

# Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

*Dramatic Publishing*



**iceandfire**

presents

**I Have Before Me  
A Remarkable Document  
Given To Me By A Young Lady  
From Rwanda**

by

**Sonja Linden**



**AURORA METRO PRESS**

## **Sonja Linden**

Sonja is an award-winning playwright, whose plays have been produced in London and in regional theatres in the UK as well as in the United States and Australia. London productions include *Call Me Judas* (Paines Plough, Finborough Theatre), *The Jewish Daughter*, sequel to Brecht's *The Jewish Wife*, (New End Theatre) and *The Strange Passenger* (Paines Plough, Battersea Arts Centre and National Tour).

*I Have Before Me A Remarkable Document Given To Me By A Young Lady From Rwanda* was written in response to her encounters with a number of young Rwandan refugees at the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, where she has been Writer-in-Residence since 1997. The play will receive its American premiere at the Kansas City Repertory Theatre in April 2005.

Sonja is currently working on a commission from APT Films and BBC Films to co-write with director Sarah Gavron a feature film about a young Iranian asylum seeker.

**I Have Before Me A Remarkable Document  
Given To Me By A Young Lady From Rwanda**

**UK TOUR SCHEDULE 2004**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name of venue</b>
South East	Sep 25 <sup>th</sup>	Riverhouse Barn, Walton-on-Thames
East Mids	28 <sup>th</sup>	Bonington Theatre, Nottingham
South West	29 <sup>th</sup>	The Sundial Theatre, Cirencester
South West	30 <sup>th</sup>	Ustinov Studio, Bath Theatre Royal
South West	Oct 1 <sup>st</sup>	Ustinov Studio, Bath Theatre Royal
South West	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Ustinov Studio, Bath Theatre Royal
South East	4 <sup>th</sup>	The Hawth Studio, Crawley
South East	5 <sup>th</sup>	Komedia , Brighton
South East	6 <sup>th</sup>	Ashcroft Arts Centre, Fareham
South West	7 <sup>th</sup>	Bradleian Theatre, Marlborough
East	8 <sup>th</sup>	The Junction CDC, Cambridge
East	9 <sup>th</sup>	Norwich Arts Centre
Midlands	12 <sup>th</sup>	Queen Elizabeth Theatre, Oakham
London	13 <sup>th</sup>	Croydon Clock Tower, London
London	14 <sup>th</sup>	Harrow Arts Centre, London
South East	15 <sup>th</sup>	Pegasus Theatre, Oxford
South East	16 <sup>th</sup>	Pegasus Oxford, Oxford
South East	19 <sup>th</sup>	Southill Park, Bracknell
South East	20 <sup>th</sup>	21 South Street, Reading
South East	21 <sup>st</sup>	New Greenham Arts, Newbury
South East	22 <sup>nd</sup>	Norden Farm Centre for the Arts, Maidenhead
North West	25 <sup>th</sup>	Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal
North West	26 <sup>th</sup>	Manchester University Drama Centre
North West	27 <sup>th</sup>	Manchester University Drama Centre
North West	28 <sup>th</sup>	Stanwix Arts Theatre, Carlisle
Yorkshire	29 <sup>th</sup>	York Theatre Royal Studio
Yorkshire	30 <sup>th</sup>	York Theatre Royal Studio
Scotland	Nov 1 <sup>st</sup>	North Edinburgh Arts Centre
Scotland	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Paisley Arts Centre, Glasgow
North East	4 <sup>th</sup>	Queen's Hall Art Centre, Hexham
Scotland	5 <sup>th</sup>	Eastgate Theatre & Arts Centre, Peebles
North East	6 <sup>th</sup>	Alnwick Playhouse, Northumberland

First printed in 2004 by Aurora Metro Publications Ltd.  
[www.aurorametro.com](http://www.aurorametro.com) Tel: 020 8747 1953  
*I Have Before Me A Remarkable Document Given To Me By A  
Young Lady From Rwanda* : Play and introduction ©  
copyright Sonja Linden 2004  
Cover design: Jimmy Turrell © copyright 2004

Permission for the use of any copyright music mentioned in the  
text must be agreed in advance with the Performing Rights  
Society, Live Music Centre: 020 7580 5544.

