

‘FAMILY FIRST’

A PLAY

**Written by Kaya Kagimu Mukasa
Story line by Raymond Byabazaire**

In loving memory of Annette Martha Katusiime Abwooli

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Prologue:

The story is about an average Kampala (Uganda) family. It chronicles the challenges they face following a tragedy, which test their commitment and loyalty to each other.

CHARACTERS

Eddie Kaddu

Sylvia Kaddu

Kaggwa

Mirembe

Nankya

Sam Kaddu

Eddie's wife

Eddie and Sylvia's 12-year old son

Eddie and Sylvia's 7-year old daughter

Their neighbour

Eddie's wealthy brother

SCENE ONE

At the breakfast table

EDDIE ... Do you people eat soap or what?

SYLVIA You bought one bar of soap the other week.

EDDIE I did.

SYLVIA We use it to wash clothes as well as dishes, you know that.

EDDIE I do.

SYLVIA Then what is your problem?

EDDIE I don't have a problem, it just seems like you become wasteful when it comes to soap.

(He counts money and gives it to Sylvia)

SYLVIA Thank you but the money is not enough.

EDDIE The money is enough, it is the grocery list that is long. Take off some items and make do with the money I have given you.

SYLVIA What should I take off the list, sugar, salt, maize flour, beans or toothpaste?

EDDIE You leave those items and take off the rest.

SYLVIA Those are the only items on the list.

EDDIE Will we have the grocery list for breakfast?

(Sylvia gets up and fetches a flask of tea and some buns. She returns almost immediately and places them in front of him. She also brings cups and side plates)

EDDIE Don't you have any money left over from last week's shopping?

SYLVIA No

EDDIE There is no milk in the tea.

SYLVIA You struck it off the list.

EDDIE Do you leave out everything that I strike off the list?

SYLVIA No.

EDDIE Then how come there is no milk?

SYLVIA You insisted that I strike it off the list.

EDDIE What about Kaggwa and Mirembe?

SYLVIA You said that Kaggwa is now 12 years so he doesn't need anymore milk to grow up and Mirembe is now 7 years old and not a baby anymore so she too doesn't need milk.

EDDIE Since you have all the answers, that makes me the bad guy.

SYLVIA That is not what I said.

EDDIE That is what you implied.

SYLVIA It is still so early in the morning and I will not get into an argument with you.

EDDIE Are you saying that I am quarrelsome?

SYLVIA I will check on the children, at this rate they will be late for school.

EDDIE I hope that won't be my fault too.

(Sylvia calmly ignores him, walks past him and goes to check on the children)

EDDIE I don't like it when Sylvia brings that stupid grocery list when I don't have money.

There are days when her timing is so wrong. Like today. I don't have even one coin in my wallet and she goes off about a shopping list.

Should a man be crucified because of a shopping list? If I tell her to cut the list, she should cut the list and keep quiet. When I am ready with the money, I will tell her.

(Sylvia returns)

SYLVIA Kaggwa is almost ready. He was ironing his shirt again as he usually does. He claims that there was a slight fold in it. Mirembe is moving very slowly. It will take a crane to move her from point A to point B. She looks a bit pale.

EDDIE You worry too much about Mirembe.

(Kaggwa bursts in)

KAGGWA You see Mummy, the fold is no longer there.

SYLVIA Yes I can see. You are very smart.

KAGGWA Thank you. As a prefect, I have to set a good example for the other children.

SYLVIA Good for you.

KAGGWA Good morning Daddy.

EDDIE Good morning Kaggwa, did you sleep well?

KAGGWA Yes I did.

EDDIE Come here, the tie of the smart class prefect looks a bit crooked. I think we should straighten it.

(Kaggwa goes to his father, who straightens his tie)

 There, it is alright now.

KAGGWA Thank you Daddy.

(Kaggwa settles down to have breakfast)

SYLVIA Let me go and check on Mirembe again.

KAGGWA It will take a 16-wheeler trailer to get her out of the bedroom today. She said she was very tired.

EDDIE Tired, so early in the morning?

KAGGWA That is what she said.

SYLVIA It must be the wound on her knee that is bothering her. She told me yesterday that her knee hurts when she walks.

KAGGWA She got another wound on her ankle.

SYLVIA When did she get that one?

KAGGWA This morning.

EDDIE How?

KAGGWA She knocked herself against her suitcase which she left on the floor.

EDDIE But her suitcase is not made out of tin.

KAGGWA No, it is made out of hard plastic.

SYLVIA My daughter is so delicate, she bruises so easily, let me go and check on her.

EDDIE Give her some time, she will soon come.

SYLVIA If I give her anymore time, she will be late for school.

(She goes off anxiously)

EDDIE How is school Kaggwa?

KAGGWA It is okay. We have an English test today

EDDIE Are you ready for it?

KAGGWA Yes.

EDDIE That is good.

KAGGWA My teacher Mrs. Mambule is very happy with you and Mummy.

EDDIE Why?

KAGGWA Because you and Mummy sign my homework regularly.

EDDIE It feels good to sign homework that is done carefully and properly.

KAGGWA It is not always easy, but I am happy that I can manage.

EDDIE Nothing good comes easy.

KAGGWA I will remember that.

EDDIE That's my boy.

KAGGWA Daddy?

EDDIE Yes?

KAGGWA There is this bully at school.

EDDIE What about the bully?

KAGGWA He makes everybody's life difficult in class.

EDDIE Even yours?

KAGGWA Yes.

EDDIE But you are a prefect. You should be able to handle him.

KAGGWA It is not always easy.

EDDIE Why do you say that?

KAGGWA He is big and strong and even his parents have a lot of money. He shows off a lot.

EDDIE Does he scare you?

KAGGWA Not only me, the whole class. He takes children's pencils and breaks them or throws the pencils out of the window just before a lesson starts.

EDDIE Have you told your teacher Mrs. Mambule?

KAGGWA It doesn't help much.

EDDIE What do you mean?

KAGGWA She does something small. She tells him to go and pick the pencil and bring it back to the owner.

EDDIE And does he?

KAGGWA Yes, he does, but when Mrs. Mambule leaves and it is let's say break time haaa....

EDDIE What happens?

KAGGWA He will come and take away your money and anything to eat and drink. And then, he tells you not to say, because he will beat you. Or spoil your book or anything that can make you feel bad.

(Sylvia returns with Mirembe. Mirembe is dragging her feet)

EDDIE Good morning Mirembe.

MIREMBE Good morning Daddy.

EDDIE Did you sleep well?

MIREMBE Not very well. My knee is still hurting.

EDDIE I am sorry my dear, let me see.

(Mirembe goes to her Daddy. She could use some pampering)

Did you show it to Mummy?

MIREMBE Yes, I did, and there is also another wound on my ankle. And I also showed it to Mummy.

EDDIE What did she say?

MIREMBE She put on some lotion.

EDDIE That is good, it will get better.

MIREMBE Yes, it feels good, because she put on the lotion nicely and I didn't feel any pain.

EDDIE That is very good. Now you have your breakfast quickly, so that you don't get to school late.

(Mirembe settles down to her breakfast)

MIREMBE Mummy?

SYLVIA Yes?

MIREMBE But I feel weak.

SYLVIA Finish your breakfast and you will feel stronger.

MIREMBE I have eaten more than half, and I am still feeling weak, which means that breakfast also doesn't have any strength.

EDDIE Mirembe, first finish your breakfast and then we will see how to get your strength back.

MIREMBE Mummy,

SYLVIA Yes,

MIREMBE There is something in my tea.

SYLVIA What is it?

MIREMBE Here, you see.

(Sylvia goes to check what is in Mirembe's tea)

SYLVIA I will pour the tea and get you another cup.

MIREMBE No,

SYLVIA Why?

MIREMBE Because my throat even feels small, so it won't be able to swallow anything anymore. Which means, that I won't be able to get any strength to go to school.

SYLVIA Mirembe –

(There is a knock on the door)

EDDIE I wonder who it is, who has come so early in the morning?

KAGGWA There can only be one answer to that question. Madam Nankya.

MIREMBE She is the one who usually comes to visit during breakfast.

KAGGWA Not only breakfast, it can be any meal, or every meal.

MIREMBE And then she starts off by saying, I won't sit, I am in a hurry.

KAGGWA And then she ends up sitting.

MIREMBE For a very long time.

KAGGWA And eating more than everybody at the table, put together.

MIREMBE And also ask for a little sugar, or a little salt, or a little rice or a little ...

EDDIE Now children, you should not say such untruths about grown-ups.

MIREMBE But Daddy, it is the truth.

SYLVIA Still, what your father is trying to tell you is that, it is not good to talk about grown-ups or anybody for that matter like that.

MIREMBE But Mummy,

EDDIE Subject is closed. Go and open the door.

MIREMBE Okay

(Mirembe returns with Nankya following close behind her. Mirembe gives them a knowing smile)

NANKYA Good morning all, I won't sit, I am in a hurry.

