

Overcoming Challenges

Written by
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For the pupils of the

Methodist Girls' High School
Freetown, Sierra Leone

CAST

Glena

Binta

Jeneba

Principal

Cynthia

Mr. Gbondo

Christiana

Isa

Five girls (friends of Isa)

Memuna (Jeneba's mama)

Mrs. Mackan

Mama Modu

Dr. Perry

The Bullying

Isa and her friend singing a popular song and rapping. Jeneba appeared on her way home after school. Isa and her friends started to provoke Jeneba.

Isa

Aye, look at that country fowl coming.

Linda

That Munku country fowl (they all laughed)

(Jeneba and her friend Mabinty attempted to pass by the group of girls. They stopped her and started provoking her)

Cynthia

Aye! You wait. What were you saying to your friend?

Jeneba

Na your business what I say?

Isa

You were talking about us, what were you saying?

Jeneba

It is not your business what I talk. Leave me o!

Isa

You country fowl. You want to argue with us? We will show you that this is Freetown.

Jeneba

I know Freetown ya!

Christiana

Munku by packet. (They laughed)

Isa

(Sings) Munku boss na Girls School o! Munku boss. Jeneba Munku/Country fowl Munku
(Singing and Clapping)

Jeneba

I am going to lay your complain to Madam. Mabinty dae for my witness ya.

(They continue taunting until they exit.)

Act I Scene II

The Math Teacher

Binta on her way home from school. She meets Teacher Gbondo.

Mr. Gbondo

Binta! Please come.

Binta

Yes, Mr. Gbondo, what is it?

Mr. Gbondo

Why are you not doing well in Mathematics?

Binta

Mr. Gbondo maths is hard! It is very difficult to solve maths problems.

Mr. Gbondo

Ok dear. Don't worry, I am going to help you.

Binta

Ok, Mr. Gbondo. How much will I have to pay?

Mr. Gbondo

Don't worry Binta. I am not going to take money from you. As long as you cooperate. I'll teach you free.

Binta

I don't understand Mr. Gbondo. How do you expect me to cooperate?

Mr. Gbondo

You'll have to come to my house for extra lessons twice a week. As long as you cooperate and make me happy. I mean give me some pleasure. Even if its just once you sleep with me, you will never fail maths again.

Binta

What? Aye! Mr. Gbondo. Me? Sleep with you? Over my dead body. Don't you ever, I mean never bring this kind of talk to me again. If you do, I will record you and report you to the Principal, to the Ministry of Education, and to the Police Station. In fact, Right now, I have a recording of this discussion.

Mr. Gbondo

Just shut up! It's a lie, what will you do?

Binta

Mr. Gbondo! Try me! Try me! And you will see I'm forgiving you for this first attempt. But if you dare try this with me again, you are going to lose your job and quite the teaching field.

Mr. Gbondo

Eh, you want to challenge me? Well I'm going to make your life miserable in this school. You are going to repeat this class. Repeat and repeat until you find yourself another school. I will show you that I am a stake holder at the Ministry of Education.

Binta

Ehn! Then dare me again. And I will show you that my father is the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education.

Mr. Gbondo

(Shocked to hear that, but tries to be bold)

Ee! Because I'm joking with you. You're taking it too far. Oh Binta. Can't you understand joke again. (Tries to touch Binta, she flicks his hands off her)

Binta

Bigman big full. That is why your trousers always swells up in front of you. Go and marry, Bigman Bigfull (She exits)

Mr. Gbondo

Don't insult me Binta. I'm only joking with you (exit with regret).

Act I Scene III

Glena and Binta wait for each other every day, they walk and yap about everything.

Glena

I was almost late for school yesterday, why were you not at the school?

Binta

There was no light for me to iron so I can't tell a lie that I have belle ache.

Glena

OK oh! ush ya. But you missed yesterday, something happened at school.

Binta

What ... please tell me ... tell me (she is so eager to hear)

Glena

Gongosa, lie, (Glena smiled) Hmm

Binta

... but you said you have something to tell me.

Glena

Yes but you too majiji. (Glena stop to check her bag for a book)

Binta

What are you looking for?

Glena

My math book, I have to submit my homework ...

Binta

You've seen it?

Glena

Yes,. Thought I left it at home.

Binta

But I don't like your maths teacher.

Glena

Why don't you like our Maths teacher?

Binta

I'll tell you ... but you tell me about yesterday first.

Glena

Ok, Mrs. Beesabody ... and you will tell me about the Maths teacher.

Binta

I will but don't tell anyone.

Glena

Ok, you know that new girl?

Binta

Which one, the new one in 3A? I forgot her name.

Glena

Jeneba ... what happened was that Isa and her friends provoked her, laughed at her, singing at her and clapping.

Binta

What? Why? They caught her stealing?

