Messiah*. When he said, "Do the work," something shifted. Maybe because Daniel reminds me of the mandem, it resonated in a way nothing else had. The next day, I took a notebook to the park, sat under a tree, and tried to write. I had nothing. Then I remembered the golden rule: write what you know. That's when my cousin Dominique came to mind.

Dominique came to the UK in 2002 from Clarendon, Jamaica. She was nine. My mum, her aunt, welcomed her into our family. At first, we clashed, I couldn't understand her thick Jamaican accent and we'd argue like siblings. But that's exactly what she became: my big sister. We played, danced to MTV Base, watched Disney Channel, and did everything together. She built a life here, went to secondary school, college, and dreamed of becoming a nurse. But when she was nineteen, everything changed. She told me she had a dream that she was back in Jamaica, a dream that would soon become reality. A letter arrived. Her immigration status was under question. Despite desperate efforts to find documents, prove her life here, and fight for her right to stay, Dominique was deported.

I lost a sister that day.

Her story lit a fire in me. I started researching the systemic issues that allow so many people from the diaspora to fall through the cracks; people who, like Dominique, grew up here, built lives here, yet are told they don't belong. The more I learned about immigration policies, the Hostile Environment, and how these stories repeat across the UK, the more I knew this play had to exist.

One Way Out is for those who feel unseen and unheard, who are treated like paperwork instead of people. It's a love letter to the bonds we form, the systems we endure, and the futures that get stolen in silence. It's for the Dominique I grew up with and for every person who's ever been told they don't belong in the only home they've ever known.

It's for the people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all who have supported me and helped make this project come to life.

Myself and NO TABLE would like to thank:

Theatre Peckham, Southwark Playhouse, Emily Aboud, Romario Simpson, Malcolm Atrobrah, Raj Digva, Daniel Carlin, Suzann Mclean, Toby Clarke, Tyrell Williams, Nathaniel Alphonso Brown, Talawa Theatre, David Gilbert, Sikisa Bostwick-Barnes, Esme Allman, Michelle Matherson, David Byrne, Streatham Space Project, Blue Elephant Theatre, Vagina Museum, Soho Theatre, Lakesha Arie-Angelo, Underbelly, Pleasance, New Diorama Theatre, Nouveau Riche, Sarah Jordan Verghese, Ryan Calais Cameron

and a special thank you to Mark Oliver (who played Leroy in Theatre Peckham's production of *One Way Out*).

In loving memory of Keith Mckay
who passed away from kidney failure.
1956–2022

This play is dedicated to my wonderful cousin
Dominique 'Berta' Cameron,
who in 2012 was deported to Clarendon, Jamaica, aged nineteen,
after living in the UK for ten years.

"Cuz, to tell yuh the truth, mi could only see one way out."

FOREWORD

In the heart of South London,
where youth clubs once buzzed with laughter,
four boys move like family.

Devonte, Tunde, Salim, and Paul.
Not by blood, but by bond.

In a place where youth clubs fade and towers rise,
The mandem move through summer with hope in their eyes.

Jamaica-born or South London-raised,
their bond holds tight for most of their days.

Police reports, parties, prayer, and patties.
Through dreams and detentions.

They dream of something more
uni, love, legacy, escape.

But when the systems around them don't see the full story,
who's there to pick up the weight?
To right the wrongs?

When friendship is the only thing still holding,
they begin to ask
What does it mean to belong?
To stay? To survive?

Is home only the place that knows your name?
Or the land that holds your paperwork claim?
Back ah Yard.
London.
A postcode we don't own.

So here's to the ones who hold you tight,
who see you whole when you're forced to fight.
When the system turns its face and your whole life's on the line
who can you lean on?

As for their actions, they need to be taken into account.
But to tell you the truth...
there was only *One Way Out*.

ACT ONE

Detention

(January.)

(Four boys were previously play fighting on their lunch break, and an amalgamation of ties, hoodies, and sweaty teens tussled through the space and a playful push resulted in a broken window in the sixth form building. The tannoy makes an announcement. All four **BOYS** *have been called into the headteacher's office separately to discuss what happened and decide their appropriate punishments.)*

(Four chairs face down the stage. Seated left to right, **PAUL**, **TUNDE**, **DEVONTE**, *and* **SALIM**.*)*

DEVONTE. What do you mean I'm not going to amount to anything, Miss?

SALIM. A-levels? Why are we talking about my A-levels?

TUNDE. They are my friends, Miss. I can't just leave them.

PAUL. Joint enterprise. Are you wearing a new perfume?

DEVONTE. My attitude stinks?

SALIM. I didn't do it.

TUNDE. It's clear to see that I had nothing to do with this.

PAUL. Smells nice.

DEVONTE. Stinks? And you're the one saying I ain't gonna achieve anything.

*(***DEVONTE** *kisses his teeth.)*

PAUL. Lemme guess, Yves Saint Laurent perfume mon Paris.

*(***PAUL** *blows a kiss.)*

SALIM. I ain't snitching. Those are my boys.

DEVONTE. Na, miss you're violating.

PAUL. I couldn't possibly be the one to cause a scene. I mean, look at me. *(Cheeky smile.)*

DEVONTE. I didn't even touch him.

SALIM. Nope, didn't see who did it.

DEVONTE. I'm not telling you who it was.

TUNDE. I didn't break the window. It was…

PAUL. Just a push.

PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE & SALIM. CCTV?

DEVONTE. *Kmt.* You ain't got no evidence

SALIM. Come on, Miss, we were just mucking around.

Just a few little scruffles.

None of us are even hurt.

TUNDE. There wasn't a substantial amount of force.

DEVONTE. Can't you see I'm the one in pain?

PAUL. More like a gentle nudge.

SALIM. Well, we were all involved, yeah.

TUNDE. I'm sorry, it was very irresponsible of me.

DEVONTE. Agh, this is long!

SALIM. Miss, I think you need to release some tension because you're taking the P. I. DOUBLE –

DEVONTE. Excuse me, did you say Police?

TUNDE. JESUS!!

DEVONTE. What crime did we commit?

PAUL. Let's not waste anyone's time.

TUNDE. Feds? I mean Metropolitan Police?

PAUL. No need to get the pigs involved.

SALIM. Pigs. Astaghfirullah!!

TUNDE. I tried to calm everyone down.

PAUL. Can we come to some sort of agreement?

DEVONTE. Suspended!! For what!

SALIM. Detention!!

PAUL. Scot-free?!

TUNDE. Two thousand word essay, but Miss, I didn't do anything. I was just a bystander. I promise I'm not lying. Please. I've got so much on right now and just, just re-think this essay. Essay? Yes, of course.

DEVONTE. No, I won't calm down

PAUL. See I knew you were my favourite teacher.

SALIM. Is your life so boring that you wanna spend more time with kids? ...two weeks ah no thank you.

PAUL. Okay, sorry Miss. It won't happen again

DEVONTE. You've always had something against me.

SALIM. I don't think this is fair.

TUNDE. I'm really really sorry, please don't tell my parents.

SALIM. Alright Alright. Detention it is then.

DEVONTE. But it was Tun – to – too much force, it was an accident I get it.

PAUL. Once again sorry for the inconvenience.

DEVONTE. Cool. It is what it is.

TUNDE. May I go now?

(End of discussion with the teacher. Sixth form Corridors, Lunchtime. **PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE** *and* **SALIM** *are walking.)*

PAUL. Phew! We got out of that one lads.

SALIM. Who's 'we'? I got detention all next week.

PAUL. Soz yeah!

TUNDE. You guys didn't say anything did you?

SALIM. Course not.

PAUL. I just said what she wanted to hear.

TUNDE. What about you Devonte?

DEVONTE. I got suspended.

TUNDE, SALIM & PAUL. Suspended!!

SALIM. Rah. How come?

PAUL. You're kidding.

TUNDE. I just got told to do a two thousand word essay. That's all.

DEVONTE. Well clearly Miss Wilson wants you to work on your strengths. And mine is not in this place.

SALIM. D, come on man, don't say things like that.

DEVONTE. Agh my mum's gonna kill me.

SALIM. We'll tell Aunty Barbara that Miss Wilson was lying.

DEVONTE. She said there was evidence that I started it.

TUNDE. But it was me.

DEVONTE. Exactly.

SALIM. Hold up, how can she get both of you mixed up. You look nothing alike. That's a bit rac/-racist

TUNDE & DEVONTE. /Is this guy for real?

PAUL. Salim, I think what Miss was trying to get at is, to her it doesn't matter who did it. We didn't take responsibility for it.

DEVONTE. One person getting suspended isn't owning up to responsibility, is it?

TUNDE. Just say it as it is.

PAUL. It's because you're black…your black AIR FORCES. You're wearing black Air Forces.

DEVONTE. I can't deal with you sometimes.

SALIM. Hang on a minute, how do I get a week's worth of detention and he gets an essay?

TUNDE. Do you wanna do an essay?

SALIM. Certainly not but –

TUNDE. Right then. D. How long are you gone for then?

DEVONTE. Two weeks.

TUNDE, SALIM & PAUL. Two weeks!

TUNDE. Devonte, Sorry about that man. We didn't mean for you to get in trouble. Just got to stick to the goal you know.

TUNDE & DEVONTE. Something in a suit.

DEVONTE. I get it, it's cool. That teacher was out to get me, ever since me and Salim locked that OFSTED inspector in the lunch hall with a broom.

SALIM. They were screaming "let me out let me out" ah Good times.

*(***DEVONTE** *and* **SALIM** *spud.)*

DEVONTE. I guess it's Karma init. What goes around…

SALIM. Comes back around.

*(***PAUL** *starts singing a song in the style of Justin Timberlake.*[*]*)*

DEVONTE & SALIM. Wahgwarn for my man!

(Both laugh.)

*(***PAUL** *stops.)*

TUNDE. I just didn't want to get in trouble with my parents, that's all. Mum's been stressing bare recently, got a new job as a nurse, constantly working overtime & hardly ever around anymore. If I stay out of trouble, Mum and Dad are finally letting me have a birthday party.

*(***PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE** *and* **SALIM** *react.)*

PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE & SALIM. Ayyeeeeee!

TUNDE. This gonna be THE party of the summer mandem, the big eighteenth, right before I head off to uni. We got Jollof rice, pounded yam, Suya, chicken wings, and a Nigerian Fanta with no ice.

(The **PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE** *and* **SALIM** *sing the first two lines of a song by J Hus.* [*]*)*

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PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE & SALIM. *(Singing J Hus – Friendly.)* "Ayyye posted on the block like a low life, I like my Fanta with NO ICE!!"

(They all laugh.)

TUNDE. I'm not tryna ruin my chances.

SALIM. You mean your chances with Michaela?

(They laugh.)

TUNDE. Shut up Salim, who doesn't like Michaela?

DEVONTE & PAUL. True!!!

SALIM. Not me bro,

PAUL. Yeah, that cos you can't get any girls.

(They all laugh.)

SALIM. Shut up I'm not you, you know!

TUNDE. Alright name me the last girl you spoke to?

(The **PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE** *and* **SALIM** *are waiting...)*

SALIM. Erm... Aisha!

TUNDE, PAUL & DEVONTE. AISHA!

TUNDE. The bengali girl that's always studying in the Library?

SALIM. Yeah.

PAUL. Since when?

SALIM. Since never. It's not like that.

DEVONTE. Man like Salim you know. Smooth criminal.

PAUL. Dark horse he is.

*(***SALIM** *gets serious.)*

SALIM. It's not like that. We just talk. She's smart and tells me more about the Quran. And I like that.

PAUL. Yeah but ain't your family already Muslim.