SYLVIA Good morning Nankya, won't you take a cup of tea?

NANKYA No, no, I wouldn't want you to go through so much trouble because of me.

SYLVIA The tea is in the flask, all I have to do is pick a cup from the cupboard and place it on the table in front of you. I am sure you will be able to do the rest for yourself.

NANKYA In that case then, I will take some tea. Just a little to keep you all company.

(Sylvia gets a cup and places it in front of Nankya)

Good morning Mr. Kaddu.

(Nankya helps herself to about half of what is on the table and starts eating)

EDDIE Good morning.

NANKYA Good morning children.

BOTH Good morning Madam Nankya.

(Nankya gets more to eat and more tea. The children giggle)

EDDIE Children hurry up with your breakfast

(The children giggle even more)

SYLVIA Children, you heard what your Daddy said. Hurry up.

MIREMBE But Mummy, I am not feeling well. I am very weak.

SYLVIA Come, let me feel your forehead and see if you have a temperature.
(Mirembe goes to her mother. Sylvia feels Mirembe's forehead and looks concerned)

SYLVIA Your forehead is hot. I think I should take you to see a doctor. Look at your blouse, I'll tuck it in properly for you.

(Sylvia tucks in Mirembe's blouse)

I have adjusted the button of this skirt twice in three months and it is loose yet again. One would think that you don't get enough food to eat.

Now go and finish your tea, then we can go and see the doctor.

MIREMBE I don't want.

EDDIE What did you say?

MIREMBE I am sorry. I have had enough thank you.

EDDIE That's better.

SYLVIA Let me see your cup.

(Mirembe brings the cup to her mother)

Finish the tea, it is very little.

MIREMBE But Mummy,

EDDIE Go ahead Mirembe, you heard your mother.

(Mirembe reluctantly takes the tea and finishes it)

That's my girl.

(Mirembe smiles)

NANKYA Children are funny. Can you imagine begging someone to eat and drink something as nice as this?

KAGGWA Mirembe has always been like that. She doesn't finish what she is given to eat and drink. You have to tell her to finish her food all the time, all the time.

MIREMBE But I finish.

KAGGWA Sometimes you don't. I see you.

MIREMBE Only a few times.

SYLVIA Okay, let us get going. Mirembe, go and get your sweater.

MIREMBE Okay Mummy.
(Mirembe goes)

SYLVIA Kaggwa, go and get your sweater too.

KAGGWA But I am not feeling cold.

SYLVIA That changes all the time. If you don't need it, you can put it in your bag.

KAGGWA Mummy, did you know that today we have a test in English?

SYLVIA Yes, you told me at least six times since I woke you up this morning.

KAGGWA Oh, really, I guess I had forgotten.

SYLVIA Kaggwa,

KAGGWA Yes Mummy, can I help you clear the table?

SYLVIA It is very nice of you to offer to help. But before you help me, did you forget your sweater at school again?

KAGGWA I didn't really forget it, but the classroom was locked before I could take the sweater out of my desk.

EDDIE You have to learn to be responsible for your things. Take better care of your sweater. You always say that a prefect-

KAGGWA Should show a good example. I guess this prefect did not really get it this time. I will remember to bring it home today, I promise. Sorry Mummy.

SYLVIA I will take your word. I wonder what is keeping Mirembe
(Calls)
Mirembe
(No answer)

Mirembe.

(No answer)

Kaggwa, go and call your sister.

KAGGWA Okay Mummy.

(Kaggwa hurries off to get his sister)

SYLVIA I know someone who is always losing his sweaters. Now when he tells Kaggwa to take better care of his sweater, it is very interesting.

NANKYA *(Who has been eating and drinking tea all this time)* Who?

SYLVIA I give you one guess.

(Sylvia looks at Nankya. Nankya looks at her. Sylvia points her mouth at Eddie. Sylvia and Nankya laugh)

EDDIE Who are you laughing at?

SYLVIA Nobody.

EDDIE I know what happens when you two get together. You laugh at everything and anything. You can even laugh at a fly that has landed on the table.

(The women laugh even more)

SYLVIA These children, at this rate they will surely be late today.

(calls)

Kaggwa ... Mirembe ..., hurry up. Kaggwa, Kaggwa-

NANKYA I wonder if you could give me just a little sugar.

(Kaggwa rushes in, he is panicking)

KAGGWA Mummy, Mirembe -

SYLVIA What about Mirembe?

KAGGWA I told her that we go and she fell down. Now she is even bleeding in the nose.

SYLVIA Bleeding in the nose? Eddie, Mirembe is-

(Sylvia runs off in mid sentence followed closely by Eddie and Kaggwa. Nankya follows reluctantly)

NANKYA Mirembe also, now my sugar ...

*

SCENE TWO

Sylvia comes in. She looks very tired and sleepy. She sits on a chair for a while. It is obvious that she is battling with deep disturbing emotions.

SYLVIA Lord, I need strength and only you can give it to me. Please give me the strength to go through this.

I will have a quick shower, and then I can go back to hospital.

(She gets up and goes to have her shower, dragging herself)

(Kaggwa enters with cups, he places them on the table. He goes and returns almost immediately with a flask of tea and bread. He moves quickly and purposefully throughout)

KAGGWA Dear Lord,
I pray for Mirembe
She is in so much pain.
That is what Mummy said.

Please take away her pain.

It is so quiet here without her.

I even asked her teacher to give her special exams when she leaves the hospital and she agreed.

I will help her to prepare for the exams Lord.
Just make her pain go away ... please

Thank you Lord,
Amen.

(Sylvia returns looking a little better. She has changed her clothes. Kaggwa is happy to see her.)

KAGGWA Mummy.

SYLVIA Kaggwa.

KAGGWA I was missing you, I wasn't sure you would make it to come and wish me luck for my remaining exams. Yesterday's luck helped, the exams were not all that difficult. How is Mirembe?

SYLVIA I promised that I would come and wish you luck. Mirembe is very weak.

KAGGWA But she will get better right?

SYLVIA I would like that very much.

KAGGWA I asked her teacher to give her special exams when she comes out of hospital and she said "Yes".

SYLVIA That was very thoughtful of you. I also talked to her yesterday.

KAGGWA I even prayed to God for Mirembe's quick recovery.

SYLVIA Thank you Kaggwa. So it is Math today isn't it.

KAGGWA Maths and SST. Yesterday was English and Science. You said that I could go and see Mirembe immediately after my exam this afternoon. Will you pick me up from school and take me to hospital?

SYLVIA Yes, I will come for you.

KAGGWA You look very tired.

SYLVIA I am.

KAGGWA I will pour some tea for you in a cup.

SYLVIA Thank you Kaggwa, but I think you should have your breakfast now so that you won't be late for your exams.

KAGGWA It's okay Mummy, it will only take a minute to pour the tea.

SYLVIA Let's do this, you pour a cup of tea for me and I will pour a cup of tea for you. How's that?

KAGGWA Cool.

(They pour tea for each other)

SYLVIA You hurry up now. Would you like some bread?

KAGGWA Yes, please.

SYLVIA Here.

KAGGWA Thank you.

(Brief silence. Both are deep in thought. They eventually take their tea as they speak)

SYLVIA Remember not to panic.

KAGGWA Yes, Mummy.

SYLVIA If you find a number is difficult, leave it and go to an easier one. You can always come back to the difficult one later.

KAGGWA Okay.

SYLVIA Do you have money for break?

KAGGWA Yes, Daddy gave me money yesterday. A lot. So, I still have some I will use today.

SYLVIA Good.

KAGGWA Mummy,

SYLVIA Yes,

KAGGWA Daddy doesn't talk much since Mirembe was taken to hospital.

SYLVIA He must have a lot on his mind. You know, work and that kind of thing.

KAGGWA Is he very worried about Mirembe?

SYLVIA He is anxious about Mirembe, like all of us. He is also very busy at work. He carries some work home now, so he concentrates on it a lot.

KAGGWA I know, because you are staying at the hospital most of the time, he has to come home early to stay with me. I like it, but sometimes it is like he is not even here.

SYLVIA He was also complaining about the house being very quiet. He said that you were reading for your exams and he didn't want to disturb you.

KAGGWA Did he really tell you that?

SYLVIA Yes, he told me yesterday, when I came back to change my clothes. He even said that he would be happy when your exams are over

KAGGWA Really?

SYLVIA Because then, there will be some voices heard around the house.

KAGGWA I have also been very quiet because I was studying hard. I want to get good grades.

SYLVIA You work hard at your studies which is a good thing.

KAGGWA Madam Nankya was here last night, soon after Daddy returned from office.

SYLVIA Okay,

KAGGWA She insisted on waiting for you to come back from hospital and tell her how Mirembe is. Daddy told her many times, maybe even five, that you would not come back last night, but this morning-

SYLVIA And

KAGGWA I tried to tell Daddy that Madam Nankya wasn't really waiting for you, but for something else, but he didn't get it.

SYLVIA Like what?

