

## REFUGEES

CAST: IMMIGRATION OFFICER [I.O.]  
WOMAN

PROPS: 'BABY' IN PRAM  
DESK

NOTES ON DIRECTION: THE HUSBAND REFERRED TO DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE FLESH. ON OCCASION, WHEN HE IS REFERRED TO, THE I.O. AND WOMAN CAN LOOK TO WHERE HE SHOULD BE

LIGHTS: THE IMMIGRATION OFFICER IS BEHIND DESK; WOMAN IN FRONT OF IT; MAN IS BEHIND BARRIER

I.O.: STARES AT WOMAN BEFORE SPEAKING) But that's what I've been asking all along, can you prove you're married?

WOMAN: Yes

I.O. STARING AT HER

WOMAN: Yes sir

I.O.: And you're telling me this is your marriage certificate?

WOMAN: Yes sir, and birth certificate of our baby

I.O.: HOLDS OUT HIS HAND. WOMAN PASSES THE CERTIFICATES TO HIM. HE LOOKS AT THE BABY'S CERTIFICATE THEN STEPS TO THE PRAM TO CONFIRM

THERE IS A BABY IN THE PRAM. HE TICKS OFF SOMETHING IN HIS NOTEPAD. THEN HE RETURNS TO THE DESK AND LAYS DOWN THE CERTIFICATE, THEN STUDIES WEDDING CERTIFICATE] What is this? [TURNS IT OVER TO READ THE BACK, SHAKES HIS HEAD]

WOMAN Our marriage certificate.

I.O.: ONLY GAZES AT HER

WOMAN: AFTER A MOMENT] Our marriage certificate sir.

IO I'm afraid I cannot read it.

WOMAN It is not written in English.

IO SMILES] No, it is not written in English. [EXAMINES THE CERTIFICATE, BUT AT A DISTANCE,; SMILES ONCE MORE Is this a foreign dialect?

WOMAN: Language of my husband's country sir.

I.O.: A language you say?

WOMAN: Yes sir

I.O.: Mm... [HE STUDIES THE CERTIFICATE. CHUCKLES] A language... I see. [HE PEERS AT HER THEN AGAIN AT THE CERTIFICATE] It is your perception that this is a language? Can you prove it's a language?

WOMAN: Pardon sir?

I.O.: You can understand English...

WOMAN: Pardon sir?

I.O.: You can understand English.

WOMAN I can sir.

IO POINTS AT WEDDING CERTIFICATE] It is your perception that this is a language.

WOMAN Sir?

IO It is your perception that this is a language.

WOMAN Sir it is a language.

IO So you say. [STUDIES CERTIFICATE, FROWNS, BAFFLED] Can you prove it's a language? [PAUSE] Prove to me this is a language? [HE STUDIES WOMAN, ENTERS A NOTE IN HIS NOTEBOOK, AND EVENTUALLY SIGHS) What about him? Can he prove it's a language. (TO MAN) You there! Prove to me this is a language?

WOMAN: He doesn't understand you. [PAUSE] Sir he doesn't understand you.

I.O.: MILDLY) You should speak when you are spoken to.

WOMAN: He doesn't understand you sir

I.O.: It is advisable that people learn the customs of the country into which they enter. Otherwise they cannot expect to seek sanctuary, let alone win asylum. In this country the culture is such that in a given situation citizens will speak only when spoken to. The obligation is on the citizen to recognise a situation, and respond to it. This recognition indicates an individual's familiarity with the customs of our country. How long have you been resident here?

WOMAN: Sir I was born here sir

I.O.: You were born here...

WOMAN: The date is listed...sir

I.O.: Thirty years and four months, is that correct?

WOMAN Yes sir

I.O.: You have been resident in this country for thirty years and four months.

WOMAN: It is my lifetime sir.

I.O. You should respond where appropriate. Did you think it appropriate?

WOMAN yes sir, my residency is my lifetime.

IO SMILES, SHAKES HEAD, GESTURES AT MAN] He is... [PAUSES, GLANCES AT NOTEBOOK]

WOMAN: My husband sir.

I.O.: AS THOUGH SHE HAS NOT SPOKEN, CONTINUES WHERE HE LEFT OFF...]  
not resident in this country. May I ask why not?

WOMAN: His parents were not here sir.

I.O.: SMILES] Where were his parents?

WOMAN: In their own country sir

I.O.: The country in which they belonged?

WOMAN yes sir.

IO Domiciled in their own country. [WHISTLES TUNELESSLY, QUIETLY AND WRITES INTO THE NOTEBOOK] They were not and never have been British nationals?

WOMAN No sir

IO Indeed. And now the son of these persons, who are not and never have been British nationals, seeks to cross an international border in order to enter an allied European power

WOMAN Sir?