SALIM. Yeah, but my uncle is always patronising me. With Aisha she just tells it how it is.

TUNDE, PAUL & DEVONTE. Awww! AISHA

*(***TUNDE, PAUL & DEVONTE** *tease* **SALIM**.*)*

SALIM. Yeah Yeah Yeah, enough with all that lovey dovey stuff. The real question is… who's even going to your party?

*(***SALIM** *runs off laughing.)*

*(***DEVONTE** *puts his arm around* **TUNDE**.*)*

DEVONTE. Don't worry bro, I'll make sure the whole college comes to your party.

(They do their special handshake and embrace.)

TUNDE. It's cool, I've already handed out flyers.

*(***TUNDE** *smiles.* **DEVONTE** *drops his head in defeat.)*

PAUL. Well, I got somewhere that would make us all happy?

TUNDE. Where?

PAUL. YOUTH CLUB!!!!

TUNDE, DEVONTE & SALIM. *(They agree.)* YOUTH CLUB!!!!

(Soundscape of overlapping police radio chatter, digital tones, and flickering projection lights. A large digital screen illuminates

center stage, displaying a stylised police report. Names appear one by one in bold, monochrome lettering, each accompanied by a soft, echoing chime:)

(One by one, names appear in stark, monochrome text – each with a cold mechanical chime:)

"Babatunde Adebayo"

"Salim Ghezzal"

"Paul Joseph Robinson"

A pause. Then – a louder chime.

"Devonte Troy Miller"

(His name glows red, flickering. It stays on screen while the others fade out. A new digital overlay scrolls in:)

Adventure Youth Club

(Lights up.)

(A warm, lived-in energy fills the room. The faint echo of a football video game menu music hums from a corner. The green snooker table sits centre stage, already set with scattered balls from a half finished game. A fold-out table near the entrance holds a single sign-in sheet, surrounded by marker pens tied to strings. Soft drinks, old flyers, and leftover patties rest on a side table. This is home base – beat-up, reliable, and full of spirit.)*

(The doors burst open. One by one, the **BOYS** *enter – each with energy, rhythm, and their own personal signing-in motif.)*

PAUL. A bit of pool lads?

DEVONTE. First on!

PAUL. Gotta play the champ, to be first on.

SALIM. Ah no patties left.

TUNDE. Nah man Michalea ate the last Beef one. Only Vegetable left.

SALIM. Devonte, I still can't believe your mum chefs it up for the youth club. That's so sick!

PAUL. Yeah – way cooler than your Uncle Abdul's off-licence.

SALIM. *(Snaps.)* Oi!

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PAUL & TUNDE. *(Singing together.)*

CALL 020 7946 1123 – YOU KNOW WHERE WE BE!

LENTILS, OILS AND MEAT – ABDUL HALAL MART CAN'T BE BEAT! ABDUL HALAL MART CAN'T BE BEAT!

SALIM. Bun you man. At least I got a job. How can you mock me…for employment?

*(**PAUL** sets up for his next shot, it goes in.)*

TUNDE. You're the Halal Mart ambassador now?

*(**PAUL** sets up for his next shot. He waits.)*

Oi take the shot man.

PAUL. I've got my process.

*(**PAUL** takes his shot.)*

DEVONTE. You man allow him! Even mum shops there.

SALIM. Exactly!

DEVONTE. Mum just helps out. Sorts food for events, stocks the kitchen sometimes – Reminder Mum's curry goat?

TUNDE. Sensational.

PAUL. Proper Caribbean heat. Burned my mouth last time. Would do it again.

TUNDE. Speaking of – how's Aunty Barbara?

DEVONTE. She's still not great. Doctors put her on this new dialysis treatment.

PAUL. *(Pauses mid-game.)* Sorry to hear that, D. What's dialysis?

SALIM. Wait, you comforted my man – and didn't even know what it was?

*(**SALIM** bursts into hysterics.)*

PAUL. I didn't wanna ruin the moment! Swear down, Salim, you can be so insensitive sometimes.

TUNDE. Kidney failure. Aunty Barbara's got kidney failure They've put her on a dialysis machine to help her treatment.

PAUL. Oh…thanks, Tunde.

*(***TUNDE** *and* **PAUL** *fist bump.* **PAUL** *finally takes his shot – sinks it clean.)*

(Smug.) And that's how you clear a red, mandem.

SALIM. Show-off.

TUNDE. Good shot

PAUL. D, if there's anything you need, we got you bro.

DEVONTE. Love, mandem. It's cool, though. Mum just makes me and my little sister carry all the cardboard boxes to the recycling bin. I swear the neighbours must think I'm an Amazon delivery driver.

TUNDE. Logistics Manager by force!!

SALIM. My uncle said if you need anything – plasters, paracetamol, even magazines – it's on the house.

DEVONTE. Appreciate it, mandem.

PAUL. And Ricky there's for you as well you know…

DEVONTE. *(Jumps in.)* My guy Ricky!!!

SALIM. Ricky is such a cool guy.

DEVONTE. *(Half serious.)* When I grow up, I wanna be respected like Ricky.

TUNDE. Respect from seventeen/eighteen-year-old boys?

PAUL, DEVONTE & SALIM. Shut up, Tunde!

TUNDE. Just saying you man are sounding like youngers on the ends/ Have some aspirations.

DEVONTE. Nah but real talk – Ricky lets us run FIFA for like fifteen minutes extra. Man's always like "Goaaaaaaaallllll!" when you score.

PAUL. He'll order pizza for everyone and actually ask what toppings you want. Pepperoni and extra mushrooms.

SALIM. He's the guy that'll sit down and help you plan uni options. "Durham? You think so?"

TUNDE. I don't sound like that!

DEVONTE, SALIM & PAUL. Ricky is that guy.

TUNDE. Whatever. Bet I still beat you all on FIFA.

DEVONTE. Fifa, Tunde lying is sin, let not do that.

TUNDE. Come then!

DEVONTE. Lemme just win this game of pool real quick, watch this.

(Silence.)

*(***DEVONTE** *attempt to hit the white ball, but it's the black one instead, loses the game.)*

PAUL. Mate, Your meant to pot the black ball last…

*(***PAUL, TUNDE** *and* **SALIM** *laugh at* **DEVONTE**.*)*

DEVONTE. I'm getting smoked out here.

TUNDE. *(Lining up a shot.)* Grab a pad…

PAUL. Three-nil whitewash, bro.

DEVONTE. Bet! Loser buys Morley's.

PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE & SALIM. *(In unison.)* Say less!

(They burst into laughter, overlapping voices and jokes flying as the snooker balls click and scatter across the table. Underneath the jokes, a clear sense of brotherhood. Music hums

under their joy. They're loud. Competitive. Together. A regular day. But they know it won't last forever.)*

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Adventure Youth Club 2

(May. **PAUL** *and* **TUNDE** *are revising and* **SALIM** *and* **DEVONTE** *are playing table tennis, in the youth club.)*

SALIM. Oi, that was a lucky shot!

DEVONTE. Lucky? Nah fam, that's precision.

SALIM. *(Swings, misses.)* Ahhh, man – I grazed my knee on that lunge, bruv!

TUNDE. Man said "grazed his knee" – like it's rugby. You're playing table tennis, not doing parkour!

DEVONTE. Aye mandem, what's college saying?

PAUL. Ah this is boring, how am I supposed to know what the *sin* formula is.

SALIM. I don't know why you thought you could handle A-level maths.

PAUL. I dunno, I thought numbers yeah that would be easy. What's your excuse for that though?

Seven–three looking long.

SALIM. Allow it. I ain't even warmed up yet.

PAUL. Why are there so many letters? I mean, who even needs to use trigo trignong–

TUNDE. Trigonometry?

DEVONTE. Architects, construction workers and cartographers. Them man all use the Pythagorean theorem, to aid the construction of stable buildings and bridges, init.

*(***PAUL** *and* **TUNDE** *are surprised at* **DEVONTE***'s response.* **SALIM** *doesn't even respond with a serve.)*

(Pause.)

DEVONTE. What? You lot didn't know that?

SALIM. Are we all going to ignore the bfact that Tunde's words came out of Devonte's mouth.

DEVONTE. Shut up Salim. I'm not stupid you know.

TUNDE. Impressive.

SALIM. What do you know about holding a bat like this, huh?

*(***SALIM** *grips it with flair, mimics pro stance.)*

DEVONTE. What? Man's holding it like he's about to butter toast.

TUNDE. Man's got the continental grip – continental breakfast more like.

DEVONTE. Probably serves it at Abdul Halal Mart

*(***PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE** *and* **SALIM** *laugh.)*

PAUL. Ermmm… What's a cartographer?

SALIM. Someone who creates cartoons. You eediat!!

*(***DEVONTE** *drops his head in defeat.)*

DEVONTE. No, Salim. It's someone who produces maps.

TUNDE. With this knowledge, I don't know why you haven't applied for university yet.

DEVONTE. Uni? Do you think after that suspension any university would take me? Your serve *(To* **SALIM***.)*.

TUNDE. Come on D, You know it was an accident. I'm serious, you'll be able to maximise your potential.

DEVONTE. It's cool. Anyways, I can't just pack up and leave my mum to go to another side of the country, can I?

TUNDE. But what about <u>your</u> future? We ain't going to be young forever you know.

DEVONTE. The truth is none of us can predict the future no matter how hard we try.

PAUL. Actually, I'm trying out this new trick, which can predict which card you have. I think that's pretty psychic if you ask me.

SALIM. *(To* **PAUL**.*)* Not now.

TUNDE. They'll want your mind, not your record.

DEVONTE. And that's game! Eleven–six, thank you very much.

SALIM. Rematch!

DEVONTE. I'm done, retired as the champ.

TUNDE. D, I'm being serious

DEVONTE. I just don't know yet, man. I've been thinking… law maybe or something with young people. Helping them get through.

SALIM. Like Ricky?

*(***TUNDE** *laughs.)*

DEVONTE. So Ricky is funny to you lot?

(Beat.)

You lot ever really clock how Ricky moves?

He's not just a youth worker, he's like a mirror.

Shows you your potential even when you can't see it yourself.

Not like Miss Wilson.

He helps you become someone you thought only existed in your head.

Paul, who gave you your first deck of cards?

PAUL. Ricky.

DEVONTE. Salim, who showed you Steven Bartlett?

SALIM. Ricky.

DEVONTE. Tunde, who wrote your UCAS reference?

TUNDE. We get your point.

DEVONTE. Exactly. If I could do that – help someone make it through, show a kid who's doubting themselves that there's more waiting…

That's change. That's purpose.

That's someone I wanna be.

TUNDE. But why aim for others to reach their potential… when you've got your own to aspire for?

DEVONTE. Because not everyone gets the same starting line, Tunde.

PAUL. That's deep.

(Pause.)

SALIM. What about you T? What do you wanna be?

TUNDE. Something in a suit, I guess. I know that would make my parents proud, for sure.

SALIM. Every day…

PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE & SALIM. Something is a suit,

TUNDE. An accountant would be good. And you?

SALIM. I want to be a franchise owner of many local off-licenses.

PAUL. Ain't your family kinda like that already.

SALIM. Well yeah. My uncle owns his shop. But imagine owning five or ten or even a hundred across the city. I would be rolling in the money. I could buy a car, a mansion, a yacht, get bare gyal, you name it.

But when I bring this up to my uncle he's always like "Salim greed is not a good trait to have." How is that greed? When the white man owns about seven or eight properties on the same road, no one calls him greedy.

PAUL. I don't own any/

SALIM. /They come in with their high rent charges, newly furnished apartments that, let's be real, none of us can live in.