KAGGWA She wanted to invite herself for supper

SYLVIA And did she?

KAGGWA Yes, she ate so much food that I almost did not have enough.

SYLVIA You must be exaggerating, Kaggwa.

KAGGWA No, I am not. You also know her. I wish she would stop coming here and eating everything.

SYLVIA Kaggwa,

KAGGWA Why does she keep coming here to eat? Doesn't she have food at her home?

SYLVIA I don't know

(Eddie walks in cautiously)

KAGGWA Good morning Daddy.

EDDIE Good morning Kaggwa, did you sleep well?

KAGGWA Sort of.

EDDIE *(To Sylvia)* How is she?

SYLVIA *(Tries to make light of the situation)* A “good morning” to me would be good too.

EDDIE You know that even if I don’t say those exact words, I have as good as said them. So how is she?

SYLVIA Still weak.

EDDIE Oh,
(Eddie paces back and forth around the room)

SYLVIA Kaggwa, it is really getting late for you.

KAGGWA I am done Mummy.

(He gets up, clears his cup and plate quickly and hurries to the bedroom to pick his school bag. Eddie stops pacing and sits on a chair next to Sylvia)

EDDIE What does the doctor say?

SYLVIA Not good.

EDDIE How bad is it, should I worry?

SYLVIA Yes.

(Eddie faces downward, holds his hands together and rests them on his head)

SYLVIA Given Mirembe’s history of fatigue, paleness, weight loss, repeated infections, bruising easily and nose bleeds, Dr. Lulimbwa decided to take a blood test and a biopsy of the bone marrow. This was after several consultations over the month of course.

EDDIE And,

(Kaggwa comes in full of purpose from the bedroom with his school bag)

KAGGWA Okay, I am off.

SYLVIA Good luck.

KAGGWA Thank you.

EDDIE Prove to the exams what a great prefect you are.

KAGGWA I will.
(Kaggwa goes out with a determined stride)

EDDIE What were the results of the tests?

SYLVIA Brace yourself.
(Eddie looks very earnestly and closely into Sylvia's eyes)

EDDIE I already did woman. What's your problem?

SYLVIA Leukemia.

EDDIE What?

SYLVIA Leukemia

EDDIE Will she ...

SYLVIA Will she what?

EDDIE Will she, can she, is there treatment she can get?

SYLVIA Dr. Lulimbwa said that chemotherapy is the most effective method of treating leukemia.

EDDIE Isn't that very expensive? I mean aren't there other treatments ...

SYLVIA He also said that various anti cancer drugs can be used, either in combination or as single agents.

EDDIE Now that seems to complicate matters even more.
(Sylvia looks down at the table as she speaks)

SYLVIA Also, transfusions of blood components and antibiotics are used as supportive treatments. *(Eddie looks blankly away from Sylvia)*

EDDIE Doesn't get any easier.

SYLVIA They also use therapy of the central nervous system as standard treatment to illuminate hidden cells.

EDDIE What else?

SYLVIA Bone marrow transplant.

EEDIE Translate that into money terms.

(Sylvia sighs)

SYLVIA Extremely expensive. It is the kind of money we will never be able to afford.

(Eddie gets up and starts pacing up and down again. His thought process is definitely painful. Sylvia gets up slowly and clears the table)

SYLVIA I am going back to hospital soon. I need some money to take care of hospital expenses.

(Eddie reaches into his pocket, gets some money and some more from his wallet in his back pocket)

EDDIE Here. That enough?

SYLVIA Yes. Thank you.

EDDIE When did you know?

SYLVIA About three weeks ago.

EDDIE Why didn't you tell me?

SYLVIA I couldn't face the truth then, myself. It was very difficult for me. I had to get used to the idea before I could share it with anyone.

(Eddie is upset)

EDDIE I am not anyone.

SYLVIA I know, but I couldn't get myself to talk to you before, I am sorry.

EDDIE Sorry, did you say sorry? You keep information about my daughter from me and you say you are sorry?

SYLVIA Yes, I am sorry. I wish I could explain better, but I can't.

EDDIE What did you think I would do to you? Eat you, beat you, pour water that has washed fish dishes over you?

SYLVIA No.

EDDIE No what?

SYLVIA Don't misunderstand this, but there was nothing you could do.

EDDIE Are you saying that I am incapable of taking care of my daughter?

(At this point Sylvia is exhausted and it shows)

SYLVIA No.

EDDIE Then what, it is like you are saying I don't care enough to do anything about my sick daughter.

SYLVIA Not that.

EDDIE I am an incompetent parent, is that it?

SYLVIA I have never said anything like that about you.

EDDIE You just did.

SYLVIA Eddie, stop. Please.

EDDIE Stop, stop, did you say stop?

SYLVIA What I meant was.

EDDIE You don't have to tell me, it is clear.

SYLVIA What I meant was that you would not have done anything to me when I told you. I knew that you would support me. I actually counted on your support. I just wanted to get all the facts straight.

EDDIE Sylvia what-

(Nankya enters without knocking with containers she took the previous evening with food in them)

NANKYA Good morning people.

(She places the containers on the table)

Sylvia welcome back from hospital. How is Mirembe?

SYLVIA She is weak.

NANKYA She has been weak for a very long time. I think I will come with you when you are going back to hospital to see her.

SYLVIA Okay.

NANKYA Mr. Kaddu, thank you for the food. I have brought back the containers.

EDDIE Welcome.

NANKYA Aren't you going to work today?

EDDIE I am.

NANKYA Aren't you going to have breakfast today?

EDDIE I have already finished.

NANKYA Eeeee, you had it early today?

EDDIE I had it at the usual time I have breakfast.

NANKYA Ohooo, anyway, I just wondered because there is nothing on the table, not even a flask of tea.

SYLVIA Actually we were just about to leave when you came.

NANKYA So soon,

EDDIE It is the right time and I am sure you also have somewhere to go.

NANKYA Me. No.

SYLVIA But you said that you were coming with me to hospital to see Mirembe.

NANKYA Eh, yes.

EDDIE (*Pointedly*) I will expect a call from you the minute you get to the hospital. I will report to the office and come straight to hospital.

(*He exits, furious*)

SYLVIA Okay.

NANKYA Where is the bag going to hospital?

SYLVIA Which bag?

NANKYA The one with the flask of tea, bread and whatever else you will need to use at the hospital?

SYLVIA I didn't make tea to take to the hospital.

NANKYA Eee, no, you cannot go to hospital like that. It will be too expensive for you.

SYLVIA Expensive, how?

NANKYA To pay for my transport to and from hospital and also to buy tea and food there for me.

SYLVIA Nankya, today I don't have money, so it's okay for you not to come to the hospital. Medical bills are very expensive. When I get money, you can come with me to hospital.

NANKYA That is why I said that we make tea from here and something to eat and take it to hospital.

SYLVIA I am time bad, Nankya, I will make tea another time.

NANKYA But it doesn't take long. I can make it while you wait. It will take a very short time. I am telling you the truth.

SYLVIA No, Nankya, there is no time for that.

NANKYA No, there is a little time.

(She runs to the kitchen. Sylvia is furious with her)

SYLVIA Nankya, don't.

(The phone rings)

SYLVIA *Hullo*

Sam, it's nice to hear from you.

Mirembe is very weak.

Yes, we are well.

Kaggwa has gone to do his Maths and SST exams.

Eddie has gone to report to work and come to the hospital soon after that.

I will definitely keep you posted.

I will be strong. I have been praying a lot about it.

Eddie has not taken it well at all.

I will be going to hospital shortly.

Yes, I am trying to rest in as far as is humanly possible under the circumstances.

Thank you for calling Sam.

Bye.

(Calls out to Nankya as she makes her way to the kitchen)

SYLVIA *Nankya, what is wrong with you today?*

(The phone rings again. It is extremely inconvenient for Sylvia. She almost barks into the phone)

Hullo

Yes, this is Sylvia Kaddu, what can I do for you?

Oh, Dr. Lulimbwa, how are you?

How is Mirembe?

I am still at home but actually walking out the door to come to hospital.

What do you mean I shouldn't hurry?

Nothing can shock me anymore about Mirembe, you know that.

What is it? You can tell me over the phone.

You would rather not? Okay, I will be right there.

No you don't have to call Eddie. He is just reporting to work and coming straight to the hospital. I am sure we will get there at about the same time so we won't keep you waiting for too long.

Thank you for calling Doctor, I will be there in about 30 minutes.

Bye.

(Calls out to Nankya)

Nankya, I have gone to hospital

She grabs her bag and rushes out

Nankya comes out about half a minute later with a flask of tea, a polythene bag, and half a loaf of bread

NANKYA *Sylvia, I am ready. You see? I told you I would hurry, now all I have to do is pack the tea and bread in this kaveera and we can go.*

(She puts the things hurriedly in the polythene bag)

Sylvia, Sylvia, I said that I am ready. Come and we go. As she is not coming. Let me check. But the bag was in this chair. Could she have left me? Sylvia, Sylvia?