IO Under the... (PUZZLED LOOK AT DOCUMENT ON TABLE) the Freedom Charter?

WOMAN: The Freedom Charter sir

I.O.: Presumably he knew what it was, this... [SQUINTS AT IT] Freedom Charter. But do tell me this, how would he know if he cannot understand English? You say he knew what it was.

WOMAN: Sir, it's written in other languages too

I.O.: Oh (SMILES) I see. I should point out to you that your tone of voice leaves a little something to be desired. Persons who wish to remain as guests in this country should show a fitting regard for its officials. One might suspect you were a subversive element. Are you a subversive element?

WOMAN: No sir.

I.O.: POINTS AT MAN) Is he?

WOMAN: No sir

I.O.: Indeed. Then a stretch of the imagination is required as to why he should depart from his own country in such unseemly haste.

WOMAN: They were going to torture him sir

I.O.: Were they! [CHUCKLES] They were going to torture him. [PAUSE] So that was his perception.

WOMAN Perception sir.

IO That they were going to torture him.

WOMAN Sir?

IO What evidence does he have to support this claim? [PAUSE] You can understand English...

WOMAN: Pardon sir?

I.O.: You can understand English.

WOMAN I can sir.

I.O.: What evidence does he have to support this claim?

WOMAN: Some friends got word to him sir and he managed to escape from the house minutes before they arrived

I.O.: Minutes before who arrived?

WOMAN: The Government security forces sir

I.O.: His Government security forces.

WOMAN: Yes sir

I.O.: By law established? [PAUSE] By law established? [WRITING INTO NOTEBOOK)  
The Government security forces by law established were arriving and he left the house before they did so. Correct? [PAUSE] Correct?

WOMAN He managed to escape sir.

IO And these friends who got word to him; do you have their names and addresses? (PEN POISED TO TAKE NOTES)

WOMAN PAUSE] No sir.

I.O.: And these friends who got word to him; do you have their names and addresses?

WOMAN: Sir, I have no names or addresses.

I.O.: Photographs, videos, web-site data; social media contact points? [CHUCKLES] DNA, finger prints, identifying scars, markers, bonds or securities, telephone numbers?

WOMAN: No sir

I.O.: POINTING AT MAN) Does he?

WOMAN: No sir

I.O.: You are certain of that are you?

WOMAN: Yes sir.

I.O.: These friends, would they substantiate his perception?

WOMAN: Yes sir most definitely.

I.O.: In that case they may present themselves at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning. [LONG PAUSE]

WOMAN Sir this is not possible.

IO However not?

WOMAN: Sir, they are in their own country.

IO The country to which they belong?

WOMAN Yes sir.

IO GESTURES AT MAN] The country to which he also belongs?

WOMAN Sir his friends disappeared shortly after he made good his escape.

I.O.: NODS] Oh that's a pity. They perhaps failed to appreciate under Section 134 Subsection 347 Paragraph P x R x Q of the International Refugee Act parties of the first, second and third parts must affirm their immediate existence in terms strictly physical. [PAUSE] You will be aware that this International Refugee Act was signed, sealed and delivered in Brussels. [chuckles] Brussels, Belgium. It demands that if you cannot prove that you are not telling

downright lies to the officials of this or any other allied European power then you must, in some other sense, convince these officials, individually and separately, and you must further do so at the port of entry on pains of the utmost, of the utmmost. (PAUSE) You do know what a port of entry is?

WOMAN: Yes sir

I.O.: This is a port of entry and I am a port of entry official. Therefore you are to convince me. (SHAKES HEAD, STARING AT THE WEDDING CERTIFICATE ETC.)

WOMAN: That is our wedding certificate sir, also birth certificates

I.O.: Unfortunately I cannot read them, they appear to be written in a form of dialect. For all I know they're a complete forgery from beginning to end. Can you prove they are not a complete forgery from beginning to end?

WOMAN: They are written in my husband's own language sir

I.O.: I cannot read it. Can he read it?

WOMAN: Yes [PAUSE] Yes sir. Sir I also can read it. We can speak together.

I.O.: Of course you can. And I shall not know what you are saying. It might be gobbledygook for all I know.

WOMAN Sir?

IO You do realise that the country this man is allegedly fleeing is one of Her Regal Highnesses oldest sovereign colonies and currently stands as the staunchest of Her friends in that particular region. It is a veritable byword for economic stability and security of wealth established. The Prince of Wales visited there less than two years ago and took a 300 Gun Salute! These guns were supplied by some of our most imminently respected armourers. Journalists from every major western outlet in the world followed His Royal Majesty's every movement with neither fear nor favour! You are aware of that.

WOMAN: Yes sir.

