

KIMALIA

A new play by Tim Luscombe

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Scene Two.

Norland, a North European Republic.

In a windowless office in Carlsbridge, the capital city of Norland, Marion, recently arrived from Naguswindi, is being interviewed by a Border Officer, Vincent.

Vincent is shadowed by a Trainee. Also present is Marion's Translator.

The Translator, also originally from Naguswindi, but now bilingual, has an accent when talking to Vincent, but not when talking to Marion.

Marion: The first time, it was in an avocado orchard, with...a worker on the, a farm. He said it was to make me a woman. 'A woman needs a man, not another woman', and I should be taught.

Translator: The first time was with a farm labourer. Under some avocado trees. The man said she needed to be taught how to be a woman.

Vincent: You reported him?

Translator: Did you report him?

Marion: To who?

Translator: Who to?

Vincent: To your family, to the police of course.

Translator: Your family, the police.

Marion: My mother said I was stubborn; I should marry and have children.

Translator: My mother encouraged me to get married.

Vincent: But you *are* married.

Translator: You're married.

Marion: This was before.

Translator: That was earlier.

Vincent: And the police? When you reported the rape to the police, did they arrest the farm worker?

Translator: What did the police do?

Marion: I didn't... How could I...?

Translator: I didn't report to the police.

Vincent: Why?

Translator: Why not?

Marion: It's illegal to be like this / where I'm from.

Translator: The death penalty exists for being homosexual in Naguswindi.

Vincent: Ah, but you say you're a lesbian.

Translator: But you're a, a female homosexual. (*To Vincent*) There is no polite word for what she is in Taswindi.

Marion: Yes.

Translator: Yes.

Vincent: Well, there might be laws against male homosexuals in what's-it-called, but there's no law against being a lesbian, is there?

Translator: There is no law against that.

Marion: Is he joking? The police would have beaten me up. / The police do the raping.

Translator: The police beat up both lesbians and gay men.

Vincent: (*To Trainee*) Our documentation's pretty clear on this. Get out the OPWs and the VOIs, yeah? See if there's anything about lesbians in how's-your-father. (*To Marion*) So that was the first time. The second time?

Translator: The second?

Marion: My husband paid for some men to rape me –

Translator: My husband –

Vincent: Yeah, your husband. See, here's the thing. I don't see how you can claim you're a lesbian if you're married. I mean, why would you get married? / I'm not an expert, but that seems to me like a bit of a retrogressive step, you get me?

Translator: Why would a homosexual woman get married?

Marion: For protection. / My family made me. I had to.

Translator: All Na'swindi women are married. Those who are not, are persecuted because they are considered evil. / Possessed.

Marion: Tell him, I got married to stop them taking me to the exorcisms, / to stop the chicken entrails, and the candles, and the holy water and the oils. To stop them pushing ground red peppers up my vagina. To stop them raping me.

Translator: She got married to stop the persecution, all the... remedies.

Pause.

Marion: Did you say all that?

Translator: I said enough.

Vincent: You have sex with your husband?

Translator: Do you have sex with your husband?

Marion: Is that important? Why are we only talking about sex?

Translator: Why do you want to know this?

Vincent: *(To Marion)* Look, dear... *(To Translator)* Look, will you explain to her that to get into Norland she's gonna have to convince me of three things? One, that she's a lesbian. Two, that because she's a lesbian she'll be persecuted if she goes back to hoojamaflip –

Trainee: Naguswindi –

Vincent: Yeah, I know, Nagu-bloody-swindi – and three, that the state of her residence offers her no protection. If she's to get asylum in Norland based on her sexuality, then we need to talk about sex. / Make sense? Tell her that.

Translator: He wants to know everything about your life in order to make a balanced decision about you.

Vincent: You said you've been raped more than once. / First time, avocado orchard. Second?

Translator: He wants to know more about the rapes.

Marion: My husband paid for me to be raped by three men.

Translator: Her husband paid for her to be raped by three men.

Vincent: Stop you there. Her husband paid for her to be raped by three men? Is that what she said?

Translator: Er, yeah.

Vincent: Her husband paid the men to rape her?