Boy! don't get me started on their fancy independent coffee shops. Come on now, we don't need three of them on the same road./

TUNDE. /I just want a pattie bro

PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE & SALIM. PREACH!!

SALIM. So the next time my uncle decides to school me again, I'm going to tell him that.

That its not greed.

It's ambition.

It's legacy.

That's me doing something for my people.

PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE & SALIM. Brapppp!!!

SALIM. And don't get it twisted – I know where my boundaries are.

I'm not about rinse and repeat just to flex.

I'm learning. Reading more with Aisha

*(***DEVONTE**, **TUNDE** *and* **PAUL** *share a look.)*

Trying to get closer to my deen, you get me?

Aisha, She's teaching me things I don't know, What's that verse in the Quran?

PAUL. I dunno

*(**SALIM** is trying to recall a verse from the Qur'an.)*

SALIM. Don't steal other peoples's p's... I dunno. *("*And do not consume one another's wealth unjustly...*"* – Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:188.)

it still sticks with me. Because I'm not tryna exploit.

I'm tryna *expand* – without forgetting who I am. If I can create jobs, give back to the ends, keep it local, keep it halal – then tell me what's wrong with that?

*(**PAUL, TUNDE** and **DEVONTE** do siren noises to celebrate **SALIM**'s words.)*

TUNDE. Well said Salim.

PAUL. Are we allowed to have an eighteen-year-old prime minister, because I'm not really trusting this Keir Starmer guy in power.

PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE & SALIM. Keir gotta get outta here!

*(**PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE** and **SALIM** laugh.)*

(Beat.)

PAUL. Seeing as you man are willing to help the community, are you willing to help a friend with their maths homework?

DEVONTE. *(Smiles.)* You're a wasteman you know that, *(Beat.)* give it here.

Adventure Youth Club 3

*(**DEVONTE**, **SALIM**, **PAUL**, and **TUNDE** are each spaced across the room. Lo-fi beats hum faintly from a Bluetooth speaker in the corner.*)*

*(**PAUL** sits cross-legged on the floor, a worn deck of playing cards spread in front of him. He fumbles with a card trick, muttering to himself.)*

PAUL. Well, I don't wanna go to uni. I been thinking, My dream is to be a magician.

*(**SALIM** laugh.)*

SALIM. I'd advise you don't quit your day job.

PAUL. Haha very funny. Don't have one.

DEVONTE. Magician? You being serious?

*(**SALIM** checks bulletin board.)*

SALIM. *(To Paul.)* Oi Justin Timberlake, you could do ballroom dancing as well. It says they've got a class here every Thursday night.

(They laugh hysterically again.)

PAUL. Shut up Salim. Watch me. I'm gonna be a bad boy magician.

(Attempts to do a trick and fails.)

*(**TUNDE** enters with two bags of party items.)*

TUNDE. Guys, I leave you for two minutes

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*(**DEVONTE** and **SALIM** put there hands up in surrender.)*

PAUL. Ah yeah, alright watch this.

*(**PAUL** takes the stage and present a magic trick with cards. He fails again.)*

TUNDE. You see, People have no shame.

PAUL. Hang on if I give it a little shake.

*(**PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE** and **SALIM** go wild as they can't believe it was a success. They are baffled.)*

SALIM. OOOOHHHH MYYYY DAYYYYYYYYSSSSSSS!!! NAAAAAAA HOW DID YOU DO THAT?

DEVONTE. Can't lie that was sick still.

TUNDE. That can't be real, there must be something behind it.

*(**TUNDE** puts his hands in the sign of a crucifix.)*

SALIM. Course it's real bruv, it's magic!!

PAUL. Told yah.

*(Pause. **DEVONTE** wanders to the noticeboard. He stops.)*

*(Noticing **DEVONTE** drift.)* What's up, bro? You ain't feeling the magic?

DEVONTE. *(Quietly.)* ...Yo. Look.

(They gather. A formal typed notice reads:)

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Due to the successful appraisal of the local redevelopment in partnership with Berkeley

Homes, Adventure Youth Club will permanently close at the end of the Summer Term (August 30th). We extend our heartfelt thanks to the community for their continued support over the years. For local referrals or transition support, please speak to Management or Ricardo – alr.

(Beat. The room goes quiet.)

SALIM. Wait…for real?

TUNDE. It's shutting down?

PAUL. How can they just…close it?

TUNDE. Guess it makes sense. Gentrification's coming for everyone.

SALIM. Nah man…at least we've got your birthday coming up, Tunde. Gotta do that big.

TUNDE. Yeah.

(Silence.)

SALIM. Agh, cheer up lads,what are we saying, game of FIFA, to lighten the mood a bit?

PAUL. I just… so where are we gonna go next?

TUNDE. Nowhere. That's it, time to enter the real world.

SALIM. We still got all summer to enjoy ourselves, let's not dwell on it.

DEVONTE. *(Quietly, like he's remembering aloud.)* You lot know this was the first place that ever made me feel welcome?

Clarendon, Jamaica to London.

Brown school uniform swapped for Kickers and a blazer.

Bag juice for a 39p KA.

New school. Cold weather. Everything different.

Teachers talked too fast.

Kids moved mad sharp – like they were born knowing things I didn't.
My accent was thick. Real thick.
Didn't say much. Didn't need to.
But here? Adventure Youth Club – this was different.
First day, Aunty Barbara handed me chicken and rice.
No forms. No judgement. Just food.
And a smile that said: *"Bwoy, you're safe here."*

I know they brought me for better. "Come to England. Focus. Become something."

But I just wanted to Kick ball. Feel free –

So this became home.
The mandem became my tribe.
And here, I felt like a kid again.

You grow fast here. And you learn fast – so when I say this place means everything…
I mean it.
It gave me back my voice.
Let me laugh again.
Even if the world out there still don't see me…
You lot did.

(Beat. He nods slowly, grounded in memory. The space breathes with him.)

TUNDE. Rah, Youth Club man,

(The energy lifts, but the weight of what he said lingers.)

SALIM. Oi, you man! let's just celebrate the time we have here and on the final day., I'll bring drinks from the shop.

Paul you can even do a magic performance,

PAUL. What bigger than dynamo?

SALIM. More electrifying than David Blaine!

PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE & SALIM. OUUUU!!

TUNDE. Legendary!

SALIM. And we can say goodbye to this place properly, how does that sound?

PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE & SALIM. Yeaaaahh!

*(**PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE** and **SALIM** go to exit!)*

PAUL. I didn't even know you were born in Jamaica.

DEVONTE. You didn't need to know.

PAUL. So how come you don't have an accent?

DEVONTE. *(Slips into Patois.)* Bikaaz unnuh people dem wouldn't bi able tuh undastan mi.

PAUL. Rassclart! *(Beat, switches back.)* Sorry...my yute.

DEVONTE. Oi.

*(He chases **PAUL** playfully.)*

TUNDE. On that note, this calls for a game of pounds. Lardi

DEVONTE. *(Ceremonially.)* Lardi one.

PAUL. *(With dramatic flair not knowing what hes saying.)* Lardi two.

SALIM. Ah Man!

*(**PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE** and **SALIM** are gathered around a low bench or floor space marked out for Pound Up. All present there pound coins, small piles of coin clinks as they sort their 'arsenal'. **DEVONTE** and **TUNDE** squat down like pros. **PAUL** looks unsure but excited.)*

Tunde's 18th Birthday party

(Dancehall and Afrobeats fill the hall. Banners, balloons, flashing lights. It's not a nightclub, but it's patterned with love. A 'HAPPY 18TH TUNDE' banner hangs above a sticky table of snacks.)*

*(***SALIM** *enters first, holding two big bottles of Fanta, no ice. He's proud.)*

SALIM. Boom! Drinks delivered. Man like me, patterned it proper.

*(***PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE** *and* **SALIM** *react with surprise.)*

DEVONTE. Fanta? Bruv...

TUNDE. Wait – where's the rum, the Red Stripe, the Magnum...something?

DEVONTE. Not even a likkle Smirnoff Ice?

SALIM. *(Scoffs.)* You lot think I'm a corner shop? Alcohol is Haram, fam.

DEVONTE. *(Half-joking.)* Aight, Imam Salim, say less.

SALIM. Nah but real talk Uncle Abdul would disown me. He said if I ever even touched a bottle at a party, he'd show up mid-dancefloor and start doing khutbah in front of the DJ booth.

TUNDE. *(Sighs, flops down.)* So I'm eighteen...and man's sipping Fanta?

DEVONTE. You look cold though...

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TUNDE. Nah, but everyone at college's gonna think I'm a neek!

This was meant to be my moment. Grown now. Man can vote, go out, even get taxed if I liked – at least let me drink Henny (Hennessey) in peace.

SALIM. You sound like them uncles on Peckham High Street!

TUNDE. Shut up, Salim!

(Enter **PAUL**, *holding a plastic bag like it's treasure.)*

PAUL. Ollie Ollie Ollie?

(No response. He frowns.)

Why's everyone acting like the party's over?

TUNDE. No drinks, no vibes, no nothing.

PAUL. Well lucky for you, I came prepared.

*(***PAUL** *pulls out a bottle of vodka like a magic trick.)*

Brought some from home. Well…technically from my dad's stash. He's gonna moan anyway – "What you drinking for, like you pay bills?"

SALIM. *(Laughing.)* Your dad sounds like every uncle ever.

PAUL. Man's not even an uncle – just grumpy by default.

TUNDE. Shoutout Papa Paul though. Came in clutch.

DEVONTE. *(To* **PAUL**, *impressed.)* You legend.

PAUL. You know me. One-man supply chain.

PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE & SALIM. Happy Birthday, Tunde!!!

TUNDE. Love, mandem.

(They crack the cans open. **SALIM** *sips his*

Fanta with exaggerated pride.)

SALIM. At least mine's ice cold. You lot drinking room temp bitterness.

*(***DEVONTE** *sips, winces.* **TUNDE** *downs his.)*

Paul, you not having one?

PAUL. *(Shrugs.)* Nah, I'm good. Let the birthday boy enjoy it. Besides – someone's gotta remember how mad this night gets.

(He watches them laugh and drink – quietly proud.)

(A UK Drill/British Hip Hop track plays.[*]*)*

TUNDE. Ayeeee! This is my tuneee!

*(***TUNDE** *jumps centre stage, lip-syncing with full commitment.* **PAUL** *and* **SALIM** *whip out their phones and shine torch lights – instant rap cypher aesthetic.)*

Boys point gunfingers into the direction of Tunde's Mum. *(Cypher ends abruptly.* **PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE** *and* **SALIM** *are buzzing.)*

Oi!! my mum, my mum my mum.

PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE & SALIM. Sorry Aunty! you look good, Sorry.

(Afrobeats kick in.)

TUNDE. What you know about this one?

SALIM. Oi this is sick, watch me nuh.

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(He attempts to dance. **PAUL** *laughs.)*

PAUL. What are you doing, mate? Me? I got the moves. I can whine mi waist and bubble to the beat. Oi Birthday boy T... Tunde!

*(***TUNDE***, drunk, dances wildly.)*

TUNDE. P money!!!!

PAUL. He's off his head, he is. *(To* **SALIM***.)* T. Who's a better dancer – me or Salim?

*(***TUNDE** *doesn't answer, deep in his own rhythm.* **PAUL** *taps him.)*

Tunde!

TUNDE. GBESE!!!

*(***TUNDE** *attempts a Yoruba dance move and falls flat.* **SALIM** *bursts out laughing.)*

PAUL. Look at you, you plonker. Come here.