(She checks all over the house and returns deflated)

I think she was serious about leaving me. Anyway, let me just take this tea, so that it doesn't get spoilt.

Now they did not leave the keys, which means that I can't leave until they return. When I finish my tea, I will go and check on what is there that I can cook for lunch. Or let me go and check as I take my tea.

(She gets up and goes to the kitchen with her tea and bread.)

SCENE THREE

(Sam, Eddie's brother is visiting the Kaddus. It is 6 months since Mirembe died. Sylvia and Sam sit at the table taking a cup of tea. It is mid afternoon. They hold a light-hearted conversation)

SAM You get better and better each time I see you.

SYLVIA It's not easy.

SAM It's been 6 months since ... and I still expect Mirembe to come out and give me a big hug and give me her standing line.

 "Uncle Sammy, I have been good all week, may I have some ice cream please?
Chocolate flavour please. Thank you"

 Even before you say yes or no.

(Light laughter)

SYLVIA Yes, Mirembe was fond of doing that. I miss her so much.

SAM We all do. She was very special to all of us in different ways.

SYLVIA She was.

SAM Absolutely. How is Kaggwa holding up?

SYLVIA He definitely misses her terribly, but he is very brave about his loss. He has matured so much.

SAM He has always been a levelheaded boy.

SYLVIA I know, but now he is like he has assumed the responsibility of holding the family together.

SAM You shouldn't be surprised.

SYLVIA Why do you say that?

SAM He is my nephew, it runs in the blood.

SYLVIA Oh, Sam, you are so full of yourself.

SAM But of course.

(Light laughter)

SYLVIA On a serious note Sam, thank you so much for all the support you gave us during Mirembe's funeral arrangements.

SAM I will stop coming here.

SYLVIA Why?

SAM Because each time I come here, you thank me. I have told you many times before, Mirembe was my niece or rather my daughter too. I would have done anything to save her life. I almost killed him. I kept on wondering why he hadn't come to me for financial assistance like he usually does.

SYLVIA The morning that Mirembe died is when I told him about the doctor's diagnosis.

SAM Yes, I remember, I too talked to you that morning before I came to hospital.

SYLVIA At that time all I knew was that the treatment was very expensive and we couldn't afford it. But soon after I talked to you, Dr. Lulimbwa called me and told me to hurry to the hospital because Mirembe had developed complications.

SAM Yes.

SYLVIA When I got to hospital, he told me that they had discovered that there was nothing they could do. The Leukemia was in its advanced stages and it was only a matter of time.

SAM Now I understand.

SYLVIA The only thing I did not anticipate was that Mirembe's time was actually up. It was exactly 30 minutes from the time I arrived at the hospital to the time she called "Mummy ..." I held her hand a little tighter as if to will her to live on ... then she breathed her last.

SAM Hm. I am so glad that you can talk about the whole ordeal like that and not break down. I am so proud of you.

SYLVIA So am I.
(Brief silence)
Eddie was just in time to see her open her eyes, call me and that was it.

SAM I remember. I came in at that point.
(Silence)
How is my brother now?
(Eddie walks in slowly. He moves like a Zombie and his expression spells thunder! His hair is not combed. His shirt is open down the front)

SAM Hi Eddie.

SYLVIA *(To Eddie)* Can I get you anything?
(Eddie doesn't respond, he walks past them like he hasn't seen or heard them. He goes to the kitchen)

SYLVIA That is how your brother is.

SAM What really bothers me is that even I, cannot get through to him.

SYLVIA At this point in time, nobody can reach him.

SAM He seems to have gotten worse.

SYLVIA I really don't know what to do with him anymore.

SAM I agree. We need to give him more time.
(Eddie returns from the kitchen holding a glass of water. He walks right past again without acknowledging them)

SYLVIA How much time?

SAM *(Resigned)* I don't know Sylvia, I don't know.
(Silence)
Where is Kaggwa?
(Kaggwa comes in throwing a basketball in the air and catching it. He is happy to see Sam. They throw the ball back and forth during the course of their conversation.)

KAGGWA Uncle Sam, it is always so nice to see you.

SAM Same here. Give me five.

(They do a sequence of hand and palm claps, fist fits etc and they laugh)

So where is my favourite nephew coming from?

KAGGWA I have been playing basketball with my friends. There is a basketball court at the school in the corner, down. During holidays, they let us play there.

SAM Good for you, at least you keep fit.

KAGGWA I have to keep fit. We have a friendly match at the end of next week.

SAM Where?

KAGGWA At that school. Tank School.

SAM I see.

KAGGWA And you know what Uncle Sam, on our team, we have 4 former prefects from our former school and we have to prove to the other team that we are still cool.

SAM But of course. You are cool.

KAGGWA Thanks Uncle Sam. I know you know that I and my friends are cool, but we need to show the other team that we are cool.

SAM You have my full support.

SYLVIA Kaggwa, welcome back.

KAGGWA Thank you Mummy.

SYLVIA How did it go?

KAGGWA Okay, but-

SYLVIA But?

KAGGWA Don't worry Mummy, it's not important.

SYLVIA Important or not, I still want to hear it.

KAGGWA Okay. You remember that bully I told you and Daddy about?

SYLVIA Yes, I do.

KAGGWA He is still annoying.

SYLVIA What has he done this time?

KAGGWA He invited himself to become a member of our team and he now behaves like he is the captain of the team.

SYLVIA Just stand up to him.

KAGGWA He is very much like Madam Nankya, always inviting themselves and ending up trying to take over.

SYLVIA Kaggwa!

KAGGWA I wonder what she will do the next time she comes here.

SAM I am sorry, Sylvia but when it comes to that woman, I side with Kaggwa. She is so irritating. If I could I would have chased her out of here myself. She is not an asset to you but a liability.

SYLVIA Sam!

(Nankya approaches, wailing from outside. She doesn't knock and enters in a very expressive manner)

NANKYA Oh, my dear Mirembe, what did you do departing so young?

(Nankya irritates Sam. Kaggwa walks quickly and holds his mother round the shoulders and stares "daggers" at Nankya)

SAM Crying, wailing and lamenting was 6 months ago. It is not part of the show anymore.

(Nankya's tears seem to dry instantly)

NANKYA Eh! Mr. Sam, it has been a very long time.

SAM Yes.

NANKYA Sylvia, how are you?

SYLVIA Fine.

NANKYA Kaggwa, what about you, how are you?

KAGGWA Tired.

(Nankya pulls a chair and sits at the table. She reaches for the flask of tea and looks around for a cup)

NANKYA Kaggwa, bring a cup for me so that I can keep your mother company. She needs a lot of comfort right now.

SYLVIA Kaggwa, you have not had tea either, so bring 2 cups.

(Kaggwa reluctantly goes to get the cups. Nankya weighs the flask)

NANKYA *But there is little tea in the flask. Will it be enough?*

SYLVIA You will both share that tea in there, if it is not enough ...

SAM You will let Kaggwa take it because he is young.

NANKYA I didn't say that I have a problem, sharing with Kaggwa. We always share in this house.

(Kaggwa returns with the two cups. Sam grabs the flask and fills Kaggwa's cup first. He gives the cup to Kaggwa)

KAGGWA Thank you Uncle Sam, you are the greatest.

SAM But of course.

NANKYA Let me also pour for myself a cup of tea.

(Picks the flask, shakes it, opens it and realises it's almost empty. She is disappointed)

 Eh. The flask is almost empty.

(They all look at her. There is silence. It is like they are daring her to go to the kitchen to get more tea)

Anyway, I was just saying...

(Nankya sulks)

After all I am not that hungry. And, I did not come here to take tea. Me I came to see how Sylvia is, if the tea is finished, it is not a problem. That is what good neighbours do. They check on their neighbours when they have problems. It is not important to give tea to a visitor who comes to see you when you have a problem. The visitor can just visit you and go away.

(At this point they are still watching Nankya. They burst out and laugh. Eddie comes out irritated because of loud laughter)

EDDIE Why are you making so much noise?

(A brief silence as they try to contain their laughter)

KAGGWA Good afternoon Daddy.

EDDIE How are you Kaggwa?

KAGGWA I am fine.

SAM Nankya has been entertaining us. We didn't realise that we were very loud. I apologize for us all.

(Eddie scowls)

NANKYA Eddie-

EDDIE I am fine, and everything else you want to ask about me is fine. We even finished having tea and food.

(All burst out laughing again apart from Nankya. She sulks even more)

NANKYA It seems I am not welcome here.

EDDIE If you feel that way, the door is open. You can use it.

NANKYA I didn't say I wanted to go. I just came here as a good neighbour, to see how you were all coping.

EDDIE *(Impatient)* As you can see, we are all fine. Is there anything else?

NANKYA No.

EDDIE Good.

(Starts to walk away)

KAGGWA Mummy, it is almost 4.00pm. It is almost time for your rehearsals. Shall I help you clear the sitting room? Your friends will soon be here.