Translator: Right. It is called corrective rape.

Vincent: Alright. Proceed.

Translator: Go on.

Marion: He wanted me to understand my duties as a woman. / After raping me, two went back to their girlfriends. The third one stayed with me for two days and raped me many times. Then my husband returned. It was from those men I got the AIDS virus.

Translator: This was to teach me a lesson. Afterwards, two left. The other raped me many more times. My husband came back. I am HIV positive from this experience.

Vincent: Right. Mind you, if it was actually like she describes, I don't think she'd be looking as good as she does. Don't translate that. (*Aside to Trainee*) I told you. See? It's these people bringing AIDS into the country.

Trainee: Well, I think –

Vincent: (*To Translator*) Moving on. Sex with women.

Translator: He wants to talk about sex with women.

Marion: What does he want to know?

Translator: What in particular?

Vincent: Describe your relationships with women.

Translator: Tell him what kind of relations you've had with women.

Marion: I can't.

Translator: She cannot.

Vincent: Why not?

Translator: I imagine she's frightened.

Vincent: Frightened? Well, tell her, if she can't back up her claim I take it there isn't one. If she's lying about this, then I'll assume her entire application is a lie.

Translator: She... In her country, it is men like you, men in uniforms I mean, who beat up lesbians and gays. She is frightened.

Vincent: Well you can tell her that I'm very sorry, but this is the uniform of Norland's Border Force. She might not like it – I'm not a major fan of it myself – the nylon [collar] chaffs like a bugger – but if I'm not to refuse her, she'd better start talking.

Translator: He says you should be honest.

Marion: What does he want to know?

Translator: What do you want to know?

Vincent: God's truth. Like pulling teeth. Look, I don't care which way this goes. I've got two stamps here. One says 'stay granted', the other says 'refused'. I don't care which one I press in the old inkpad and put on her form. I really, really don't. I've got her and a poof from Jamaica standing between me and a lunchbox full of meatballs that I care more about. But if *she* cares, she'd better start telling me how much of a dyke she is.

Trainee: Lesbian.

Vincent: / Lesbian.

Translator: / Please tell him everything in order to make a convincing case.

Trainee: (*Presenting a departmental folder*) Here's the bit about Naguswindi.

Translator: The situation in her country... Possibly she has never spoken of these things to anyone –

Vincent: (*Stopping the Translator*) Just a moment. (*Reads*). Oh dear, oh dear. Just as I thought. / Doesn't have any intell on lesbians.

Marion: What's happening? / What's he saying?

Translator: She wants to know –

Vincent: *(To Marion, as if to a deaf child)* There is no documentation of state-sanctioned persecution of lesbians in your country. / *(Normal)* So, if there ain't no persecution going on, I'm not convinced that returning you would represent much of a danger to your person.

Translator: There is no evidence of persecution of female homosexuals in Naguswindi. / You will be safe if I send you back.

Marion: But there is. There is. Why else would I come here? Tell him. He doesn't know. Tell him!

Translator: She insists that persecution takes place.

Vincent: Oh really? Well, I think if serious abuse was happening, we'd know about it, don't you? *(Waving the folder)* This is the objective evidence. This is what I go on. And if it doesn't say lesbians are in danger in Naguswindi, then they're safe. *(To Marion)* And if living where you live is a problem, then move – to another region or wherever.

Translator: You can relocate within Naguswindi.

Marion: Relocate? But... Hide...? The police are the same. The people are the same everywhere. A woman alone will always be suspicious. They'll find me and punish me again.

Translator: Moving is not an option. I will not be safe if I move. / I will be punished.

Vincent: Frankly, I'm not convinced you're a lesbian anyway. / You've talked a lot about sex with men. I've heard nothing about any girlfriends.

Translator: You've not convinced him you're a female homosexual. He's sending you back.

Marion: I'll kill myself before you send me back.

Translator: I would rather kill myself than return.

Vincent: Well, that's up to her. I'm just doing my job.

He picks up a stamp, inks it, and stamps Marion's application.

To read the entire play, please contact Tim directly on tim@timluscombe.com +44 (0) 777 978 9198