Caution: All rights whatsoever in this play are strictly reserved.  
Application for a licence to present performances including  
professional, amateur, recitation, lecturing, public reading,  
broadcasting, television and translation into foreign languages  
should be applied for, before rehearsals begin, to:

Ice and Fire Theatre Company, 75 Hillfield Park, London N10  
3QU. Tel: 0207 482 4255 / 0208 444 5228 Fax: 0208 444 2322  
E-Mail: [info@iceandfire.co.uk](mailto:info@iceandfire.co.uk)

In accordance with Section 78 of the Copyright, Designs and  
Patents Act 1988, the author asserts her moral rights to be  
identified as the author of the above Work.

This paperback is sold subject to the condition that it shall not,  
by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or  
otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in  
any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is  
published and without a similar condition being imposed on  
the subsequent purchaser.

Trade distribution:

UK - Central Books Tel: 020 8986 4854 Fax: 020 8533 5821

USA - Theatre Communications Group, N.Y. Tel: 212 609 5900

Canada - Playwrights Union of Canada Tel: 416 703 0013

Printed by InTypeLibra, Wimbledon, UK

ISBN 978-09546912-3-7

*To Lea Chantal*

whose remarkable story and indomitable spirit  
inspired this play

## iceandfire

We passionately believe art has a role to play in communicating one of the most pressing issues of today – the growing displacement of peoples from conflict zones. In a world increasingly overshadowed by international tensions, we aim to present to British audiences stories of individuals whose lives have been touched by these events.

The company was founded in January 2003 by Sonja Linden, playwright and Writer-in-residence at the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. Here she set up the Write to Life Project, a creative and testimonial writing programme offering clients of the Foundation the opportunity to discharge their painful experiences of persecution and exile through the act of writing. Inspired by her seven year residency at the Medical Foundation, Sonja Linden is concerned to represent refugees as “ordinary people caught up in extraordinary circumstances.” (Eli Wiesel, *Holocaust survivor, writer, Nobel laureate*).

The company's launch production *I Have Before Me A Remarkable Document Given To Me By A Young Lady From Rwanda* was first produced at the Burton-Taylor Studio Theatre, Oxford in July 2002 for one week as part of Oxford Africa Week. The play's London premiere, a four week run in June 2003 at the Finborough Theatre, marked the launch of iceandfire. This production received considerable critical acclaim and was subsequently produced by Theatre Works at the 2003 Edinburgh Festival, and by BBC Radio World Service Drama.

In 2004, the Arts Council England awarded the company funding to tour the play to 30 venues across the UK in autumn 2004, to coincide with the tenth

anniversary of the Rwanda genocide.

The company's second production, *Crocodile Seeking Refuge* is currently in development for a London run in 2005.

**Artistic Director** — Sonja Linden

**Producer** — Sarah Sansom

**Patrons** — Oona King MP, Juliet Stevenson, Arnold Wesker

**Directors** — Jane Dorner (chair), Moris Farhi (MBE), Katherine Klinger, Malcolm Smart, Matthew Reisz, Alexis Rwabizambuga.

**iceandfire**

**75 Hillfield Park  
London N10 3QU**

**Tel: 0207 482 4255 / 0208 444 5228**

**Fax: 0208 444 2322**

**E-Mail: [info@iceandfire.co.uk](mailto:info@iceandfire.co.uk)**



The company is supported by the Indigo Trust and Arts Council England. **iceandfire** is a company limited by guarantee. Registered in England No 4648400 Charity 1062174



## Biographies

### **Drew Ackroyd – Director**

Drew trained at Rose Bruford College. Recent directing credits include the London Premiere of *I Have Before Me....*, the European Premiere of Larry Kramer's *The Destiny of Me* (Finborough Theatre), *Ciboulette* (San Francisco Opera Studio), *Fish Tales* (National Tour), *No Time To Cry* (MTV). Rehearsed Readings include *Castro's Beard* (The Arts Theatre), *A Minor Dark Age* (The Actors' Centre), *The Modern Man* (Producers Club NYC). Assistant Directing credits include *Natural Inclinations* (Finborough Theatre), *Barber of Seville* (European Chamber Opera National Tour) and *Dark of the Moon* (Westminster Theatre). He studied Forum Theatre and the methodology of Augusto Boal with the Centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed, Physical Story Telling with Clive Mendus of Theatre de Complicite and Contact Improvisation with Rick Zoltowsky. Drew also teaches, is a freelance script reader for BBC Radio Four, Co Artistic Director of Productions Absolute and an Associate Director at the Caird Company.