(Eddie turns around like a bull that has seen red)

EDDIE What! Did you say rehearsals?

SYLVIA Kaggwa, it is time for your shower.

KAGGWA Okay Mummy, but if you need my help, just give me a shout.

SYLVIA Okay.

(Kaggwa runs off, his voice raising)

EDDIE Did I hear Kaggwa say rehearsal?

NANKYA I think I will use the door now, Sylvia.

(Shouts at her)

EDDIE Just go.

(She practically runs out)

SAM Eddie,

EDDIE What?

SAM Calm down.

SYLVIA It's alright Sam, I will handle it.

EDDIE I thought I told you that I don't like that silly acting project that you are involved in. and I definitely don't like the idea of those men hanging around you.

SYLVIA The play had both men and women. We have been through this.

EDDIE Yes, and I expected that you had understood where I stand on this.

SYLVIA You told me that you didn't like me spending too much time away from home, from Kaggwa, from you, going out for rehearsals. We agreed that rather me going out to the rehearsal, I invite the cast to rehearse here, after all they are only three.
(Eddie raises his finger as he speaks slowly and deliberately)

EDDIE Now, I don't want you to be involved in that funny project of yours at all.

SYLVIA You know I can't do that. We are 6 weeks into rehearsals and putting on the play in 2 weeks.

EDDIE Tell them to get a replacement for you.

SYLVIA They cannot do that. We have run out of time and besides I have invested so much in the project together with my friends. I cannot let them down now.

EDDIE You will have to.

SYLVIA Eddie.

SAM Eddie, ease up man.

EDDIE Sam, you will do well to remember that this is my house and I make the rules in my house.

SAM Okay. I was only trying to help.

EDDIE You are not doing a very good job.

SAM My lips are sealed.

SYLVIA Eddie, please listen to me.

SAM Stay home and put your family first for a change.

SYLVIA I am always at home for the past few months. And you know that I always put my family first.

EDDIE You heard me.

SYLVIA I am doing this for you, Kaggwa, Mirembe-

EDDIE Stop.

(A knock on the door)

SAM I will get it.

(He jumps up and runs to the door. He speaks from the door)

You have come for the rehearsal.

I am sorry, there won't be a rehearsal today.
(Murmurs from outside. Someone is heard to say "She can't be serious. How can she do this...")

Sylvia will get in touch with you about the next rehearsal.

I am sorry for any inconvenience caused.

Thank you for coming.

(Comes back to the sitting/living room cautiously)

It was-

EDDIE We heard you.....and them
(Eddie speaks as he looks at the door and the fading voices)

SAM Okay.

SYLVIA Eddie, please don't be like that.

EDDIE Like what?

SAM Eddie please, listen to me. What Sylvia is trying to do here-

EDDIE You have over stayed your welcome. Thank you for coming.

(Eddie walks to the door and opens it for Sam. Eddie waits for Sam to use it.)

SAM Wish you luck, Sylvia.

SYLVIA Thank you, I need it.

SAM Thank you for your hospitality Eddie.

(He goes out after a worried backward glance at Sylvia. When Sam goes through the door,)

SYLVIA Eddie, I think you are being unreasonable.

EDDIE I don't want to hear it.

(Sylvia loses her temper)

SYLVIA You must hear it from someone sooner or later.

EDDIE Then let it be later.

SYLVIA Correction. It is now and from me, so sit down and listen.

EDDIE I don't have to listen to anything you say.

(Sylvia continues like she did not hear what he said)

SYLVIA Since Mirembe died, you have become unbearable. If you don't move around like a zombie, you are rude to everybody around you. We all miss Mirembe very dearly but you have to snap out of it and get a hold of yourself.

EDDIE I am fine. It is you who need to get a hold on yourself.

SYLVIA You cannot continue to chase away everybody who comes here. The world did not stop when Mirembe died. You must face that and move on. Your work is now suffering.

EDDIE What is wrong with you woman?

SYLVIA I am dealing with my loss by doing an activity that can help heal the pain of other people who have been in the same situation. Kaggwa is doing the same. You should also start dealing with your loss. Don't you get it? I need to do this play.

EDDIE If you decide to continue with this stupid play, get out of here.
(Silence, as husband and wife look dead into each other's eyes. A hint of sadness in Sylvia's eyes, defiance in Eddie's. This lasts for a few seconds and then Sylvia speaks quietly, but firmly)

SYLVIA Fine.
(Eddie looks at his wife with a look of slight disbelief on his face. He attempts to speak but doesn't. He then raises his hands in the air in a gesture of resignation then storms out of the house)

SCENE FOUR

(Eddie and Sam in the Kaddu's sitting room. Eddie repairs Kaggwa's walkman)

EDDIE What did you say?

SAM You heard me, and heard me right.

EDDIE You must be joking. Pass me that little screwdriver.

(Sam passes him the screwdriver)

SAM I could be a lot of things, but joking is not one of them, right now.

EDDIE You know what Sam, I am really tired of your attitude towards me.

Here hold these tiny screws, I always loose them, and if I loose them this time Kaggwa will be so disappointed.

(Sam reaches out to hold the little screws, one falls down and he bends down to look for it as they continue with their conversation)

SAM Oh no, I have dropped one.

You know how to make me change the attitude.

EDDIE I am going to do no such thing, you hear me?

(Sam goes under the table to look for the tiny screw)

SAM I heard what you said, but whether or not you are going to do anything about it, is yet to be seen.

EDDIE I don't care what you think. I am not going to be pushed around because of an adult who has decided not to be responsible.

SAM Would you like to rephrase that?

EDDIE *(Shouts)* No!

(As Sam comes from under the table Eddie's raised voice startles him and he knocks his head under the table)

SAM Ouch!

Eddie, think about it.

EDDIE I don't want to think about it anymore. I have thought about it over and over again and I come up with the same conclusion so stop hounding me.

SAM Eddie-

(Sam comes from under the table rubbing his fore head)

EDDIE Stop! I don't want to hear anymore.

SAM I know, but please hear me out just one more time.

EDDIE If I have to listen to you one more time, I will run mad.

SAM Okay, hold your madness for a little while.

Get me some ice please.

(Eddie goes to the kitchen to get the ice. Sam is left behind rubbing his forehead gently and swearing under his breath. Eddie returns almost immediately, with an ice tray, a piece of cloth and a couple of cold beers)

EDDIE Is it very bad?

SAM Not really. Thanks.

EDDIE Here is the ice. Have a beer too. It should help ease the pain.

SAM Thanks.

(Sam holds the cloth with the ice against his forehead and winces in pain)

EDDIE Give me the tiny screws.

(Sam gives Eddie the screws, opens both bottles of beer, puts Eddie's bottle on the side table near Eddie, sits back and takes a long swig from his)

SAM Sylvia is scared, she is hurting, she needs support, she needs you.

EDDIE She has a nice way of showing that she needs me.

SAM Eddie-

EDDIE It was her decision to leave us, it wasn't mine.
Momentary silence as both men take long swigs from their beers.

SAM You didn't give her much choice.

EDDIE Choice, did you say choice? I didn't realize there was any other choice but to stick with your family while you are all grieving for the loss of a loved one.

Here, listen to the sound and tell me what you think.

SAM You were not there for her. What did you expect her to do?
(Eddie gives Sam earphones. Sam puts them on and listens for a while)

EDDIE Put her family first.

SAM *(Speaks loudly)* What did you say?

EDDIE Put her family first.

SAM *(Speaks even louder)* What?
(Eddie reaches for the earphones and takes them off Sam's ears)

EDDIE I said she should put her family first.

SAM The sound is not too bad.

 Which family? Maybe Kaggwa, but you?

EDDIE What do you mean?

Sam takes another long sip from his beer. The bottle is almost empty. Eddie too, takes a long sip from his beer.

SAM Kaggwa is only 11 years old, but he has supported his mother more than you have supported her, as her husband.

(Eddie puts down what he is doing in exasperation and turns to face Sam)

EDDIE Then if she thinks that I am not a good enough husband, she should have stayed behind for her son.

SAM She is there for her son every single day and you know it. May I have another beer?

Eddie looks thoughtful and a bit absent- minded

EDDIE Of course. Help yourself and please bring me one too

Sam goes to the kitchen and returns with two beers. Opens both and hands one to his brother. They both take smaller, slower sips than from the first bottles.

EDDIE So why is she discriminating against me?

SAM Eddie, don't you see? She was drowning, and you did not as much as hold out a hand to her to save her. All she needs is a little comfort from you. Not anybody else but you.

(Eddie picks up the walkman and takes it to Kaggwa's bedroom. Sam is left looking at his brother trying to figure him out. Eddie returns after a little while. Sam stares at him in silence as he dabs his forehead with the cloth of ice.)

EDDIE If you are talking about her silly play, then I am not listening.

SAM You may call it a silly play but may be it is her only saving grace right now.

EDDIE You know what Sam, you are really not making much sense.