I.O.: People know nothing of our formalities yet have the - what shall we say - audacity? nerve? or gall, I think, is perhaps more germane, if you follow my drift... [PAUSE] You do follow my drift?

WOMAN Sir...

IO You ask a question...

WOMAN No, sir.

IO STARES AT HER

WOMAN DOES NOT FLINCH

IO You may be aware that there are those who come to our country offering not the slightest evidence to back up their claims to entitlement.

WOMAN Sir

IO You ask a question...

WOMAN No, sir

IO I see

THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER

WOMAN: Sir, he is my husband.

I.O.: And why is he your husband?

WOMAN: Pardon sir.

I.O.: Why is he your husband?

WOMAN: Sir I am married to him.

I.O.: That is not an answer, you are married to him. Why are you married to him? What possible reason could you have had to enter into such a contractual arrangement?

WOMAN: Reason sir?

I.O.: PATIENTLY) Reason, yes. Motivatory factor. There was a purpose. What was that purpose? My purpose is to serve: I serve my Monarch and my country. I have a purpose, you have a purpose. What is your purpose? Everything has a purpose. Your parents had a purpose, the birth of your child has a purpose, your marriage has a purpose. What is the purpose of your marriage? It must have some purpose. You must have had some purpose engaging in this marriage. What were you thinking to achieve? What thoughts were in your head? You do have thoughts in your head!

WOMAN: Yes sir.

I.O. STUDIES HER] Can you prove to me, at this moment in time, that you are the mother of this child? For I put it to you madam that I entertain doubts that you are a mother at all? Are you or you not a mother?

WOMAN: Yes sir

I.O.: We do have tests you know, rigorous tests, unbiased and objective tests, self-evidential tests, tests designed solely for the female member of the noncaucasian races of which you, madam, are a clear and indisputable specimen. (POINTS SIDEWAYS) My uniformed colleagues have undergone a thorough briefing for just such an expediency. What is more, they have worked earnestly. You are aware of that?

WOMAN: Yes sir

I.O.: You said of this person that he was your husband. Let me tell you that we members of Her Gracious Majesty's Immigration Office, whether inside uniform or without, simply will not countenance physiologica discrepanciers

WOMAN: I was born here sir

I.O.: So you say.

WOMAN: And on my birth certificate sir.

I.O.: And where is this so-called birth certificate?

WOMAN: POINTS TO IT] That is my birth certificate there sir

I.O.: Prove to me that that birth certificate is your birth certificate? (PAUSE)

WOMAN: Pardon sir?

I.O.: Tread warily. I must caution you that I am the duly appointed official at this Her Majesty's port of entry and that if I am unable to be convinced by the story which you are narrating then I shall have no immediate grounds on which not to order your immediate return to the land from whence you deny having come!

WOMAN: Sir I was born here

I.O.: Where exactly?

WOMAN: Glasgow, Scotland sir

I.O.: I said where exactly

WOMAN: It tells you on the birth certificate sir

I.O.: On whose birth certificate?

WOMAN: POINTING TO DOCUMENT) Mine sir

I.O.: I see. Which may or may not be a forgery. Are you or are you not acquainted with forgers?

WOMAN: No sir

I.O.: Have you now or did you at any time in the past become, or threaten to so become, a person whose friends and/or relatives, associates and/or distant acquaintances are harbouring, have harboured or threaten to harbour at any time whatsoever, any thoughts - no matter how conceivable or inconceivable they may be - thoughts linked in any way whatsoever, to the possible misrepresentation of a member of Her Gracious Majesty's citizenry. (PAUSE) You appear unable to answer. You do understand English?

WOMAN: Yes sir

I.O.: Then why are you wasting my time? Why am I speaking to you?

WOMAN: On account of my husband's right to asylum sir

I.O.: Who's right to asylum?

WOMAN: My husband's sir

I.O.: And just who is your husband?

WOMAN: POINTS TO MAN)

I.O.: He is your husband? (PUZZLED)

WOMAN: Sir,we are married

I.O.: STARES AT WOMAN BEFORE SPEAKING) But that's what I've been asking all along, can you prove you're married?

WOMAN: Yes

I.O.: Yes what?

WOMAN: Yes sir (POINTS) That is my marriage certificate

I.O.: SNAPS FINGER & WOMAN GIVES HIM THE CERTIFICATE. HE STUDIES IT THEN FLINGS IT DOWN ON THE TABLE) But it's absolutely useless, I cant read the damn thing. It's not written in my language

WOMAN: No

I.O.: No what?

WOMAN: No sir

WOMAN: A language of my husband's country sir, where we married

I.O.: A language you say?

WOMAN: Yes sir

I.O.: Doesnt look like a language to me. Can you prove it's a language?

WOMAN: Pardon sir?

I.O.: Can you not understand English? (PAUSE] I'm waiting for an answer!

end