### **Mishi L. Bekesi – Asst Company Stage Manager**

Mishi (aka Deepered) is a sound designer; sound engineer; DJ and stage manager. He works extensively on the International and London theatre, music, fashion and club scenes. His recent works include: technical manager of several projects for Steve Frost; Boothby Graffoe comedy; Antonio Forcione music; Linda Marlowe theatre; Fresco Theatre 2003 tour and Prince O' Neill productions.

### **Rebecca Clatworthy – Deputy Stage Manager**

Becky is in her final year at the Central School of Speech and Drama, where she is studying for a BA in stage management. She has worked on numerous productions within college including, *The Storm*, *Rape upon Rape*, *As You Like It*, and most recently *The Quest* at the Minack Theatre, Cornwall. Outside of college Becky has worked on a new musical *The Biz*, *Now That's Musicals....* with Cygneture Productions and this year's festival for new writing at the Polka theatre, Wimbledon. Her television work includes *Record of the Year* 2002 and *Basil Brush*.

### **Atlanta Duffy – Designer**

Atlanta trained at Motley Theatre Design School and the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith. She has designed for Theatre, Opera and Dance for: Bristol Old Vic, Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Tricycle Theatre, Southwark Playhouse, RADA, Arcola Theatre, BAC, Stephen Joseph Theatre, Birmingham Rep and Oxford Playhouse. Recent work includes *Come Out Eli* – Time Out Award Winner, *The Way of the World* – Dir. Selina Cadell, Wilton's Music Hall, *Trojan Women* – Dir. Deborah Paige, RADA, Masquerade Costumes for *Waingi* – Dir. Peter Badejo, Greenwich & Docklands Festival, *Women of Owu* – Collective Artistes Tour, and *Death and the Maiden* – Dir. Chuck Mike, Lagos, Nigeria.

### **Suzann McLean – Juliette**

Suzann trained at the Italia Conti Academy and has worked extensively in theatre; credits include Isabella in *Measure for Measure* (RNT), *Sense of Belonging* (Manchester), *Angie Baby* (Young Vic), *Trojan Women*, (Chipping Norton) *Romeo and Juliet*, (Keswick), *Equianano*, (National Tour), *The Magic Box*, (Tricycle Theatre), *Vengeance*, (Hackney Empire), *Ozulumba*,

(Bloomsbury Theatre), *Jack & The Beanstalk* (Theatre Royal, Stratford East), *Little Shop of Horrors*, (Ipswich), *Blue Girl* (Vienna's English Theatre) and the critically acclaimed national tour of *Bonded* (Tiata Fahodzi). Suzann recently shot a medical video to help those with Sick Cell Anaemia. She has also appeared in various commercial, television and audio productions including *Casualty*, *Face at the Window*, *Coupling*, *The A-Force*, *Baby Father* (audio) and *Grange Hill* (all for the BBC). Film credits include *To Strike A Chord*, (Central TV), *Coco Dance* (Slim Chance Productions) *Jesus Christ Superstar*, (video) and the female lead in *White Light* for UIPL, an independent film based on a modern day Jesus Christ, to be released this year.

### **Gabrielle Moss – Education Consultant**

Gabrielle undertook post-graduate studies in Arts in the Community at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA) after which she spent two years as Education Director of Besht Tellers Theatre Company. Gabrielle has acted as Education Consultant for Northwood Holocaust Education Project – developing and delivering a unique Holocaust education programme for secondary school students, including teaching about Rwandan genocide as a key component; The Red Room – researching, compiling and designing an Education Pack to accompany the company's production *Animal*; and *IDworks!* – developing and trialling a Key Stage 1 Emotional Literacy curriculum. Gabrielle has worked with, amongst others, Hampstead Theatre; The Bull Theatre, Barnet; Half Moon Young People's Theatre; and Children's Discovery Centre *Discover*, Stratford, London. In 2003, Gabrielle established Polygon Arts, a community and educational organisation which exists to encourage Active Citizenship through drama and music, for which she is a Director. Gabrielle is currently studying for her MA in Drama and

Theatre in Education at the Central School of Speech and Drama.