Glena

No! But why did you ask that question, is she a thief?

Binta

I don't know o!

Glena

Well don't say things you don't know, what I heard was that Isa laughed at her and say she does not know how to speak English.

Binta

It is true, I don't like how she speaks.

Glena

Do you know how to speak? Everyone has different way they speak.

Binta

She does not

Glena

I'm sure you would have joined the crowd?

Binta

I won't but ...

Glena

... there is no but, the principal has ask everyone of them to come to school with their parents.

Glena

Tell me ... (A girl in uniform comes out and is walking ahead of them) ... that's her, it's her!

Binta

Who? What are you talking about?

Glena

Jeneba, I have never seen her in this street before, I wonder whether she lives here.

Binta

Call her ...

Glena and Binta (yelled at the same time)

JENEBA

Jeneba

(Turns to see who is calling, she is surprised)

Yes ...

(Glena and Binta double their steps)

Glena

... you live here? I have never seen you in this street.

Jeneba

You two live in this street?

Glena

Yes, we live down this street, we are neighbors.

Jeneba

Me and my mama move here yesterday.

Glena

(Glena and Binta looked at each other)

Yesterday?

Jeneba

The landlord drove us out of the place we were leaving in (she looks embarrassed)

Glena

He is a bad man, why did he drive you out.

(all three of them stop to talk)

Jeneba

My mama was late to pay house rent so he said we should get out of his panbody.

Binta

Where did you come from?

Glena

Binta (Glena yelled at her)

Jeneba

Yesterday, after school, my mama almost in tears said...

Binta

... your mama crying ...

Glena

Binta ...

Binta

What?

Jeneba

... she said 'titi, wahala don meet wi oh, we foh muf', I then started to cry.

Binta

The landlord is a bad man.

Jeneba

A woman, Mama Modu who came next door to see her sister, she then beg the landlord for us not to move

Glena

He agree ...

Jeneba

No, he refused ... but the women took us to her house. She has an adjoining in her house, that's where we live now. Let me show you how it all happened.

Flash Back

The Notice to quit.

Pa Joe

I don't know what is wrong with this woman, up till now she cannot pay the house rent. I need money.

Pa Sandy

Pa Joe how are you doing. Pa Joe I have a problem and I need your help. I am looking for just a single room to rent for my bother. Whatever amount it is, I am ready to pay.

Pa Joe

Are you willing to pay Le100 per month?

Pa Sandy

Yes, Pa Joe. I can even pay for 1 year. Look at the money (Pa Joe receives the money)

Pa Joe

Fine, fine. This women is going to leave my house today. I only ask her to pay Le50 per month. Yet still it's 3 months now, she cannot pay me.

(Memuna enters from selling patched groundnuts)

Memuna! Memuna! I want my house now. You refused to pay me for 3 months now. Somebody else want the room. You should pack your things out and leave my house before night fall. This man here has paid me for 1 year at 100NLe per month. Double what you ae paying.

Pa Sandy

Pa Joe. Ar dae baig you. Do yah. Gee me small chance. Ar dae pay you.

Pa Joe

You think say ar dae joke? You think say ar dae joke ehn! (Shows Memuna the rent collected from Pa Sandy.)

You see! You see 'di money wae dem don pay?

In fact, Ar dae ib you things den na doe now.

Memuna

(crying)

Aye! Usai mi dae go now? Aye Papa God! Sorry for me! Fen place for wi. (She went out cying.)

Glena

Oh my God, it's sad but thanks be to God for sending you a savior. Anyway ...

Binta

Me too, I'm happy for you having a place to live now. (Binta and Glena hugged Jeneba)

Jeneba

Thank you, I hope you will be my friends now.

Glena

What about the Maths teacher (The school bell rings)

Act II Scene I

(The principal asked Jeneba, Isa and her friends to her office)

Principal

I am so disappointed at what happened yesterday. Bullying is unacceptable in this school. Your behavior to Jeneba was shameful. Jeneba what happened?

Jeneba

Me and my friends dae were talking about what that woman talk to us last week.

Principal

You mean the speaker who was at devotion?

Jeneba

Yes ma ... Isa begin to call me fussy and said I don't know how to speak good English. She and her padi dem start to laugh, sing, and clap at me.

Principal

Why ... why should you do that?

Isa

They were also talking madam and she was pointing at us ...

Jeneba

That is a lie ma, it's lie (she was emotional)

Principal

I want to hear the truth?

Jeneba

My friends dae there, we not talking about them, ma.

Isa

She was pointing at us and I hear her say, they are not compashing. When I asked her if she was talking to me, she hissed.

Jeneba

That is a lie ma, it is a lie ...

Principal

I have often told you that bullying is unacceptable in this school ... but why should you gang up against her.