(He helps **TUNDE** *up and puts an arm around him.)*

TUNDE. Paul I got you my bro!! Listen I swear, the next Dynamo bro, you're gonna go far bro, that trick you hold man. I wish I could be like you. Mum is too strict. You know being first born... I've got a set an example and my dad...

(They all help **TUNDE** *over to a chair and sit him down to rest.)*

(Music lowers, energy softens.)

PAUL. This is what friendship's about, man. Connection. We fit like pieces of a puzzle. It's magic.

SALIM. Wow, that's brought tears to my eyes.I feel like Tunde after that fall.

TUNDE & PAUL. Shut up, Salim!

DEVONTE. *(Smiling, looking around.)* Oi you man – I don't know why we're in here when there's bare girls in the other room asking for the birthday boy still.

PAUL. Swear?

TUNDE. For me, yeah?

*(***TUNDE** *tries to get up.* **PAUL** *bolt off like a kid at Sports Day.)*

DEVONTE. I'm playing! *(Laughs.)*

*(***DEVONTE** *steps forward. Everyone quiets slightly.)*

You lot are actual clowns.

(To **TUNDE***, sincere.)* Happy birthday, T.

(A small pause. Everyone listens.)

You're one of the realest guys I know. And I don't say that lightly. Thanks for always seeing potential in me. I see greatness in you, bro. Keep doing your ting.

"Something in a suit – soon come." And maybe I will apply for uni. Who knows – Durham, Oxford… be each other's wingmen in them uni parties.

(He holds out his hand. They do a chaotic but well-practised signature handshake, ending in a hug.)

TUNDE. Love you too, bro.

*(***TUNDE** *burps in* **DEVONTE***'s face. They all laugh.)*

DEVONTE. Rest up, so we can enjoy the rest of your party.

SALIM. This is beautiful, man. I'm tearing up.

DEVONTE. You're tearing up 'cause your dance moves are painful.

(They all laugh again. Scene fades on laughter, music rising again in the background.)

(Enters **PAUL**.*)*

PAUL. Oi! Guys, guess who's here?

SALIM. Who?

DEVONTE. Who? Wait.

TUNDE. Is it...?

PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE & SALIM. MICHAELAAAAAAAA!

*(***PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE** *and* **SALIM** *get overly excited, jumping up and down like thrilled children. They embrace like they scored the winning goal in a cup final.)*

(Composure.)

*(***PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE** *and* **SALIM** *look at each other as if they know it's time to dance with a girl.)*

TUNDE. I need to make sure I provide amazing hosp. hopila. Hospital –

PAUL. Hospitality.

*(***TUNDE** *attempts to fist pump* **PAUL** *but loses balance.* **PAUL** *catches him.)*

Woah! Easy there fella.

DEVONTE. Well you and your best friend should stay here, while I attend to Michaela.

SALIM. You think she's even gonna remember you.

DEVONTE. Only time will tell. Ah she's such a Goddess, Michaela is so ridiculously peng, its...ridiculous. a Nubian Queen and I'm gonna see if I can be her Prince Charming.

*(***DEVONTE** *goes to leaves.)*

Salim... Wanna be my backup dancer?

SALIM. Alright then.

(Both leave.)

*(***PAUL** *puts* **TUNDE** *to sleep, carefully making sure he doesn't wake him up.* **PAUL** *decides to joins the party.)*

*(***DEVONTE**, **PAUL** *and* **SALIM** *are all dancing and enjoying the party. They begin to whine girls as a nineties R'n'B song begins to play.** *They all have different experiences.* **DEVONTE** *is pulled by...Michaela.)*

DEVONTE. Michaela

The finest girl in College wants to dance with me.

"I've missed you not being around. It's been such a longtime" she says.

I'm amazed because even though I know I'm good looking.

This girl never speaks to me.

Maybe it's true what they say: absence does make the heart go fonder.

In the shadows her face is so close to mine that I can smell the cocoa butter on her skin. "I don't know what it is you've done to me."

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I can't figure out just what to do, when the cause and cure is you. We dance, no we are grinding to the sweet sound of nostalgic nineties R'n'B. Michaela turns around and elegantly places her arms over my shoulders. brushes my face ever so gently like a true artist creating a masterpiece.

Her eyes begin to close.

I lick my lips to prevent them from being dry and crusty.

As our two heads close the space between them.

She kisses me.

I get so weak in the knees, I can hardly speak, I lose all control. In all honesty I had not invited this prodigy of a tongue; but we are now making out in the middle of the party, in the youth club. Oh, I love this place. I'm gonna miss this place…

"Let's get out of here" she says

My face lights up then suddenly dims as I'm trying to play it cool.

She pulls my hand, and directs us to the exit, as we weave through the moving bodies and mask ourselves from the smell of sweat and cheap alcohol.

Today, I'll leave the youth club as a Boy.

Tomorrow I'll return as a Man.

(A nineties R'n'B song begins to play.)*

*(***DEVONTE** *exits, disappearing into the night to share a moment with Michaela.)*

(Lights shift.)

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*(**DEVONTE** enters alone. He's no longer the confident boy from earlier – but there's a glow about him. His clothes are slightly rumpled. He moves with the swagger of someone who's just had a good night. A quiet grin sits on his face. He's back in his own space now – maybe his room, and reliving last night's high.)*

*(He scrolls through his phone. Snap stories from the party flicker across his face: clips of **TUNDE** dancing, **PAUL** doing a magic trick badly, Michaela winking at the camera. He laughs to himself – low, satisfied.)*

(He addresses the audience with a smirk, eyes gleaming – Yeah. I got lucky. Then – something shifts.)

(An envelope catches his eye. It's been slipped under the door or left on the table. He picks it up casually at first, still smiling, still half in last night. No rush. Could be anything.)

(But something about it – the weight, the plainness – makes him pause.)

(He frowns.)

(Curiosity creeps in.)

(He tears it open.)

The Letter

(It's a brown A5 envelope – slim, but heavy with consequence.)

(A window reveals two stark words: Home Office. No guessing, no comfort. Just folded, double-sided paper inside, still and silent the air shifts. The double-sided paper inside is folded crisply – too neatly – The ink is cold. The language, clinical.)

*(***DEVONTE** *opens the letter.)*

DEVONTE. *(Reading the letter.)* "It's recently come to our attention. We have insufficient records of your residency in this country. You have up to thirty days to provide us with documentation (passport, birth certificate) to demonstrate that you are entitled to remain in the UK. If unattainable, we may investigate further and could proceed with removal to your country of birth."

(Pause.)

(He reads it again – silently this time. Eyes narrowing. Jaw clenched.)

(We watch him shift – from the bold, cheeky boy who just kissed the girl of his dreams, to a scared young man with no ground beneath him.)

(His chest rises, sharp – breath caught in his throat.)

(He looks down at the letter, fingers curling. He almost rips it out of panic, confusion, rage but stops.)

(Beat.)

(He folds it slowly. Tucks it into his pocket.)

(He looks out at us. The party, the kiss, the laughs – all of it now feels a world away.)

(He won't tell anyone.)

(Not yet. He's going to carry this – alone.)

End of Act One

ACT TWO

Results Day

(School bell rings. Present-day, South London. August 13th, A-level/BTEC results day. A group of teens queue up to collect their results. Nervous chatter hums through the space. The air is tense. The future is sealed in brown envelopes.)

*(***TUNDE** *is nervously waiting.)*

*(***DEVONTE** *stands slightly apart, startled, staring down at an envelope – not the one from the college. His hands tremble slightly as he quickly folds the official Home Office letter and slides it into his jacket pocket before anyone notices. He tries to stay composed.)*

PAUL. Oi lads, who would have thought that us knob-heads would be getting a proper qualification.

SALIM. I'm just lucky that I made it to the end. D, how you feeling?

DEVONTE. Composed.

PAUL. Tunde… Mr brainbox.

SALIM. Oi South London's Einstein.

TUNDE. Shhh…

(Silence.)

Just have to wait patiently that's all.

PAUL. Mate, this isn't GCSEs, you will get a job in the future I promise yah!

TUNDE. It's not about that. I want to get into my first choice.

SALIM. Chill man, besides if the worst comes to the worst, you can come and work at my uncle's shop.

PAUL. No offence, Salim, but none of us wants to be stacking shelves for the rest of our lives. We all just need to relax, My dad says education isn't everything. It's about life experience, going out there in the big world, exploring.

SALIM. Easy for you to say. You aren't going to have aunties and uncles waiting at your doorstep, who have come from Edgware Road to hear the 'great news'.

PAUL. 'Great news' ha! Come to think of it, when I got my GCSE results, no one cared.

(Impersonates his dad.)

"As long as you know how to spell your name and count money, you'll be alright, son."

I'm only good at one of those things.

SALIM. What are we going to do to celebrate?

PAUL. Nandos?

SALIM. Sounds sick!

PAUL. Yeah, cheap as chips.

TUNDE. Not anymore.

*(***DEVONTE** *and* **TUNDE** *become visibly nervous.)*

*(***DEVONTE** *fidgets, checking his phone – the reporting time draws closer. He's anxious but trying to stay in the moment.* **TUNDE** *also becomes visibly nervous.)*

DEVONTE. Oi, how long is this going to take?

SALIM. Don't know why you lot are sweating it. This college isn't going to take your picture and plaster it on the wall for being an outstanding student.

TUNDE. You don't know that.

PAUL. Einstein has returned.

SALIM. You know it's true.

DEVONTE. Aye Tunde, See you on the other side, yeah?

TUNDE. See you on the other side, my brother.

(They hail each other up – solid and meaningful. As they drop hands, **DEVONTE** *lingers a second too long, then suddenly steps away from the queue. No envelope in hand. He walks toward the school exit – no goodbyes, no explanation. The others don't fully clock it yet.)*

(Beat.)

SALIM. One small step for man.

PAUL. One giant step for the mandem.

*(***PAUL** *and* **SALIM** *spud and laugh hysterically.)*

TUNDE. Shhh! I'm next.

(They all go silent.)

*(***PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE** *and* **SALIM** *step forward and collect their results simultaneously. They stare at each other, taking one large deep breath, as their future awaits them behind a brown envelope.)*

PAUL. Where's D?

SALIM. I thought he was behind you?

PAUL. Probably nervous *(Insinuating he's got an upset stomach.)*

SALIM. Guys, let's just go to Adventure Youth Club, chill out there, and when the time is right, we can open all our results.

PAUL. Yeah, Yeah.

TUNDE. Yeah nah, sorry guys. Mummy got to see these results first. Imagine, she's taken a day off, just to hear the news. Catch you man in a bit though yeah!

*(***TUNDE** *exits.)*

SALIM. Snake!!

*(***PAUL** *rips open his envelope first. His eyes scan down the page,* **TUNDE, DEVONTE** *and* **SALIM** *are intrigued to hear* **PAUL***'s results.)*

PAUL. Salim.

SALIM. Yeah.

(Pause.)

PAUL. Has your uncle got vacancies?

*(***SALIM** *laughs at first, then sees the results and comforts* **PAUL**.*)*

Time

(Croydon Home Office. Interview Room.)

*(***DEVONTE** *sits centre stage, alone under harsh fluorescent lighting. A plastic chair. A worn table. Everything else is in complete darkness around him – the world outside the spotlight doesn't exist here. He clutches the Home Office letter, trying to steady his breathing. He speaks quickly, politely – eager to be heard, but afraid to say the wrong thing. The distant, mechanical tick of a clock begins, echoing through the space – steady, unnerving. It continues throughout the scene. The Immigration Officer is never seen. Their voice cuts through the silence like a blade – a disembodied presence, 'Voice of God' from above or offstage. Throughout the interview, we see* **DEVONTE** *fidget – a foot tapping, fingers wringing – while the Immigration Officer takes unseen notes, each scribble felt in the weight of* **DEVONTE***'s responses.)*

(This isn't a conversation. It's an examination. And **DEVONTE** *is alone.)*

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Mr Devont Miller.