### **Sophie Nathan – Assistant Designer**

Sophie studied English and Philosophy at Leeds University, after which she spent three years managing events, including a year as Events Officer for Leeds University, and Marketing Manager for the Islington International Festival. On completing a Foundation Course in Art and Design at Westminster and Kingsway College, Sophie spent a year at the Arcola Theatre in Hackney assisting designers, constructing, scenic painting, mask and prop making. Sophie was the production manager on a new writing piece, *Owner/ Occupier* and set and costume designer for a devised piece called *Out of Man*. Sophie graduated this year from the Theatre Design Course at Motley.

### **Sarah Sansom – Producer**

Sarah has been with Ice and Fire since November 2003. Previous work includes producing for: Arcola Theatre, Dance United, Theatre and Beyond, Pillion Productions and The Non-Violence Foundation, plus managing, marketing and tour booking for Union Dance. Directing credits include: *Pass the Parcel* (London Talent, Theatre Royal Stratford-East), *Fair Ground* (Cardboard Citizens forum theatre piece, Polka Theatre and schools tour), *A Woman's Place* devised by women refugees (The Albany, Hoxton Hall, Oxford House, London and the British Council *Sense of Place Festival*), *Shout* (Arcola Theatre), *Time Won't Wait* (Old Market Theatre, Brighton International Festival), *Target* (Festival for Women in the Performing Arts, Hanover Expo 2000). Other theatre work delivered for refugees and asylum seekers has been with Refugee Women's Association, Praxis Refugee Centre, Albanian Youth Action and Company of Angels.

### **Catriona Silver – Lighting Designer**

Catriona has worked previously with Atlanta Duffy on the national tour of Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu*— Dir. Chuck Mike. Recent work includes: *The Associate* at The National Theatre, and *Inside Out* with Clean Break Theatre Company. She lit many theatre productions while resident lighting designer at The Palace Theatre, Westcliff-on-Sea. Having completed a Masters in lighting at University College London, she has expanded her interest in lighting to encompass architectural lighting design and the physiology of vision and has developed a lighting proposal for the Trinity Buoy Wharf area of London.

### **Tim Speechley – Company Stage Manager**

After graduating in stage management at Guildhall of Music and Drama, London, Tim went on to work in provincial rep, several West End productions and then took a seven year residency in stage management at the National Theatre. Tim is a lighting tutor at RADA and has spent the last fifteen years touring international drama and dance; worldwide companies include the Moscow Classical Ballet, the National Dance Company of Guinea and the Moscow State Circus. Tim's lighting design connections in world music include: Rachid ta Ha from Algeria, Femi Kuti and Keziah Jones from Nigeria.

### **Jane Watkins – Sound Designer**

Jane studied at Guildhall School of Music under Malcolm Singer and Simon Bainbridge and at Dartington International Summer School under Judith Weir (Scholarship Britten Pears Trust). Recent theatre music engagements include *Pea Green Boat* (Stewart Lee/ BAC/ Traverse Edinburgh), *Valentine* (Actors Centre), *Widows* (Steven Little/ ALRA), *I Have Before Me....*(Drew

Ackroyd/*Ice and Fire*), *Modern Man* (New End), *The Sea* (Byre Theatre), *Singing, Dancing, Acting* (Soho Theatre), *Twelfth Night* (National Theatre Studio), *Much Ado* (Byre Theatre), *Twelfth Night* (Cambridge Arts Theatre), *Burleigh Grimes* (Bridewell Theatre), *Medea in Jerusalem* (Rattlestick Theatre, New York). Animation music for: *Crapston Villas* (assistant composer Spitting Image), *64 Zoo Lane* (assistant composer Millimage). Ballet includes *The Quest for Corolaine* (The Arden Holford Ballet School). Concert works for: The Junior String Orchestra (Royal Irish Academy of Music, Dublin), The Vent Saxophone Quartet. Published work includes *Santa Pod Velodrome* (Guildhall Examinations Service).