SAM It means a lot to her. It is an activity that helps to distract her from her pain. Can't you see that? She also wants to reach out to hurting people like she is hurting. She is desperate to help someone deal with the kind of pain of loosing a child to an illness that may not have a cure. That is all she is trying to do.

EDDIE If you want my honest opinion, I think she is wasting a lot of valuable time that she should be spending with her family. She can't play God and pretend to take away people's pain. I have never heard anything more ridiculous in my life.

(Sam places the cloth with ice on the table. Eddie picks up the cloth that had the ice for Sam's forehead and takes it back to the kitchen. Eddie returns looking frustrated)

SAM But you weren't even talking to her at the time she left, only Kaggwa was talking to her, so what did you want her to do, continue to talk to you when you were not responding to her? What do you take her for? Some doll with no feelings?

EDDIE *(Shouts)* Hey, watch it! I am not about to "baby sit" a grown up woman. Let me "baby sit" Kaggwa. At least he is still a child.

SAM If you ask me, I think you are behaving like a big baby yourself!

EDDIE The good thing is that I didn't ask for your opinion so let us pretend that this conversation did not happen.

(Silence)

SAM I need to use the toilet.....You know Eddie, this is something I find uncomfortable bringing up.....but you compel me to.....*(Eddie looks up from his beer and looks sharply at Sam)*.....You remember many years ago when you and Sylvia had only been married a few months. You then got laid off from that insurance job. Which company?

EDDIE "African Life". What the-

SAM Sylvia had just started on her job with "Happy FM" and struggled to support both herself and a jobless husband for what, almost a year!? She was young, beautiful, as she still is, and very much in her prime. Temptation beckoned her every day to dump you and ride with the many knights-in-shining armour who wanted her.....You yourself told me about this with awe and gratitude towards her.

Where is that gratitude now? She was there for you, then. Why can't you be a little understanding with her now?

(Sam goes out slowly, shaking his head. Eddie is left behind. He stares blankly into the air, with a thoughtful reminiscing look on his face as his mind goes way back to those years. He is desperate and frustrated. He paces up and down as he reflects on what they have been talking about.)

EDDIE

What happened here?
What happened to me?
What happened to Sylvia?
When did our communication get so bad?
Where did I go wrong?
Where did she go wrong?
Why are we tearing each other apart so badly?

Sylvia used to be so sweet, so supportive, so understanding.
She was always there for me.
She was always my strong hold.
And now I feel so lost without her.

I don't believe that she doesn't understand ...
That I need her to be here with me... that Kaggwa needs her.

Why is she so strong headed about that silly play?
I have never seen her feel so strongly about anything like she feels for that God forsaken play, project, whatever it is.

But what if Sam is right and I am being too harsh in judging Sylvia?
And what if Sylvia is judging me too harshly?
Why don't I get any answers to my questions?

Sylvia, please come back.
I have already lost Mirembe,
I cannot afford to loose you too.

Why should she choose a mere play over me, her husband?

But how will I ask her to come back?
What will I tell her?
I can't ask her to come back.
She will think that I am weak.

She will have to do the begging, the asking for forgiveness
and do the crawling back.

(Sam returns, cautiously)

SAM

You okay?

EDDIE

Yes.

SAM Eddie, I need you to think about this seriously. This is not about the play that Sylvia is involved in.

EDDIE Then what is it about?

SAM This is about the death of Mirembe and how much you are all hurt by this loss.

EDDIE That is my point exactly.

SAM So please look beyond the play as a play and look into what Sylvia is going through as a person and support her where ever she is.

EDDIE Why doesn't she think about supporting me for a change?

SAM She tried and you pushed her away.

EDDIE Was I the one who told her to go? She is the one who decided to go. So how can you say that she supported me?

SAM And what do you say about all the times she talked to you and you did not as much as acknowledge her presence? Is that your idea of supporting her?

EDDIE I was hurting. Everybody could see that.

SAM She too was hurting then, she is still hurting now and everybody can see that, unless they choose not to.

EDDIE What is your problem?

SAM At least go and watch the play, it might help you to understand why it is so important to her to be a part of it.

EDDIE I will do no such thing.

SAM She reached out to you and you turned her away. You owe her. Watch the play, at least do that for her, it will mean so much to her.

EDDIE I don't care what you say, but I will not go to watch a stupid play that wrecked my marriage!

SAM It could be the only way to save your marriage.

EDDIE You really don't get it, do you?

SAM I don't know if you are thinking about this rationally or it is your ego that has got into the way.

Pride can be a dangerous thing. It usually comes before a fall.

(Sam walks to the door, opens it and goes out without a backward glance. A moment of panic for Eddie.)

EDDIE Why does life have to be so complicated?

(He turns to go and there is a knock at the door. He turns around, expecting it to be Sam)

EDDIE Come in.

(Enter Nankya like she has fresh gossip to share. Eddie is extremely irritated and impatient with her)

EDDIE What do you want?

NANKYA Have you seen Sylvia lately?

EDDIE No, and I don't want to see her. Thank you for coming and close the door behind you.

NANKYA But I closed it when I entered.

EDDIE Go through it and close it behind you, that is what I mean.

NANKYA Has Kaggwa come back from school?

EDDIE No, which means that there is no tea.

NANKYA You don't have to be like that. I only came to see how you are.

EDDIE As you can see, I am fine.

NANKYA And what about Kaggwa?

EDDIE Kaggwa is fine too. So now that you know, good bye.

(A knock on the door. Eddie is even more impatient. He shouts)

 Come in.

(Enter Kaggwa and Sylvia. Eddie stares "daggers" at her. She is not bothered)

SYLVIA Hullo Eddie, just dropped off Kaggwa like I usually do.

(Eddie doesn't reply, he scowls, turns around and heads off to the bedroom with an attitude as big as a building)

KAGGWA Don't worry about him Mummy, he is always acting weird these days, and to every body so don't take it personally. It's just that each time you drop me off he is not yet back from work so you have never seen this side of him.

SYLVIA It's alright Kaggwa. Nankya, how are you?

NANKYA Anyway, you really look good. I had even come to tell Eddie, but he didn't give me a chance. Being on your own really suits you.

SYLVIA Kaggwa-

KAGGWA It's time for my bath.

(He runs off to the bedroom and calls as he goes)

Wait for me to escort you. I won't be long.

SYLVIA Okay.

NANKYA We can see that you are looking good, which is good, but did you have to go that far?

SYLVIA What do you mean?

NANKYA Leave your home?

SYLVIA I explained to you why I did it. I had to get away to keep my sanity, to give Eddie space and to give Kaggwa a chance to get attention that is not suffocated.

NANKYA But anyway, you are also a strange woman. Who ever heard of a woman walking out of her marriage because of a play?

SYLVIA There is a lot more going on here than what you choose to highlight as the main point. We have been through this and I will not entertain anymore criticism from you.

NANKYA Anyway, me, I just wanted to tell you that people are talking.

SYLVIA Like you?

NANKYA Me I am not like that.

SYLVIA Really, you just say a little bit when you are with me and then say a lot more when I am not there and you have a lot more company?

NANKYA You have also taken it so badly.

SYLVIA I think I am taking it like it is.

NANKYA Me, I just wanted to tell you that people were talking. That drama and plays are for failures or women who are not serious with their life and they are surprised that you can throw away your marriage for something so "un" serious.

SYLVIA Go and tell them that I am not a failure and I am not a woman who is not serious with my life. I am doing this project to help other women and men who have shared an experience of losing someone special like I lost Mirembe. The reason

I am doing this project is to help them know they are not the only ones who have suffered such a loss. It will also help them to deal with their pain.

NANKYA Who said that people here have to exhibit their pain to deal with it? Here people deal with their pain in silence, not throwing it all over the place, at everybody.

SYLVIA Nankya, I am really not interested in the way you think people should or should not deal with pain. If that is the way you deal with your pain, that is okay. But you should not judge and condemn people who are dealing with their pain the best way they know how.

NANKYA Anyway, me I was just telling you about people's opinion.

SYLVIA I have heard it over and over again and I have understood. I can even repeat our conversation word for word.

NANKYA Anyway, me I am just trying to help you.

SYLVIA Shall I tell you a secret.

NANKYA Yes, me I keep secrets.

SYLVIA I am sure you will want to keep this one.

NANKYA Tell me.

SYLVIA You are not helping me at all.

NANKYA Eh, Sylvia, you also, you are so angry for nothing.

SYLVIA You know what Nankya, my life is none of your business. You can also tell your gossip-mates that I really don't care about their opinion of how I choose to lead my life. You can also tell them that what I do with my life is none of their business!

If they want to continue to judge me, they can come and watch the play then if they have the ability to think, they will be able to sort out a few things as they judge me.

(Nankya is embarrassed. As she is trying to regain her composure, Kaggwa comes back, there is still a bit of water in his hair and he hasn't ironed, his clothes properly)

SYLVIA Kaggwa, please go back and dry your hair, I would also like you to go and change into something better ironed.

KAGGWA Is it too bad Mummy? I didn't want you to wait too long.