DEVONTE. Dee-von-tae. Yeah.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). I'm just going to call you D for short. D, How are you doing? James Wardley, Immigration officer.

*(***DEVONTE** *stands and offers a handshake.)*

Take a seat. Just got a few questions.

*(***DEVONTE** *sits. He's unsure if he should be defiant or grateful.)*

DEVONTE. Why am I here? I received this letter about there being insufficient records of my residency in this country.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Don't worry, you're not in trouble. Your information, or should I say lack of, was flagged in our database.

DEVONTE. What information?

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Let's see. It says here that your name was mentioned within a police report of a broken window in a college building.

DEVONTE. What, that wasn't me.

(Beat. Ticking continues.)

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). We just wanted to iron out a few things. So, shall we begin?

*(***DEVONTE** *nods.)*

It's August 15th five thrirty four p.m.

Could you perhaps tell me where you are from?

DEVONTE. Peckham, South London.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Where are your parents from?

DEVONTE. Jamaica.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Jamaica! Cool runnings, great film.

You weren't born in the United Kingdom. Is that correct?

DEVONTE. Correct.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Could you provide us with your Birth Certificate?

*(***DEVONTE** *is silent.)*

Mr Miller?

DEVONTE. My mum should be able to sort all of this. She just is not well at the moment.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). You're eighteen. Is that correct?

DEVONTE. Yes.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Well then, your mother won't be needed for this conversation, but I'm sure you can fill her in once we are done here.

(Pause.)

Shall we continue?

*(***DEVONTE** *nods.)*

Were you granted permission to stay in the UK?

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Permission? I've been here since I was ten years old.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). If you were born in the UK and lived here for the first ten years of your life, you would be entitled to apply to be British. But as you weren't born here, and you've only been here for eight years, that wouldn't apply to you. Would it? I would recommend looking at our government website to see if you can make a visa application.

(Beat.)

DEVONTE. Visa

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Have you been issued paperwork to confirm that you have the status to be in the UK?

DEVONTE. What are you talking about? I just finished my A-levels. I go to school here.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). But you're not from here!

(Silence, **DEVONTE** *tightens his jaw. The officer softens slightly.)*

Right D, you seem like a bright kid. You shouldn't be up in all this mess. It's not your fault.

(Beat.)

Now I'm going to ask you a few more questions, and I need you to answer them correctly.

Do you understand?

*(***DEVONTE** *nods.)*

Can you provide any paperwork to confirm that you've had status to be in the UK?

(Pause.)

DEVONTE. Paperwork?

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). National Insurance Number, NHS number; previous grant of leave letters.

DEVONTE. I've got my student ID.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). That won't be necessary.

Can you disclose the purpose of your visit?

DEVONTE. Visit? Bro. I just told you. I live here,

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). If you wish to continue giving attitude, we will terminate this interview. I'll get someone else in, and they won't be as friendly as I, alright.

*(***DEVONTE** *defuses his flame.)*

Do you have the right to work in the UK?

DEVONTE. Yeah *(Confusedly.)*

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). What's your occupation?

DEVONTE. Just finished College. My Mum wanted me to focus on my studies.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). So unemployed then.

*(**DEVONTE** shifts in his seat.)*

DEVONTE. Look, I can get all these things you need, just need some time. It shouldn't be an issue.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Okay. Mr Miller – we are going to continue to have you report to the Home Office…

(He begins writing.)

Each week, you will need to report here, in person.

Every Tuesday between ten a.m. and one p.m. Not a minute later. You are not permitted to abscond during this process. You will need to provide documented proof of your presence in this country.

*(**DEVONTE** is stunned. His breath shortens, but he holds it in.)*

We will now be taking your photograph and fingerprints for our records.

(Snapshot.)

Great. That's it for now. If we have any more questions, we'll be in touch.

Don't worry.

Everything is going to be fine.

DEVONTE. Can I go now?

(The Immigration Officer leaves.)

Fight For Your Rights

(Royal Free Hospital, North London.)

(Urology and Renal unit.)

*(**DEVONTE** is placed on a chair beside Aunty Barbara's hospital bed.)*

DEVONTE. How are you getting on, Mum?

Any update on the transplant?

Ricky and all the boys send their love.

We were laughing the other day – you know when you're looking for important documents and you always go straight under the mattress?

So I did that.

Nothing.

(Silence.)

I know you're ill, and this isn't the best time… But I don't really have time.

Mum, where's my passport?

(He stiffens. The smile fades.)

What you mean it's complicated? Why was this never sorted?

My life…my future's on the line. And you're telling me it's complicated?

I'm British. I was raised here.

On all those forms, right – what do I always tick? BLACK BRITISH.

So how come, all of a sudden, they can decide when a Black person is no longer British?

Did you even think to fix my papers?

Did you ever plan to make sure I was safe?

No – I won't calm down.

(Beat.)

Was it enough just to feed me, clothe me – make it look like I belonged?

(He pauses.)

The Home Office has only given me a few weeks to get this sorted.

And you're telling me the one thing I need to make all of this go away – I haven't got?"

So my whole life is a lie?

Mi can't believe this.

Is it 'cause I'm not your son?

Is it 'cause I'm just your sister's boy, Aunty Barbara?

I don't blame you.

You were just helping your family, right?

The goal was to get me over here.

He'd figure the rest out.

Well – I didn't.

And now it's my name on the line.

(His voice cracks. He wipes away tears – frustrated, ashamed, heartbroken.)

*(***DEVONTE** *mutters.)*

Why am I not enough?

"I just need time. Just need time."

Please, Aunty Barbara…please.

Don't let them take me.

There's gotta be a way out of this.

There's gotta be…

First Choice

(Late afternoon. The room is half-tidied, chairs stacked, posters dropping off the wall. **PAUL** *and* **SALIM** *are mid-convo by the Ping Pong table.)*

PAUL. Erm Salim, we are here now, and my grades didn't change.

SALIM. Na, yours ain't changing still.

*(***DEVONTE** *rushes in – urgent, slightly out of breath. Bag slung over one shoulder. Eyes scanning.)*

DEVONTE. Yo, is Ricky about?

PAUL. Nah, bro. He left like half an hour ago. Said he was locking up the main office. Why?

DEVONTE. You know if there's any…paperwork here? Like…registration forms or trip stuff – anything with my name on it?

SALIM. What are you looking for, D?

*(***DEVONTE***'s already moving – heading for the front desk, pulling drawers open, yanking out folders. Papers fall to the floor.)*

DEVONTE. I just need something. Anything that shows I was here.

PAUL. Bro… What's going on?

(He rifles through clipboards, some yellowed with age. His fingers tremble as he flicks faster, more frantic.)

SALIM. You applying for something? What's all this for?

DEVONTE. *(Snapping slightly.)* Does it matter? Man can't just look for his own name?

*(**PAUL** picks up a form off the ground – crumpled, old.)*

PAUL. This is from 2019. Trip to Thorpe Park.

DEVONTE. Yeah, good. Keep it.

SALIM. *(Joking to lighten the mood.)* What are you trying to do, build your own CV from scratch?

PAUL. I should be doing the same thing to be honest.

SALIM. Yeah you should,

*(**PAUL** and **SALIM** laugh.)*

*(**DEVONTE** keeps searching. Pulls out an old club newsletter. His name's not in it. His hand tightens. He gets visibly frustrated.)*

PAUL. D, you alright? You're sweating, fam.

DEVONTE. I'm fine. Just…sorting stuff.

SALIM. *(Serious now.)* You're not.

DEVONTE. It's nothing, man. Drop it.

(They exchange a look. The mood has shifted. Then –)

*(**TUNDE** bursts in, grinning like he won the lottery. Waves a paper above his head.)*

TUNDE. Yooooooooooooooooooooooo! Guess who got into their first choice?!

*(**PAUL** and **SALIM** glance at **DEVONTE**, then half-smile at **TUNDE**'s entrance. **TUNDE** doesn't clock the tension.)*

In three years' time, Babatunde Jesufikunayomi Adebayo will be the new accountant from The Peckham!

*(**TUNDE** speaks to himself 'Thank you Jesus!! ... This is my story, this is my song!!!')*

PAUL. Well done mate, proud of yah.

SALIM. Something in a suit soon come!!

(He launches into his handshake. **PAUL** *and* **SALIM** *joins in.* **DEVONTE** *stays still.)*

DEVONTE. Congrats.

TUNDE. *(Grinning, then noticing.)* What – Man can't get no love no??

DEVONTE. Just got...stuff on my mind.

TUNDE. What kind of stuff?

DEVONTE. It's personal. You wouldn't get it.

TUNDE. D, come on. We're brothers.

(Beat. **DEVONTE** *looks at him. Wants to say it. But doesn't.)*

DEVONTE. Not this time, bro.

(Silence.)

*(**DEVONTE** fills the awkwardness.)*

So when you leaving?

TUNDE. End of the month, gotta pack, do induction, buy essentials, cant forget the big tub of Jollof rice from mumzy.

SALIM. Come by the shop, I'll get uncle Abdul to sort you out.

TUNDE. Thanks bro.

*(**SALIM** clocks on to the energy in the room.)*

SALIM. This calls for a celebration, Morleys on me mandem!

*(**TUNDE** agrees. Then **PAUL** speaks up, gentle.)*

(He picks up one last sheet from the pile – barely legible, some old club rota – folds it neatly and pockets it like it means something.)

(He forces a small smile.)

DEVONTE. You man celebrate. You earned it.

TUNDE. What, you not rolling?

*(**TUNDE** watches him for a beat. Still confused. Then nods.)*

DEVONTE. I'll meet you there.

TUNDE. Alright. you know where we are, yeah?

*(**DEVONTE** nods again. But says nothing. He looks at his friends – at the warmth, the pride, the joy in their faces – and then down at the paper in his hand.)*

*(Lights dim as **DEVONTE** drifts away from them slightly – carrying the weight, silently.)*

Reporting No. 2

(A sparse interview room. One table. Two chairs. Fluorescent lighting hums above. A ticking clock **DEVONTE** *sits across, clutching a plastic wallet of loose documents.)*

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). M. Miller… Got something for me today?

(Placing the folder down, tired but holding it together.)

I'll be attending to your case today. So what have you brought?

DEVONTE. Yeah. I brought what I could. My Oyster card. My GCSE results. Some school letters…

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Hmm. No official immigration documentation? Still no birth certificate?

DEVONTE. I couldn't find them but I've got these.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). We need government-verified documentation, Mr Miller. These…they're not proof of legal residence.

DEVONTE. But this is my life! I pay Oyster fares. Look here's all your evidence. I've done everything right.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). That may be so, but school records are personal identifiers – not immigration documentation.

DEVONTE. I don't know what else to give you.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). This does confirm you sat your exams here. Within the last three years. So I have to ask – did you migrate to the UK three years ago?

DEVONTE. No. Like I said – I've been here since I was ten.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). And can you prove that?

(Pause. **DEVONTE** *says nothing. The silence hangs.)*

Hmm.

If this proceeds, you'll need formal representation.

DEVONTE. I can't afford a lawyer.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Legal Aid might be available. Have you looked into it?

DEVONTE. I wouldn't even know where to start. I've been doing all of this on my own.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). That's unfortunate. But it doesn't change the requirements.