### **Joe Young – Simon**

Joe trained at the Drama Centre, London. Recent theatre includes: Jackson in *The Hired Man* (Salisbury Playhouse), Lt. Bus Adams in *South Pacific* (National Theatre), Macheath in *The Beggars Opera* (Queens, Hornchurch), Bill Sikes in *Oliver!* (Palladium), Sammy in *Blood Brothers* (Phoenix). Also in the West End, *The Importance* (Ambassadors), *Rope* (Wyndhams); Rep seasons at York, Swansea, Leatherhead, Northampton, Norwich, Nottingham; tours for Bubble Theatre as Orin the Dentist in *Little Shop of Horrors*, Henry Clerval in April de Angelis' *Frankenstein* (LATC). Joe is an Associate Artist with Theatre and Beyond, a Brighton-based new writing company. Television roles include King Ferdinand in *Christopher Columbus DNA* (Discovery), Jake in the horror series *Dark Realm* (Warner Brothers), *London's Burning*, *Lyttons Diary*, *Doctor Who* and *Live One* (Sky One). Joe is also an award-winning soundtrack composer. Recent work includes a Friday Play for Radio 4, *Full Blown*, by Anita Sullivan.

# **I Have Before Me A Remarkable Document Given To Me By A Young Lady From Rwanda**

by

**Sonja Linden**

**Juliette**

Suzann McLean

**Simon**

Joe Young

**Director**

Drew Ackroyd

**Producer**

Sarah Sansom

**Designer**

Atlanta Duffy

**Assistant Designer**

Sophie Nathan

**Lighting Designer**

Catriona Silver

**Sound Designer**

Jane Watkins

**Company Stage Manager**

Tim Speechley

**Asst Company Stage Manager**

Mishi Bekesi

**Deputy Stage Manager**

Rebecca Clatworthy

**Education Consultant**

Gabrielle Moss

**Production Photographer**

Deborah Sandersley

**Graphic Designer**

Jimmy Turrell

## **I Have Before Me A Remarkable Document Given To Me By A Young Lady From Rwanda**

Shortly after I started working with clients of the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, I met a young woman from Rwanda, whose impulse to write had started in a refugee camp shortly after the murder of her entire family. What started out as a testimonial act, the writing out of her family's experience of genocide, became, in addition, an act of healing as a result of which she reported that she felt 'clean' and that her nightmares and headaches had ceased. For two and a half years, she had worked on this book on her own, writing in her mother tongue and wrestling day after day with her enormously painful story, often tearing up the previous day's work at 5 o'clock in the morning, when she started her daily writing. Even while she was immersed in the process of writing her book, she recognised its therapeutic value, talking about writing in order to take the pain 'away from my heart'.

The healing she achieved was done at enormous cost since it meant confronting and expressing with full force the negative emotions that overwhelmed her in the years following the genocide. So inspired was I by her story, that when I came to write something of my own, as part of my writing residency, it was infused with her spirit and her struggle to write. *I Have Before Me A Remarkable Document Given To Me By A Young Lady From Rwanda* tells the story of an uneasy relationship between Simon, a struggling British poet in his mid-forties and Juliette, a young survivor of the Rwandan genocide, who comes to him for help with her book. My challenge as a playwright was to transform this into a piece of theatre that would engage an audience. Humour, remarkably, became an important component to create a sense of balance and draw the audience in; humour largely drawn from the



cultural divide between the Englishman and the young African woman. It is this aspect of the play as well as Juliette's plight and feistiness that audiences have most remarked upon.