SYLVIA I am good at waiting.

KAGGWA *(He giggles at being caught)* I will be back soon.

SYLVIA I will be waiting.
(He rushes off again)

NANKYA Anyway, Sylvia, me I am your friend.

SYLVIA Whatever, Nankya.
(Kaggwa returns much better groomed)

KAGGWA Mummy. I am ready. Shall we go?

SYLVIA Sure.

KAGGWA *(To Nankya)* Are you staying here?

NANKYA No, I am only waiting until you return from escorting your mother so that we don't leave the house empty.

KAGGWA But Daddy is in the bedroom. The house will not be empty.

NANKYA But here will not be locked and besides, you will come back hungry, so I thought about making a cup of tea for you.

KAGGWA I am not hungry at all. I ate on the way with Mummy in a restaurant, so you don't have to bother.

NANKYA It is no trouble at all.

KAGGWA Madam Nankya it is really not necessary.

SYLVIA Kaggwa, let us go. I am sure that your father will very ably take care of this.
(Kaggwa reluctantly leaves. They both exit. Nankya stays behind. She looks hopeful)

NANKYA Eh! That Kaggwa also wanted to make me miss the tea. He doesn't realise that I don't have anything at home and I am very hungry. Children also, don't understand big people's problems.
(Eddie comes in quietly unnoticed by Nankya. He shouts at her)

EDDIE What are you still doing here? Get out.
(Nankya is in shock. She runs blindly and somehow loses direction to the door. She runs to the kitchen. Eddie shouts even louder.)

Get out of my kitchen Nankya and go to your house. I don't want to see you here ever again.

(Nankya in shock still, finally finds her bearing and runs out the door. Kaggwa returns, in high spirits)

KAGGWA What is wrong with Madam Nankya? She is running like she has seen a ghost.

EDDIE She must believe that she saw a ghost.

(They laugh lightly as Kaggwa demonstrates how Nankya was running)

KAGGWA I will do my homework now.

EDDIE Okay.

KAGGWA After I finish doing my homework, will you tell me if you will come with me to watch Mummy's play tomorrow?

(Caught off balance, Eddie can only nod his consent)

SCENE 5

(In Eddie's living room. Kaggwa fumbles with his walkman. He puts the headphones on his head, then takes them off. He gets impatient with what he is doing. A knock on the door)

KAGGWA :Come in

(Sam enters)

KAGGWA :Uncle Sam. *(He rushes to Sam)*

SAM :How is my favourite nephew?

(They do their greeting sequence)

KAGGWA :I am fine. Just a headache, but I got some medicine.

SAM :Good. Ready for the big day?

KAGGWA :You bet I am.

SAM :Yes?

KAGGWA :Can you talk to Daddy about coming?

SAM :Kaggwa, you know that I have talked to your Daddy many times about this.

KAGGWA :One more time Uncle Sam.

SAM :Kaggwa-

KAGGWA :Please-

SAM :We have been through this.

KAGGWA :It is very important to me.

SAM :I know

KAGGWA :And to you.

SAM :Yes

KAGGWA :Not to mention Mirembe.

SAM :I know Kaggwa but-

KAGGWA :Can you just imagine what it would mean for mummy?
(Sam puts his hand on Kaggwa's head and looks at his nephew compassionately)

SAM :I understand Kaggwa, I understand. What happened to your walkman this time? It seems to be in bits and pieces?

KAGGWA :Are you trying to change the subject Uncle Sam? *(Slowly Removes his uncle's hand from his head)*

SAM :No Kaggwa, I just want to fix your walkman.
(Sam reaches for the walkman and starts fixing it)

KAGGWA :So will you talk to Daddy,

SAM :Kaggwa.

KAGGWA :Just one more time?

SAM :Okay. Just one more time.

KAGGWA :*(Excited)* Thank you Uncle Sam, I owe you one.

SAM :You owe me many.
(They Laugh)

SAM :I will greet your daddy first, then talk to him.... Yet again, then fix your walkman okay?

KAGGWA :Sounds good to me. Did you know that you are the greatest uncle in the world?

SAM :Absolutely.
(They Laugh)

(Sam walks to the door still laughing and is met at the door with "stone faced" Eddie)

SAM :Good morning Eddie, Kaggwa told me that you were up. I was coming to say hullo.
(Eddie walks right past Sam like he hasn't seen him. He goes to the kitchen)

KAGGWA :Daddy, Uncle Sam is taking me to watch Mummy's play,

and he-

(Eddie pats Kaggwa on the shoulder and passes him too)

KAGGWA : *(Desperate)* Uncle Sam.

SAM : Sshh, be patient Kaggwa. Trust me, I will talk to him.

KAGGWA : When Mummy comes, I want to tell her to get an extra ticket for Daddy. I know, that will make her very happy.

SAM : I know Kaggwa. Let us have hope.

KAGGWA : Okay.

SAM : When is your mummy bringing the tickets?

KAGGWA : She said at 11:00am.

SAM : *(Checks the watch)* We still have an hour. And what time does the play start?

KAGGWA : 3:00pm. She said 11:00am will give her time to come and see me, and bring the tickets and go back in time to prepare for the grand opening.

SAM : Sounds reasonable.

(A knock on the door)

SAM : Looks like your mother is early.

(Kaggwa runs to open the door)

KAGGWA : Madam Nankya, Daddy is in the kitchen, so I don't think you should go there to make a cup of tea. I will go and iron my shirt. *(He exits)*

NANKYA : You Kaggwa also, you think that every time I come here is for tea?

(Sam laughs)

NANKYA : I just came to check if your mother had brought the tickets for the performance today.

SAM : She will be here at 11:00am.

NANKYA : There is still time.

(Eddie walks in slowly from the kitchen holding a glass of water. He stands behind Nankya. Sam watches in amusement)

NANKYA :Sylvia has really worked hard to make this program happen. I am sure Mirembe is very happy where she is in heaven.

SAM :She should be.

NANKYA :It has also helped her to keep busy and take away attention from herself and her pain and focus on other people who may be hurting just like her over the loss of a child.

SAM :True.

NANKYA :There is nothing as frustrating as being with a child who is constantly sick and you have no idea what exactly they are suffering from.

SAM :I can only imagine.

NANKYA :Like Mirembe's case, she was always weak, tired, constantly losing weight, always complaining about a headache, she would always bruise easily and those nose bleeds, those terrible nose bleeds, poor tiny, little Mirembe always suffering.

SAM :It was bad.

NANKYA :Only to discover it was Leukemia and her poor parents didn't know, and by the time her parents discovered what was really wrong, it was too late.

SAM :It was too late.

NANKYA :But at least Sylvia's play will highlight the symptoms of Leukemia in children and parents who have children with those symptoms will be pointed, in the right direction. They will find comfort.

SAM :Absolutely.

NANKYA :By the way is Eddie going to watch Sylvia's play?

SAM :That is a question only Eddie can answer.

NANKYA :Hmm! He is also like a mad man. I am not saying that Sylvia should have walked out, but Eddie was also very hard on her. Surely a man should support his wife. Where is he?

EDDIE :Right behind you.

(Nankya is startled)

NANKYA :Eh! Eddie, what are you doing here?

(Off stage. Kaggwa shouts)

KAGGWA :Daddy, my nose is bleeding.

(Sam and Eddie run to the bedroom, leaving Nankya behind, totally confused)

NANKYA :Oh my God, now what is this? What shall I do, me Nankya? Why did I come here this morning so early? I knew that Sylvia was going to bring the tickets at 11:00am. I just wanted to take a cup of tea, now see what has happened. Even Eddie heard me talk about him.

(Sam comes out carrying Kaggwa. Eddie follows closely behind)

NANKYA :What about me?

SAM :Stay here and wait for Sylvia. Tell her what has happened and ask her to wait for us here.

NANKYA :Have you called her?

SAM :Her phone is off.

NANKYA :What about-

EDDIE :*(Shouts)* Get out of the way.

(They rush out the door)

NANKYA :Now why should I be the one to tell the woman that the only child she has left has also started bleeding through the nose? God also gives people tasks that are not manageable. How will I start? That what? Me, God I don't like this arrangement.

(Nankya paces up and down in silent prayer. She varies the shape of her mouth in interesting forms as her expression reads desperation)

NANKYA :God, if you are there, please come down now and help me.

(A knock on the door. Nankya panics, she runs to the door and locks it)

NANKYA :Who is it?

(Off stage)

SYLVIA :It's me Sylvia.

(Nankya opens the door. She looks sheepish. Sylvia walks with a slightly irritated look on her face and in her voice)

NANKYA :Eh, Sylvia.

SYLVIA :Nankya, why did you lock the door.

NANKYA :I thought I was opening it.

SYLVIA :Nankya, answer me. Why did you lock the door?

NANKYA :I didn't know that it was you.

SYLVIA :And so,

NANKYA :I don't know what to say Sylvia, I don't know what to say.

SYLVIA :It is not like you at all not to know what to say.