DEVONTE. You think I want this? To come in here every week? To feel like I'm a ghost in my own postcode?

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Noted. You're due to report again next Tuesday. Between ten a.m. and one p.m.

DEVONTE. Yeah, yeah. I know.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). If you miss it – even by five minutes – it becomes a different kind of case.

DEVONTE. You already treat me like I don't belong. Not much left to change.

(Beat.)

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Try not to see this as personal. The system's slow, but it works…eventually.

DEVONTE. Yeah. Until it doesn't.

(Pause.)

Can I go now?

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). That'll be all for today.

*(**DEVONTE** stands, collects his papers. As he reaches the door, he looks back for a second – like he wants to say something. But doesn't.)*

(He exits.)

Dreams & Nightmare

(We see **DEVONTE** *in a dream state, we hear flashbacks to his days as a child. Rainbow in the sky. Children playing freely in the distance. This puts a smile on* **DEVONTE***'s face. A youthful woman calls his name "Devonte, come to me". His physical state is trying grasp on to this call, however the more he reaches the more difficult it gets. As the struggle increases the call of "DEVONTE" begins to sound urgent, opposite from the other chants.* **DEVONTE** *begins to hyperventilate as he continues to search for the call. He awakens. Out of breath, almost shaken, as if a dream turned into a nightmare.)*

Youth Club Last Day

(The final day.)

(The space is messy but buzzing – pizza boxes half open, Fanta bottles on tables, snooker balls left mid-frame, table tennis game unfinished, FIFA paused on a frozen match screen.)

(A sign reads: "ADVENTURE YOUTH CLUB 2006–2025 – THANK YOU FOR THE MEMORIES." A shirt hangs up near the kitchen with marker pens dangling off string: "SIGN ME – LAST DAY. PEACE & POWER. **SALIM** *lays out soft drinks near the wall, hands off a bottle of Fanta.* **TUNDE**, *in a fresh but slightly wrinkled tee, bounces a ping pong ball against the wall.* **SALIM** *is loading soft drinks into a plastic tub – all Fanta, no ice.* **PAUL** *adjusts his hoodie and card deck.* **DEVONTE** *scrolls on his phone, standing near the reception desk.)*

SALIM. Fanta. No ice. As it should be.

TUNDE. Old Kent Road certified. Where's your Abdul Halal Mart jingle today?

PAUL. *(Singing.)*
CALL 0207-HALAL-MART, BEST IN BREAD, STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART!

SALIM. You lot need a hobby.

TUNDE. We've got one. our final day at Youth Club. So let's play everything.

PAUL. Snooker, table tennis, FIFA, Pound Up, Uno – let's make it a championship. I even brought a fake trophy.

TUNDE. *(Laughing.)* You're too invested, bro.

TUNDE. Pounds, Lardi

PAUL. Lardi one, Yess!!

SALIM. Not playing. Its haram.

PAUL. Since when?

SALIM. Since forever, it's gambling.

PAUL. Uou've gambled before

SALIM. Look, I'm working on the five pillars right now. you wouldn't understand.

*(**PAUL** backs off.)*

TUNDE. D, man. You playing or not?

DEVONTE. *(Low.)* I can't stay. I've got to go soon.

PAUL. Again?

SALIM. Real talk, you been dodging everything lately.

PAUL. *(Snapping.)* You've been sliding out for the past three weeks, bro. And now it's the final day…and you're still disappearing?

TUNDE. This was meant to be a moment. A send-off.

DEVONTE. *(Genuinely.)* It's not about you, man.

PAUL. Then what is it? Tell us.

DEVONTE. I've got to go soon. Just checking something.

PAUL. You said you'd stay.

DEVONTE. I am staying…just not long.

TUNDE. But this *is* the send-off. Our last day here, bro. We said we'd make it count.

PAUL. *(Heated.)* Man's been halfway out the door for time. You ain't said what's really going on.

DEVONTE. It's nothing, alright?

PAUL. Don't lie. We've all clocked it. You check your phone every ten minutes, won't eat, won't play. Like you're scared to get caught enjoying yourself.

SALIM. Allow it, man.

PAUL. Nah. It's like he don't rate us anymore.

DEVONTE. I'm here, ain't I?

PAUL. Physically. But your head's not.

*(Beat… Music still playing softly.** **DEVONTE** *tries to laugh it off.)*

You laugh, but I'm being serious.

All I ever wanted was an audience –
people who see me, who back the dream.
This ain't some phase. This is real.

You ever been stuck in a life you didn't choose?
So desperate to change it, you'd do *anything* just to feel different for a second?

That's what magic is to me.
The one thing I can control.
The one thing that makes me feel seen.

I just wanted to show you this one trick.
One moment.
To prove I'm not a joke.

Dad thinks it's a waste of time.
Says magic won't pay the bills.
And maybe he's right.
But Mum…

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Mum used to love my tricks.
Every morning before school, we'd sit down together,
put on Morecambe and Wise, Tommy Cooper –
she'd laugh like it was the first time, every time.
She'd say, "Paul, one day they'll clap for *you*."
And I believed her.

Even when no one else did.

This place…this youth club…was like that too. A tradition. A second home.
You lot – you're my family.

(Begins to break.)

And now it's all disappearing. Tunde's off to uni. The doors are closing.
And I don't know where I'm supposed to go.
Where I'm supposed to *belong*.

*(***TUNDE** *and* **SALIM** *begin to comfort* **PAUL**.*)*

So D…
for once, just stop for a second. Just *watch*.
Give us your undivided attention.

Let me show you what I've got.
Because once this place is gone…
I don't know where else I'll get to be me.

(Silence.)

(They all look to **DEVONTE**, *a moment before he's just about to tell them:)*

DEVONTE. *(Mutters.)* Kmt. I gotta go

PAUL. *(Hurt.)* Forget it.

(He throws the cards down.)

*(***SALIM** *steps back.)*

*(***TUNDE** *watches* **DEVONTE** *– then finally steps into the centre of the room.)*

*(***DEVONTE** *goes to leave.)*

TUNDE. D, man. Last day – can we get you to actually stay? Try us. We've been boys since primary. I don't get it – we're trying to help you. Why don't you help yourself for a change? This ain't it.

DEVONTE. *(Snaps.)* Help myself? All I do is help people. All the time. And what do I get back? Nothing.

SALIM. Na D, stop now, man.

TUNDE. Na – let him carry on. He's always got excuses.

DEVONTE. Excuses?

TUNDE. Paul's right. Results day. You ran off and didn't even care to open –?

DEVONTE. I don't care!

*(***TUNDE** *and* **SALIM** *block his exit.)*

You man, I'm being nice – get out my way.

TUNDE. Not today. not until you apologise to us.

DEVONTE. Move out my way.

TUNDE. No, im not moving

DEVONTE. MOVE OUT MY WAY!

(Beat. **TUNDE** *doesn't move.)*

TUNDE. I see you've given up already.

*(***TUNDE** *steps aside.* **DEVONTE** *walks past.)*

If I was your mum, I'd be disappointed in you.

(Beat. **DEVONTE** *freezes. Turns.)*

DEVONTE. What did you just say?

TUNDE. I said, if –

*(***DEVONTE** *punches* **TUNDE**. *Hard.)*

*(***PAUL** *and* **SALIM** *rush in.* **SALIM** *grabs* **DEVONTE**, **PAUL** *grabs* **TUNDE**.*)*

SALIM. D – all he's saying is he wants the best for you, that's all!

DEVONTE. *(Exploding.)* SHUT UP, SALIM! Ain't you got to go to your uncle's shop or something? *(To* **TUNDE**.*)* Man gets a fancy piece of paper and suddenly they switch on you.

(They are still in a grapple. **TUNDE** *pushes* **PAUL** *off him.)*

TUNDE. You know what? Forget it. You just wanna throw your life away – go ahead.

*(***DEVONTE** *throws a chair out of frustration.)*

(He exits.)

(Silence lingers.)

Ever noticed how youth clubs look better when they're empty, anyway? Quiet. Still. Just space – This building has what, twenty-four hours left? We are the only boys still in this place.

It's ridiculous.

I can't lie, when I was younger – I needed this place.
I relied on it. Mum relied on it. Free childcare.

Cos, Mum always thought I was safe here, even if mad things were happening right outside.
Damilola Taylor, Peter Hagan, Lil Mo – he was only sixteen.

Knife incidents two roads over…
But I was inside playing patball or table tennis But now?
Come on you man, It's better that they closed Adventure Youth Club,

This place was never my home…it was somewhere you could hide.
Because outside felt dangerous.
But really and truly, it wasn't that safe in here either.

That's the thing.
Trauma's worse when it's wrapped in good intentions.
'Cause you start to think you're safe – and then your stuff gets stolen.

Remember when one of the older stole my Casio watch?
"Wagwarn little man, Ah, I beg you, let me try it on,"
I came in here smiling, left with my watch gone – and no one said a word.

Not even n Ricky could of protect us.

You lot forgetting? There were older lot…lurking.
And us younger ones, too.
All of us figuring ourselves out in these same four walls.
Some were quiet. Some were loud.
Some just needed someone to see them.

Me?
I just wanted respect – outside my house.

But I'm eighteen now. I see the bigger picture.
And suddenly…this place feels small.

Heading to Durham to study accounting.
All this work – just so I'm not seen as some statistic…
Or lucky to be here.

I want a future that doesn't begin and end at this youth club. Or my name and face on a T-shirt.

Where respect doesn't come from who you know –
But for what you built for yourself.

And I will build.
Better than this.
Better than what anyone expects.

So maybe I'm done being treated like I need saving.
I'm not looking for protection anymore.
I'm looking for power.

(Beat.)

So, you man better know what you're looking for –
Because time's running out.

*(***TUNDE** *exits.)*

(Silence.)

SALIM. I'm gone.

PAUL. Where you going?

SALIM. To see if my uncle needs help at the shop. Apparently I'm needed there.

*(***SALIM** *exits.)*

(Beat.)

*(***PAUL** *is alone in the space. He quietly moves through the room, straightening chairs, tidying tables as if restoring order to a place that once felt like home. Each gesture is small but intentional, a silent act of care. He's not just cleaning, he's honouring the space. Preparing it for goodbye.)*

*(***PAUL***'s phone rings. He checks. Answers.)*

PAUL. Ah dad…is everything alright? I only took the bottle, I swear. How many this time? Yeah. I'll pick 'em up for you.

(He hangs up. Looks at the youth club one last time.)

Salim…wait up.

*(***PAUL** *exits.)*

(Lights dim. Youth club permanently closes.)

Detained

(Croydon Home Office. Interview Room. Harsh fluorescent lights. Plastic chairs. CCTV blinks in the corner. **DEVONTE**, *sits across from a single Immigration Officer. He tries to calm his breathing, speaking quickly but politely.)*

DEVONTE. I'm sorry I'm late. The train was – Anyway. I made it.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). *(Flat.)* You were due to be here between ten a.m. and one p.m. It's now one forty six.

DEVONTE. *(Half-laughing, hopeful.)* I'm here. That's what matters, right?

(Silence.)

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Did you bring any new documentation? Letters? Updated case materials?

DEVONTE. Not yet. I've been looking. Sorry just been caught up with all of this. I just need a bit more time. Please.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). You've had time. You've had multiple reporting sessions. You were advised to provide evidence supporting your right to remain. That hasn't happened.

DEVONTE. No one ever told me I had to *declare* my stay. No one said, "Hey, when you turn eighteen, this is what you need to do." Not in school. Not at college. Not even at my GP.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). It's not our role to advise you. It's your responsibility to be aware of your immigration status.