Many people have commented on the lengthy title of my play, some thinking it brilliantly arresting, others finding it annoyingly unwieldy – 'it takes up all the answerphone tape at the Box Office', – 'it uses up too much space in the listings column', – 'it'll frighten audiences away because it has the word Rwanda in it,' are some of the criticisms I've received. Whenever I've been challenged in this way, I've been reminded of the response of another author of another work on Rwanda: Philip Gourevitch, called his book: *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families*. Like my title, it was a quote from the text, but here the quote was taken from real life – the desperate cry for help from seven pastors in charge of two thousand terrified Tutsis taking shelter in a church compound. The help was not forthcoming. For Gourevitch, impatience with his title seemed symptomatic of the West's indifference to a genocide taking place in a tiny country, off the map, in faraway darkest Africa. Similarly, my long title is a deliberate challenge to our short attention span where Rwanda is concerned.

As the daughter of refugees from Nazi Germany, I have felt all the more compelled to draw attention to this appalling late chapter in twentieth century history, a chapter that has such strong parallels with the Final Solution. Tragically, as I write this, a new genocide threatens in Western Sudan, transgressing once more the idealism of the post-Holocaust slogan of 'Never Again'.

**Sonja Linden**

---

**I Have Before Me  
A Remarkable Document  
Given To Me By A Young Lady  
From Rwanda**

---

**Sonja Linden**

First performed at the Burton-Taylor Theatre, Oxford,  
July 2002.

**Characters:**

**Juliette**      A young Rwandan woman in her twenties

**Simon**      A British poet in his forties

**Time and Place:**

1999 – five years after the Rwandan genocide. London.

*Author's note:*

Rwandan language is indicated by [ ]

Phonetic spelling to aid pronunciation is indicated by \*

A stroke (/) marks the point of interruption in  
overlapping dialogue.

## Prologue

**Juliette** (*offstage*) They came to our house in the morning. Some of them were our neighbours. The president had been killed in the night. There was a curfew. On the radio they said nobody can go out or they will be shot. My father was very worried. We all stayed together the whole night. And in the morning there was a knock at our door. We saw it was our neighbours and my father thought this is maybe good, they will help us hide. Then we saw the others, eight or nine of them, with machetes. "What's going on?" he said. Our next door neighbour, he said, "Now is the time for all the Tutsi cockroaches to die."

### Scene 1

*Juliette is waiting tensely in the reception area of a Refugee Centre in central London, clutching a super-market carrier bag protectively to her chest. Simon is in one of the offices at the Centre. Both are wearing casual western clothes. Simon looks a bit scruffy and Juliette very neat. They speak straight out to the audience.*

**Simon** Not a bad little room. Bit institutional. It's got a window at least. Not a great view. Never mind. A desk, two chairs and an empty book-case. So... wonder what she's going to be like?

**Juliette** I'm early. I'm always early. I want to make a good impression. It's important. I had to take three trains to get here. I don't really mind that. I don't mind the trains. It's the tunnels I don't like when you have to change from one line to another. I get scared if I'm alone in those tunnels. Anything could happen.

**Simon** My first client. An African. (*reads*) Juliette Niy... rabeza. Juliette spelled the French way. Of course, it was a French colony. Better look that up.

**Juliette** I wonder what he will be like? Glasses. For sure he will wear glasses. Probably those little ones at the end of the nose. So he will look down at me like this. And he will be dressed in a smart suit, navy or black, and a white shirt and a tie. Maybe his old university tie. Oh, he must be so educated! His English will be perfect – perfect grammar, perfect spelling. I don't mind how strict he is, I need to learn. It is an opportunity for me. When he sees my book, he will see how serious I am. I will say to him, "Mr. Simon, can you help me please." And I will take it out of my bag and put it on his desk. And he will take one look and he will pick up his phone to speak to his secretary. And he will say, "Miss Smith, get me the best publisher in London please. I have before me a quite extraordinary and remarkable document given to me by a young lady from Rwanda," and he will look down his glasses at the first page and he will say to me...

**Simon** Juliette ?

## Scene 2

*Simon's office at the Refugee Centre.*

**Simon** (*indicating chair*) Please. Well, it's really nice to meet you, Juliette. You're my first customer. I'm really looking forward to working with you. Have you come far?

**Juliette** Barking.

**Simon** Barking. That is a long way. So... perhaps you'd like to tell me a bit about yourself. How long have you been here? In the UK?