NANKYA :No, I was going to make a cup of tea. Would you like some?

SYLVIA :No thank you, I had a late breakfast.

NANKYA :I will make myself a quick cup of tea.

(she practically runs off to the kitchen leaving Sylvia wondering at her strange behaviour)

SYLVIA :*(Searches her bag for the tickets. She takes them out and counts them)* Kaggwa, Kaggwa....Kaggwa, where are you?

(Nankya comes out of the kitchen, nervously with her cup of tea. She sips it through out the scene)

NANKYA :Yes? Did you call?

SYLVIA :I was calling Kaggwa.

NANKYA :Is your phone on?

SYLVIA :Yes.

NANKYA :Are you sure?

SYLVIA :Yes. Why do you ask?

NANKYA :Because Sam tried to call you earlier.

SYLVIA :Really? Let me check.

NANKYA :Yes, you check. *(She sips the tea)*

SYLVIA :There is a missed call. I wonder what he wanted. Let me call him back.

NANKYA :Right now?

SYLVIA :Right now. I need to know why he was calling.

NANKYA :But...have you brought the tickets?

SYLVIA :Yes, here they are. *(She answers in a distracted manner)*
Let me first make this call to Sam.

NANKYA :*(Talking faster)*. How many are they?

(Sylvia signals with her fingers-4)

SYLVIA :Hullo, Sam, its Sylvia. I found a missed call. Sorry I didn't pick it up.

The phone must have been deep in my pocket so I didn't hear it. I am at home.

I have brought the tickets.

I had told Kaggwa that I would be here at 11:00am, but I didn't find him here. Any idea where he is?

Nankya, yes, Nankya is here. No she hasn't told me anything.

What! Oh my goodness, what happened? Is he alright?
Where are you? *(She sits down and puts her free hand on her Head, in distress)*

:Where are you?... Tell me... Sam, answer me. I want to come and see my son.

Where is Eddie?

How is Kaggwa?

Are you sure he is fine? The bleeding
has stopped, okay, I will wait, but please hurry.

(She switches off the phone)

NANKYA :What did he say?

SYLVIA :That the bleeding has stopped. The doctor said he will be
fine and they are on their way home.

NANKYA :That's good news.

SYLVIA :I was so scared. That nose bleed reminded me so much
about Mirembe. For a moment I thought I was going to loose
Kaggwa too. I couldn't bear it if I were
to loose Kaggwa too, I think I would die.

NANKYA :Kaggwa will be fine. That is what the doctor said.

SYLVIA :I pray that he will be fine.

*(A knock on the door. Sylvia runs to the door and opens
it).*

SYLVIA :Kaggwa, are you alright?

KAGGWA :*(A little shaken)*. I am fine mummy. I am so happy to see
you.

SYLVIA :I am more happy to see you. How are you feeling?

KAGGWA :Funny, but I guess I am alright.

EDDIE :The doctor said that he should rest a lot and he should be
fine. She said that if it happens again, we should rush him to the
clinic and more tests would be done.

SYLVIA :Okay.*(Sylvia has her arm around her son all this time)*

KAGGWA The doctor also said that I can watch the show, but take
it easy.

SYLVIA Okay, lets get you to bed now and rest as much as
possible before the show.

(Sylvia takes Kaggwa to the bedroom).

NANKYA :Is it serious?

EDDIE :What if it is?

NANKYA :I just asked.

EDDIE :What will you do?

SAM :It is not serious.

EDDIE :So don't go shooting your mouth off to Sylvia, pretending you know more than you do to confuse her.

NANKYA :I wouldn't do that.

EDDIE :You are no stranger to anyone here, Nankya. We all know what you are capable of doing.

(Sylvia returns more relaxed).

SYLVIA :Thank you very much Sam, and Eddie.

SAM :The pleasure is entirely mine.

EDDIE :He is my son too.

NANKYA :We had a moment of panic here.

EDDIE :Nankya, stop it.

NANKYA :I was only trying to-

EDDIE :Whatever it is, we don't want to hear it.

SAM :I need to get airtime. I have a few important calls to make. I will be right back.

EDDIE :Thank you very much Sam.

SAM :Anytime Eddie.

EDDIE You know, for a while there I was scared. If you hadn't been there, I don't know what I would have done.

SAM :Don't worry about it, I was glad to help.

EDDIE :You were a big help. *(Eddie pats his brother on the shoulder).*

(Kaggwa appears in the doorway).

KAGGWA :Where are you going Uncle Sam?

SAM :To get some airtime. I will be right back.

KAGGWA :I thought you were abandoning me too.

SAM :You know I would never do that.

KAGGWA :You can never be sure. Things change all the time.

SYLVIA :Kaggwa, you should be resting.

KAGGWA Yes Mummy, I just wanted to make sure that Uncle Sam wasn't abandoning me too.

SAM :Kaggwa no one is abandoning you.

KAGGWA Daddy, I know that I have asked you before, but I will ask again. Please Daddy, can you go with us to the play?

EDDIE :Kaggwa.

KAGGWA We are all doing it for the memory of Mirembe. I am sure she would love you to be there.

EDDIE :Kaggwa, listen to me.

KAGGWA :My nose bleed, scared me. It reminded me of Mirembe's nose bleeds. Now I know the pain she used to go through.

EDDIE Kaggwa

SAM Eddie let him finish. He wants to tell you something that I feel is very important to him, please.

EDDIE :Sam.

SAM :That is all I am asking, please listen to him.

(Eddie turns to look at Kaggwa).

KAGGWA I was scared I was going to die. And I don't want to die or lose any member of our family. It's like I want to be with all of you all the time. If I am not, I am scared something bad is going to happen to you, like what happened to Mirembe. Daddy, please, let us go to watch Mummy's play, I need us to be together. Please Daddy.

(Everybody turns to look at Eddie, there is silence. Eddie is at a loss of what to do. He clears his throat.)

EDDIE :Excuse me.

(He walks away hurriedly, choking with emotion.)

KAGGWA

Daddy, where are you going, Daddy please come back.
Mummy, where is Daddy going?

SYLVIA

:It's okay Kaggwa, when he returns, I am sure he will explain.

(Kaggwa holds onto his mother like his whole life depends on it. They all try to console him.)

SAM

:Kaggwa, listen to me. Everything is going to be all right.

KAGGWA

:Are you sure Uncle Sam?

SAM

:Absolutely.

KAGGWA

:It is just so difficult when-

SAM

:Kaggwa, trust your Daddy, he cares about you very deeply. He wouldn't do anything to hurt you deliberately.

KAGGWA

But he just walked away without as much as looking at me.

SYLVIA

:Kaggwa listen to your Uncle Sam.

NANKYA

:I will go and make a cup of tea for all of us.

SYLVIA

:That is a very good idea, thank you Nankya.

NANKYA

:I will definitely be more use in kitchen than I am here.

SAM

:Great idea Nankya.

(Nankya goes hurriedly to the kitchen.)

SYLVIA

Trust Nankya to come up with something helpful right now.

(Eddie returns all dressed up . He enters slowly and everybody's jaw drops)

KAGGWA

:(Uncertain). Daddy-

EDDIE

:(Cheerful). Kaggwa is that how you are going?

KAGGWA

:(Spaced out). Going?

EDDIE

:Going to the play.

KAGGWA :Going to the play?

EDDIE :Have you changed your mind?

KAGGWA :Changed my mind! Not in a million years. But it's only 12:40pm. The play doesn't start until 3:00pm.

EDDIE :Then we can go out and have lunch somewhere while we wait.

KAGGWA :Lunch?

(Nankya comes in with a flask of tea and cups.)

KAGGWA :*(Uncertain)*. Even madam Nankya?

EDDIE :Even madam Nankya.

(There is nervous laughter from everybody. Kaggwa runs to change. Sylvia picks her bag and Eddie picks his car keys. Nankya is confused.)

NANKYA :People, tea is served.

EDDIE :We are not going to have tea, Nankya.

NANKYA :Why not?

EDDIE :Because we are going out.

NANKYA :It's okay, me, I will have the tea.

EDDIE :No Nankya.

NANKYA :What do you mean no?

EDDIE :I said because we are going out.

NANKYA :I heard that.

SYLVIA :All of us.

NANKYA :Even me?

SAM :*(Laughing)*. Even you.

(Kaggwa rushes back, all dressed up too.)

KAGGWA :I am ready.

NANKYA :I have to change.

EDDIE :If you go to change, we will leave you.

NANKYA :Then I won't.

SAM :Good idea. (*Whispers to Eddie.*) Not that she has anything else to change in that will look better. She has a serious problem with her dress sense.

(*Laughter.*)

NANKYA :I will just get my scarf and handbag from the kitchen and I will be with you in one moment.

(*She exits hurriedly and returns almost immediately with a scarf she is tying round her neck that clashes seriously with her dress. They all laugh, as they exit.*)

NANKYA :This is surely a happy moment for all of us.

(*They laugh even more.*)

FAMILY FIRST