DEVONTE. How can I be responsible for something I didn't know I had to do?

(Silence. The officer doesn't answer.)

Had someone told me, I would've sorted it. This didn't have to go this way. I'm just a kid, come on, don't you have children./ what if this was your son or brother.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). / Mr Miller – Mr Miller! At this time, you are not complying with immigration conditions. You've provided no new evidence, no application in place and quite frankly no barrier of removal from the country, and with that being said we will now transfer you over to process removal.

(Beat.)

Devonte Miller...You are being detained under Schedule 2 of the Immigration Act.

DEVONTE. ...What?

(Pause.)

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). You will be transferred to Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre in two hours. Please hand over your phone and personal belongings. You will be provided with a designated phone to inform your loved ones of the situation. Meals and basic necessities will be provided.

*(***DEVONTE** *remains frozen.)*

DEVONTE. No one knows I'm here.

(He slowly rises. Hands by his side. Eyes wide. Empty.)

End of Act Two

ACT THREE

Detained Monologue

DEVONTE. I was detained at Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre near London's Heathrow Airport. They told me –

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Everything is going to be fine.

DEVONTE. *(Dry laugh.)* Me, like an *eediat*, believe them.

(Pause.)

Was waiting to hear back from my solicitor…

When they told me they wanted to place me on a one-way flight straight back to Jamaica.

(Beat.)

Deportation. *Administrative removal*, they call it.
You're asked to leave because you've overstayed your permission to live in the UK.
It's funny, right? Our people were literally begged to come over here –
build the country into what it is now.
And all of a sudden…we need *permission* to live here?
Seventy-five years. It's been seventy-five years.

Funny how it's…seventy-five years of Windrush and seventy-five years of the NHS. I know I'm pretty good at maths, but you work it out. And of course, the government do what them always do – *have an*

inquiry. Inquiry about missing paperwork. Inquiry about individual cases.

But *whilst all of this is going on* – them same people deporting all of us, *day in, day out*.

(Beat.)

Why can't you people just leave us alone?!

(Blackout.)

Rally Up

SALIM. Wait – what? Nah. No way. Not D. You sure?

PAUL. He called you? Why would he call *you*? …How bad is it?

TUNDE. Harmondsworth? That's… That's where they send people *before they get flown out*.

SALIM. He tried to call me. I missed it. I was praying.

PAUL. He called *me* too. I thought – I thought it was just another scam number.

TUNDE. He called me too. I saw it. Let it ring.

(Silence.)

(Montage of interviews.)

The UK government is trying to deport my friend, Devonte Miller. He's been here since he was ten years old. This isn't fair.

This Saturday, we need all of you to come down to Harmondsworth Immigration Centre to protest.

It's gonna be peaceful, okay? No violence.

We need all of you to stand up and use your voices.

SALIM. He's just an eighteen-year-old boy! Yes he was suspended, but that wasn't his fault. They can't just shift him off.

PAUL. He's one of my best friends! They can't remove him

(Montage of social media posts, being sent to each other.)

Have you seen this! An eighteen-year-old teen has been threatened with deportation to Jamaica.

(Montage of gathering the community.)

SALIM. Everyone meet us at the Home Office! Three p.m.

(Crowd builds. Sound rises. The movement becomes unstoppable.)

TUNDE, SALIM & PAUL. NO TO DEPORTATIONS!!!

NO TO DEPORTATIONS!!!

NO TO DEPORTATIONS!!!

Dream Again

(Music starts. We see* **DEVONTE** *in a dream state, his current situation feels like a nightmare, his friends begin to feel like a distant figure in his memory... Music stops abruptly,* **DEVONTE** *has awakened in the detention centre. He has forgotten his environment.)*

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Justice For D

(Outside the Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre.)

*(***SALIM***,* ***PAUL****, and* ***TUNDE*** *lie on the road. Protest placards read: "Justice for D" / "Stop All Charter Flights".)*

(Other young people chant nearby. Sirens are distant but growing. The tension is rising.)

PAUL, TUNDE & SALIM. WE WANT REPARATIONS, NO TO DEPORTATIONS!

WE WANT REPARATIONS, NO TO DEPORTATIONS!

TUNDE. Guys, I really don't think we should be here.

SALIM. We're not leaving.

TUNDE. What if my mum sees this?

PAUL. Bro, relax. You already had your birthday party. I doubt your mum's gonna pre-order a beating just for protesting.

TUNDE. You don't know my mum.

SALIM. *(Firm.)* You man focus. This is serious.

PAUL. So what now?

SALIM. We stand strong and wait till the deportation enquiry for Devonte is dropped.

PAUL. Right!

(Beat.)

FREE MY BRO!

TUNDE. He's not in jail!

PAUL. Oh. Still.

SALIM. *(Sharply.)* What's the difference? *(To the crowd.)* They're still caging him, still shipping him off like cargo. Removing Black people? This country will do whatever it can to prove that it's racist. It's not policy – it's punishment.

PAUL, TUNDE, & SALIM. WE WANT REPARATIONS, NO TO DEPORTATIONS!

WE WANT REPARATIONS, NO TO DEPORTATIONS!

(Sound effects: Police sirens draw closer.)

TUNDE. *(Anxious.)* We really need to stop. We're causing a scene.

SALIM. Exactly. That's the point. WE WANT REPARATIONS, NO TO DEPORTATIONS!

TUNDE. There's got to be a better way. I spoke to my mum – she said if he applies for a Leave to Remain form, it would take some time…but she knows Devonte. Maybe it could help.

SALIM. *(Cutting in.)* It's too late for favours, Tunde. They've already taken him.

TUNDE. You know we could get arrested for public nuisance. Public nuisance is a criminal offence – This is public property!

PAUL. Nah, you don't say. WE WANT REPARATIONS, NO DEPORTATIONS!

TUNDE. I can't risk that. No uni. No future. You know I could get deported too. My mum can send me back to Nigeria too, you know.

*(***TUNDE** *starts to back away.* **PAUL** *watches, unsure.* **SALIM** *steps forward, fire building in his voice.)*

SALIM. Tunde, can you stop thinking about yourself for one second?!
Your best friend needs you. Why don't you care?

You always think uni will fix everything.
Like you can work hard enough to outrun it all.
What are you running from, bro?
What's absorbing you so much that you can't even see what's right in front of you?
Do you not understand – if we don't do this, we may never see Devonte again.

TUNDE. There's just too much risk involved.

SALIM. You think I don't know that risk?

You don't understand. Why do you think I live with my uncle Abdul?
After Windrush – we were next.
I came here the same age as Devonte. But every time I return from holiday, I get pulled into a room for questioning.
Where am I travelling?
Why?
Interrogated like I don't belong here.

You take anything you can just to stay here.

My parents aren't here. My uncle he took me in. That man gives charity, supports the mosque…but he's terrified I'm out here right now.

But I had to come.

Because if I don't show up – who will?

(Beat. **TUNDE***'s breath catches.* **SALIM** *pushes through the emotion.)*

The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said:

"If you see an injustice, change it with your hand. If you cannot, speak against it. And if you cannot even do that – at least hate it in your heart."

Today, I choose my hands.

*(***TUNDE** *is still overwhelmed.)*

TUNDE. You don't understand. We can't afford to make one mistake in this life. We've got to work twice as hard in this game. I'm not tryna let myself – or my family – down.

PAUL. If the system doesn't work for Devonte… What makes you think it's gonna work for you?

*(***TUNDE** *struggles to answer.)*

TUNDE. I just don't think rioting's the right way.

SALIM. Brother, This isn't a riot, it's a *rescue*.

We are taking action so that boys like Devonte – boys like us – aren't ripped from their lives overnight.
This isn't about missing uni.
This is about making sure Devonte at least gets the chance to apply for asylum…
This is bigger than us.
Bigger than what any degree can give you.
So fight for your brother, man.

(A long beat. **TUNDE** *looks at* **PAUL**. *Looks at* **SALIM**.*)*

(He walks back to the centre of the road and lifts his placard high.)

TUNDE. Justice for D.

PAUL. Justice for D.

SALIM. Justice for D.

PAUL, TUNDE, & SALIM. WE WANT REPARATIONS, NO DEPORTATIONS!

WE WANT REPARATIONS, NO DEPORTATIONS!

(Sound effects: Sirens crescendo. But they do not move.)

(They stand in defiance as the lights fade.)

Goodbye Britain

(Location: Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre – Common Room / Visitors' Area. A cold, institutional visitors' room... Plastic chairs bolted to metal tables. A vending machine hums in the corner.)

*(***DEVONTE** *sits alone at one of the tables. A book is open in front of him, but his eyes are distant – lost. To him, this place doesn't feel temporary. It feels like prison. Like a goodbye he didn't ask for.)*

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Mr Miller, you've got a visitor.

*(***DEVONTE** *looks up.* **TUNDE** *enters. They haven't seen each other in two weeks. A pause – then ease.)*

DEVONTE. Yo T! You're looking good.

TUNDE. My brother. Yesterday was push day.

*(***DEVONTE** *and* **TUNDE** *laugh. For a second, it's the youth club again.)*

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). You've got five minutes.

(They glance at the officer, eyebrows raised – "Can we have a minute?")

Protocol.

(Beat.)

TUNDE. So...what's the latest with the asylum application?

DEVONTE. Denied. Said I've got no 'credible fear for my life'.

TUNDE. That's mad. You've been here since –

DEVONTE. *(Cutting in.)* Since I was ten, bro. I know. They don't care.

All it takes is one slip-up and suddenly you're flagged.

TUNDE. Slip-up?

DEVONTE. The window.

College contacted the police for an insurance claim – and there I was.

All over a bit of broken glass.

One dumb moment.

(Beat. **DEVONTE** *looks directly at* **TUNDE**. **TUNDE** *freezes, guilt rising.)*

TUNDE. But it was me who broke –

(Long pause.)

We were only messing around. I didn't know they'd use that against you.

(Long pause.)

(Softening.) You know the whole college started a protest for you?

Ricky, Michaela…even Miss Wilson. They were outside the gates. Holding signs. Shouting your name.' Devonte! No to deportatons. We want reparations…'

(The Immigration Officer coughs – a warning.)

D, man…

DEVONTE. It's cool.

TUNDE. It's not cool. This is your life we're talking about. So it's really happening?

DEVONTE. Yeah. Tomorrow/

TUNDE. Tomorrow

DEVONTE. Montego Bay. One-way ticket.

TUNDE. And Aunty Barbara?

DEVONTE. *(Quietly.)* She did her best, man.

Brought me over here. Raised me.

But, I was never legally adopted.

TUNDE. Can't she adopt you now.

DEVONTE. I'm eighteen bro, They said I was never 'formally placed'.

(Beat.)

TUNDE. She was only trying to help.

DEVONTE. I know. The goal was just to get me here. I'd figure the rest out.

(Pause.)

But the truth is…

I didn't know what to do.

I tried everything.

Letters. Evidence. I even found old trip forms with my name on them.

TUNDE. I wish I'd been there. Properly.

DEVONTE. You're here now, innit?

TUNDE. Why didn't you tell us,?

DEVONTE. I dunno… I was embarrassed.

Felt totally humiliated by my country.

This country.

Like I've been in a fight for months.

But at least in a fight, there's a sense of control, right?

(Beat.)

With this…

It's just an unbelievable sense of betrayal.

You stand there – while someone else decides your ending.

TUNDE. *(To the* **OFFICER***.)* This ain't right. He's grown up here. His whole life.

DEVONTE. They don't care. All they see is: immigrants. Foreigners. Intruder.