**Juliette** Five months.

**Simon** And did you come here alone or...?

**Juliette** Yes.

**Simon** That must be difficult... to be here all alone, new country, new language, new customs, must be hard. The nearest I ever got to it was when I spent a few months in India. Backpacking. Of course it wasn't the same... naturally.

**Juliette** You don't have a phone.

**Simon** Er... no, no I don't, do I? *(beat)* Anyway, you've been here five months and you live in Barking and you've come to see me about....

**Juliette** My book.

**Simon** Your book! Well! May I see? Ah, it's written in...?

**Juliette** Kinyarwanda.

**Simon** Kenya...?

**Juliette** Kinya-rwanda. That's the language we speak in Rwanda.

**Simon** Kinya-rwanda. And what is your book about? Is it a novel?

**Juliette** It's about the genocide.

**Simon** Of course. And... is it a personal account?

**Juliette** It's a history of my country and what happened in 1994 .

**Simon** 1994 being the year...

**Juliette** ... of the genocide against the Tutsis.

**Simon** I'm sorry. I didn't know the exact date. And you were there, I mean...?

**Juliette** Yes. I was there.  
**Simon** So... it's a... first-hand account.  
**Juliette** It's about what happened.  
**Simon** Right. And is it finished?  
**Juliette** Almost.  
**Simon** That's very impressive. It's a lot of writing.  
**Juliette** I did much research. I went to libraries.  
**Simon** Right. *(leafs through the document then hands it back)* That's quite an achievement.

*Silence.*

**Juliette** You are a big writer...  
**Simon** Well...  
**Juliette** So you can help me to get my book published.  
**Simon** Ah. You want me to help you get this published. But the book isn't written in English, so...  
**Juliette** Someone is translating it for me.  
**Simon** I see. Good. I'll be able to read it then.  
*(beat)* Well, Juliette perhaps I should tell you a bit about what I do here at the Refugee Centre. My job here is to help people like you with their writing. Some people may want to write poetry or short pieces about what happened to them in their countries, some may want to write stories...  
**Juliette** How do you speak to your secretary? If you don't have a phone.  
**Simon** I don't actually have a secretary.  
**Juliette** But who types your books for you?  
**Simon** Well, it's mostly been poetry. And then I tend to just scribble down lines as they come to me...  
**Juliette** I don't understand.

**Simon** Scribble, you know, dash things down.  
Write things down quickly. I only type it up when I've got the final draft of a poem.

**Juliette** You type it yourself?

**Simon** Oh yes, all by myself. With these two fingers.

**Juliette** I thought you were a book writer.

**Simon** Well, my poetry has appeared in books.  
I've had a few collections published.

**Juliette** OK.

**Simon** And I've got a couple of novels sitting in the drawer.

*Juliette starts to pack away her book into the carrier bag and stands up.*

**Juliette** Thank you for your trouble.

**Simon** Not at all. Are you sure there isn't anything else I can...

**Juliette** It was nice to meet you.

**Simon** Well, it would be nice to meet again.  
Perhaps when you've had it translated and then I could...

**Juliette** The first part will be ready next week.

**Simon** Why don't you bring it to show me? Then I could get some idea of your book. How about next Thursday? At the same time.

### Scene 3

*Juliette and Simon speak straight out to the audience.*

**Juliette** He's no good! He can't help me. I'm not going back there. He had a stain on his trousers. So he

can't have a wife. He must be an English bachelor. I thought he would be a proper writer. A man of letters. Not a man with a stain on his trousers. And there were no books in his room. I thought I would see rows of his books. Some in the drawer he said. Why hide them in a drawer? What was that new word.... scribble? I'll write it down. It doesn't sound too nice – scribble. He's a scribbler, that man.

**Simon** Well, that was short. Sweet girl... bit naive... shy. Probably looks up to me: 'The Writer'. Well, I'll have to do something about that at our next meeting, make her more at ease. Huh! 'The Writer'!

**Juliette** (*opening a large manila envelope, excited as she takes out the contents*) Oh! It's so beautiful. It's typed, like a proper book. He is a good friend to do this. I didn't want to approach him because he is a Hutu but we have to believe some of them are human beings, some of them were against the killing and anyway he was here when it happened. Oh the pages are so clean! I hope it is a good translation. How will I know? I don't have any English friends. So there is only one person. The man with his books in a drawer. The scribbler.

#### Scene 4

*Simon's office at the Refugee Centre.*

*Silence while Simon reads the introduction to Juliette's book.*

**Juliette** What do you think?

**Simon** Well, I've only read a couple of pages.

**Juliette** Yes?



**Simon** You've packed in a lot here... the historical background, pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial. I can see you've worked really hard.

**Juliette** But is it good? That's what I need to know.

**Simon** I need to read it properly. Look, could I borrow it, would that be all right, then I can read it before we meet again?

**Juliette** OK.

**Simon** Fine.

**Juliette** I want to learn about writing.

**Simon** That's great.

**Juliette** Can you give me an assignment please to help me improve my writing in English.

**Simon** Right... OK... let's think now... erm. Well, what about your life here in London? Do you think you could write me a piece about that. Your new life here. Where do you live? In a flat? Or, a room?

**Juliette** A room. In a hostel.

**Simon** Well, you could start very simply. Just write about the hostel and the people in it or even just about your room. A descriptive piece. How does that sound?

**Juliette** OK.

**Simon** Just write very simply, as though you were speaking to me.

**Juliette** But I want to do good writing.

**Simon** Some really good writers write very simply.

**Juliette** Really?

**Simon** Sure. Good writing is not about fancy long words. Good writing makes you see what the writer wants you to see. And feel of course. Writing is about feeling, Juliette.

**Scene 5**

*Juliette is in her room and Simon in his 'writing hut'.*

**Simon** 'A Description of My Room'! Jesus! I'll be asking them to write about their summer holidays next! Pathetic. And I was cock-a-hoop when I got this job, seemed like an answer to a prayer: dried-up poet and failing novelist seeks part-time work with 'writer' in job-title, to restore modicum of self-respect and income, in lieu of current occupation as house parasite with well-meaning wife acting as sole breadwinner for one year, so that struggling writer can finally complete the big novel! Yeah well it was great at the beginning, fantastic, not to have to go into work every day, just wake up, pop down to my little shed at the bottom of the garden, and have the whole day. Years and years of notes, drafts, sketches, finally to be able to put them in some sort of order. My big chance. And then...after the first hundred pages, suddenly, nothing. Everyday I think, right, today's the day I'll crack it and I sit here and ....nothing.

**Juliette** 'A Description of My Room'. One chair is in my room. One bed is in my room. One... wardrobe is in my room. One... The walls are grey. The ceiling is grey. The table is grey. The window is grey. The sky from the window is grey. My sweater is grey. There are no colours in my room.

A mirror is in my room. There is a face in the mirror. A girl's face. An African face. The girl looks in the mirror. She sees the face of her mother. She sees the face of her little sister. She sees the face of her grandmother. When she turns her head she sees her father's nose. She sees her uncle's chin. The girl looks

in the mirror and she does not see herself.

I must write. I must finish my book. I must. 'A Description of My Room'. I don't like this room. This room is cold. This room is dark. At night it is noisy. The girl in the next room is crazy. She is talking all the time, talking, talking like a madwoman. I feel sorry for her but I want her to go away. There is a big smell coming from her. A stinky woman's smell. I don't want her to come near me. But she always knocks on my door or she bangs on my wall. I don't like people who are so dirty.

'A Description of My Room'. I hate this room. I sit here all day and then I lie down to sleep. And it is like a prison to me because I'm frightened to go out. It is cold in this room, and lonely. I am lost in this room.

And when I look in the mirror to find myself, I see my mother, I see my little sister, I see my aunts, I see my grandmother. I see my father and my uncle. They are all there in the mirror. I see them clearly. Until they disappear. Until they are washed away. My mother's cheeks grow wet. And tears drip from my father's nose onto my uncle's chin. 'A Description of My Room'.

## Scene 6

*Simon's office at the Refugee Centre.*

**Simon**                      Nice to see you again, Juliette. How are you?

**Juliette**                     Fine, thank you. And you?

**Simon**                      Oh, not so bad. *(Pause)*