TUNDE. You're none of those things.

DEVONTE. *(Quietly.)* I feel like I am.

(Beat. **TUNDE** *looks at him properly now. Sees the weight.)*

*(***DEVONTE** *looks away. Eyes heavy.* **TUNDE** *lowers his voice.)*

TUNDE. We're always trying to solve shit. Always trying to be the strong one.

But sometimes…we don't need to fix it. We just need to be heard.

DEVONTE. I didn't want you to see me like this. Like I failed.

TUNDE. You didn't fail. The system did.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Time.

TUNDE. Before I go… I brought something.

*(***TUNDE** *reaches into his bag and hands* **DEVONTE** *a letter.)*

DEVONTE. What is it?

TUNDE. Your A-level results. You ran off. Remember?

*(**DEVONTE** opens it. Reads silently.)*

DEVONTE. *(Softly.)* ABB.

TUNDE. See? I told you.

You reached your potential – even when everything around you said you wouldn't.

*(**DEVONTE** stares at the page. It doesn't feel like a win.)*

(He breaks. Silent tears. Shoulders tight, breath shallow.)

*(**TUNDE** watches. Quiet. Letting him feel it.)*

You're good, bro. You're good.

DEVONTE. Would you look after Aunty B for me, yeah?

TUNDE. She'll have me at her service. I promise.

You said you didn't want us to see you like this.

But I'm glad I did.

Because I get it now.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (VOICE). Time.

(They do their handshake – the one they made in Year 8.)

(Then an embrace. Real. Heavy. Unspoken.)

*(**TUNDE** exits.)*

*(**DEVONTE** is left alone. The letter still in his hand.)*

(Lights fade.)

Fun Fact

(Paul's house. **SALIM** *enters wearing a Jubba Thobe, visiting to see his old friend.)*

PAUL. What you doing here?

SALIM. What, can't I come see my mate?

(They hug.)

Big hug

PAUL. Oi you look well sharp!

SALIM. Just came from the Mosque, I thought I'd stop b.

(Pause.)

Its weird without –

PAUL. Yeah.

SALIM. How you coping? Devonte gone, Tunde in uni.

PAUL. It's our new reality now right?

SALIM. What happened to you being a magician?

PAUL. That's a little boy's dream.

*(***PAUL** *puts the cards away.)*

Salim, did your Uncle Abdul ever get back to you about the job vacancy?

SALIM. Ah yeah. He did.

PAUL. Sick!! So when can I start. Dad's been bollocking me since result's day and I need to get out of this place.

SALIM. Paul. He said it's just for family.

PAUL. Me and you are like brothers so –

SALIM. My family.

(Beat.)

but if you send your CV I could pass it around.

PAUL. It's cool.

SALIM. You wanna know something?

PAUL. What?

SALIM. Remember that time when I laughed at you because you didn't know what dialysis was.

PAUL. Yeah, Aunty Baraba's kidney failure.

SALIM. Truth is, I didn't know what it meant either, I just didn't want to seem insensitive to Devonte.

PAUL. Oh and you thought it'll be alright if it was me, did ya.

I thought I was a right idiot.

SALIM. You're not, that's why I'm here.

PAUL. For what?

SALIM. I dunno, for making you the scapegoat all the time.

(They sit in silence.)

What happened to your hand?

(Beat.)

Did you get into a fight, cos I swear I'll back it you know.

(Silence.)

Was it your dad?

PAUL. I just don't understand him.

Works all day then drinks all night, then gets back up again for work. And when he's tired and frustrated, guess becomes the punching bag.

But not this time.

I hit him. hard.

He called me useless, thick and he said I was a disappointment of a son. All because I wanted to do magic.

You'd think your kid having a passion for something would spark joy into your life but no.

Not him. How do you think I feel growing up seeing you piss yourself, wearing the same clothes every day. Not showering and slurring your words till the point you can't even form a sentence. "As long as you know how to count your name and spell money, you'd be alright Son." Well I'm not alright, whilst you was off his head, binging I had to step up, get a proper job, just like he wanted. Turns out that A-level maths came in handy. I'm doing an apprenticeship in construction. Can you believe it!

(Beat.)

Am I the problem that he's trying to fix?

*(***SALIM** *goes to comfort him.)*

Don't need you to feel guilty?

SALIM. It's not just guilt, … I miss you, fam.

PAUL. Yeah? Well, you missed a lot.

*(***SALIM** *lowers his head.)*

You and Tunde got your futures, your fresh starts. Devonte's gone. And I'm still here. Same house. Same walls. Same dad.

SALIM. Paul –

PAUL. But at least he stayed.

(Beat. **SALIM** *looks up.)*

He didn't disappear into a course or a career or a clean conscience.

He didn't send a CV and vanished.

SALIM. That's not fair.

PAUL. Isn't it?

*(**PAUL** is pacing.)*

Everyone thinks I'm the joke – the magician, the clown.

But I'm the one who's still here. Smiling like everything's alright when it's not.

SALIM. You shouldn't have to do that on your own.

PAUL. But I am. And you weren't here.

*(**SALIM** is quiet. Letting it land.)*

I think you should leave.

Devonte's One Way Home / Aunty Interlude: Barbara's Goodbye

(Lights up on the youth club. **DEVONTE** *stands centre stage, surrounded by letters, fallen from the sky. A duffle bag rests beside him. The mood is hushed, the air thick with farewell.)*

(We see an Arsenal football shirt with 'Jamaica Independence' colours – **SALIM***'s gift.)*

*(***DEVONTE** *opens one of the letters and begins reading aloud. The voices of his friends echo around him – part memory, part imagined.)*

SALIM. Yo, when you get to Jamaica, make sure you tell the girls about me.

DEVONTE. *(Laughs.)* Yeah, I will.

SALIM. *(Offstage, mock patois.)* Tell dem me is ah general from foreign!

DEVONTE. This guy, yeah Salim.

PAUL. *(Offstage.)* You better pick up that phone when I need help with trigonometry. My yute!

*(***PAUL** *silently picks up one of his cards – the Ace of Hearts – and sets it in front of* **DEVONTE***.)*

That's you. The heart of this crew

TUNDE. *(Offstage, softer.)* Not having you as a wingman in uni is hard…

I know you'll be good out there – you always have been.

Keep faith.

I love you, bro.

Remember that.

*(**DEVONTE** folds the letters carefully, presses them to his chest. He looks around the space one last time – his sanctuary, his second home.)*

(He places his bag on the single chair downstage centre.)

*(**DEVONTE** steps backward. With each step, a memory ignites in brief spotlight: [the characters appear on stage during the memory sequences.])*

MEMORY ONE – Playing pool
Stage left.
Reenactment of **PAUL** taking his shot in adventure youth club one
the other boys act as the balls, devonte is static, whilst all of this is happening around him

MEMORY TWO – Tunde's eighteenth Birthday
Stage right.
A cheap banner, plastic cups, **TUNDE** being drunk at his party
PAUL helping him
TUNDE and **DEVONTE** frozen mid-handshake – their special one.

MEMORY THREE – Table tennis at Youth Club
Downstage left.
Fold-up table,
SALIM hits the ball. PAUL fumbles a magic trick.
DEVONTE follows it with his eyes.
TUNDE watches – proud…maybe a little envious.

MEMORY FOUR – Final Group Photo
Upstage centre.
PAUL, TUNDE, DEVONTE & SALIM, arms around each other, smiling.

The *Adventure Youth Club* sign behind them.
They freeze – a snapshot of youth, brotherhood, survival.

(As **DEVONTE** *continues stepping back, he fades from the light.)*

(Each memory fades, one by one –)

(Until only the group photo remains, lit in warm amber.)

(Then that too…fades.)

(Silence. Then:)

(The warm amber reappears.)

(Voice of **AUNTY BARBARA** *– low, warm, reflective:)*

AUNTY BARBARA. People look forward to certain things.
It's not old age, y'know – you can always work again.

But there are so many factors, my nephew…

Do your due diligence, my darling.

It's not everyone that's gonna love you –

So you have to be very careful.

Sometimes, the same people you mess with…

You have to be careful of them.

That's what the world shows us.

*(***DEVONTE** *takes a breath and walks into the warm amber light [Jamaican] turns back to have one last look at a place he called home.)*

(He exits.)

Fate

SALIM. So you wanna know what it amounts to?

PAUL. Let me guess.

TUNDE. After he left…

PAUL. I was a bit naive,

SALIM. I'm moving up in the world,

PAUL. I thought we would all get a place together. Start a business or something.

SALIM. Uncle Abdul, expanded yeah.

PAUL. Camberwell,

SALIM. Old Kent Road,

TUNDE. 'Peckham'.

PAUL. Tunde? Yeah, Yeah, Tunde's doing great! He's at Uni.

TUNDE. Durham's nice. Quiet.

SALIM. Put me in charge.

TUNDE. A part of me wanted to take a break, take a gap year…

SALIM. We got limited edition Fantas.

TUNDE. But mum wouldn't have been too pleased about that. And she's right. I've just got to keep my head down, and focus.

SALIM. I've been focusing on my deen as well

PAUL. Apprenticeship going well

TUNDE. I changed my course. Dropped Accounting. Switched to Law.

PAUL. I started performing card tricks on site, people love it. They call me MAGIC PAUL! It's nice…

TUNDE. I think… I needed something that felt like justice. Some way to… I don't know… Make things right.

SALIM. Uncle Abdul is proud. We've gotten closer.

TUNDE. I can't deviate from the plan, it's always been the plan. Something in a suit. it's a new chapter, a lot to get used to.

SALIM. I feel like I'm gaining something there, the mosque.

TUNDE. New environment.

SALIM. Aisha? She's doing great, meeting her family soon.

TUNDE. New people.

PAUL. I moved out of Dad's.

SALIM. I think I like her.

PAUL. Long story. Now I'm in a hostel, not far. Shared accom. Damp walls. Still…it's mine.

TUNDE. But no one's like my old friends.

SALIM. The whole thing with D – it just made me think. I realised, I didn't know what my community was.

PAUL. Building flats. It's nice. I work/

TUNDE. Hard. work hard. Don't question it. Get through it.

SALIM. We all put up the best fight to keep Devonte here.

PAUL. They say you don't know it's the best time till it's over.

SALIM. It could have been anyone.

TUNDE. Salim took it the hardest I think.

SALIM. I just wish I knew earlier.

TUNDE. I need to reach out

SALIM. He still owes me three pounds you know.

PAUL. How am I eighteen, and I've already run out time/

SALIM. Time. I don't really have the time.

TUNDE. To call.

PAUL. The connection is bad.

SALIM. It's all WhatsApp.

TUNDE. Memes.

PAUL. Gifs.

SALIM. Gifs.

TUNDE. Another world.

SALIM. I miss him, still.

TUNDE. You don't need a visa to be remembered,

PAUL. At the end of the day it all came to nothing.

TUNDE. The tweets.

SALIM. Posts.

PAUL. Protest.

SALIM. Absolutely

PAUL, TUNDE & SALIM. nothing.

TUNDE. It's mad because they say he won't be able to return to the UK for ten years.

PAUL. Ten years.

TUNDE. Like he's some sort of criminal.

SALIM. Excluded from society like he wasn't worth being here.

PAUL. One step for man.

PAUL, TUNDE & SALIM. A giant step back for the mandem.

(Beat.)

*(**PAUL, TUNDE & SALIM**, who have now turned into young men, clock each other.)*

(They all put there focus on the empty chair 'Devonte's Chair', reminiscing their dear friend.)

(Devonte.)

TUNDE. Can I go now?

(Blackout.)

The End

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