Isa

Its not a gang ma.

Principal

If you and your friends joined together, that means you ganged up on her, and that's bullying. The speaker last week mentioned about being compassionate ... you all heard her, not so?

All Five Girls

Yes ma

Principal

I want you to apologize to Jeneba now

All Five Girls (in unison)

We are sorry!

Principal

Just leave my office all of you. (They all dashed out of the office.)

Act II Scene II

(Mama Modu rescues Memuna and Jeneba)

(Memuna and her daughter goes to express their thanks and appreciation to Mama Modu)

(Knock Knock Knock)

Mama Modu

Who is it, come in!

Memuna

Mama na we (she and Jeneba kneel in front of Mama Modu and in tears) Mama leh God bless you ma. God go bless you, you pikin en grandpikin dem.

Mama Modu

Get up and seat down ... I never know you from Adam but when ah see dis pikin with girl school uniform, una de cry because you have nowhere to go, my heart broke.

Memuna

Na mi man put we pan shame so; ah get for run away. Me ah go to school but not foh long ...

Mama Modu

Ah happy wae you put Jeneba school and na dis school ah go when ah bin bi small pikin.

Memuna

Jeneba dae do well na school ma.

Mama Modu

That's good. Jeneba, I am going to help you with school, you hear me? Memuna don't worry ah promise you say Jeneba go go far na school!

Memuna

Yes ma. But small problem dae ma. Mi man want in padi for marade Jeneba

Mama Modu

Jehovah (she shouted) ee dae crais, he should be arrested, small small pikin lek dis! oosi man go ol pan am. Dis pikin dae in pumpkin noh rep yate na im de papa wanr am for marade, ee craise!

Memuna

Mi mami na im make ah run-away wit am, ma!

Mama Modu

Yu don do well foh yu gayl pikin.

Memuna

Mama na di wangrayn pikin dis wae ah get.

Mama Modu

That's alright, yu don du well. Noh worry, ehn ehn ... Las net ah bin de think ... you know how foh do housework? I mean oswoke.

Memuna

Mama eniting you want me for do, ah kin do am, eniting, just tell me.

Mama Modu

No to for me ...

Memuna

Na foh oodat ma ...

Mama Modu

(Jeneba enters in school uniform) Na wan jumbul en ee wef (Memuna looked at Jeneba, their faces lit up) dis go gee you money wae go bete pas the grannat weh you say yu bin deh sell. Ah go ker yu go to dem wen Janeba go school. (Memuna green from ear to ear). Tomara after school, I want for talk to you.

Memuna

Ah mama tenki tenki oh for me pikin. Tenki ma.

Mama Modu

Jeneba!

Jeneba

Yes, Mama Modu

Mama Modu

Call me Grandma Modu or Grandma, some of my grandchildren are older than you (all three of them smile). Jeneba!

Jeneba

Yes Grandma.

Mama Modu

That's why I like you, yu da lan very fast. Luk yu lunch.

(They exit)

Act III Scene I

Mama Modu's conversation with Jeneba

(Jeneba gets home from school)

Jeneba

Grandma, good afternoon!

Mama Modu

Jeneba, is that you?

Jeneba

Yes Grandma

Mama Modu

When you finish eating and do your homework, come and show me then we can talk.

Jeneba

Yes Grandma

(Memubna's Employer)

(Mrs. Mackan reading a newspaper Memuna enters to show her Jeneba's report card.)

Memuna

Madam morning. Look, see Jeneba report card.

Mrs. Mackan

(Receives, opens and reads)

Oh! That is good! Wow! Jeneba is a very brilliant girl. She's doing so well in school and she needs proper and regular support. And that I can provide.

Memuna

Madam what you talk? Me. I noh understand.

Mrs. Mackan

I said Jeneba needs support. And I am going to support her education as long as she continues to excel in school. I will pay her school fees for the rest of her schooling. Even up to university as long as she continues to do well.

Memuna

Aye! You go pay Jeneba school fees? Papa God Tanki (Begin to Sing)

My God is good

My God is good

My God is good is good to me

Of

Tell am tenki.

(An hour later, Jeneba was done)

Jeneba

Grandma, I have finished my homework (Jeneba handed her book to Mama Modu)

Mama Modu

It's only math homework you have. Your math is different from ours, (as she looked at her school assignment), although it is the same addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division but the process is different.

Jeneba

Yes Grandma.

Mama Modu

What are your favorite subjects.

Jeneba

Mathematics, Biology, and History ma

Mama Modu

That is good. Pay attention in school. Your mami showed me your report card and I see you are a good student. Don't let the boys fool you.

Jeneba

I don't know any boy ma.

Mama Modu

I am just advising you. Some of the boys might be observing you as you walk to school everyday, they would want to talk nice to you and tell you they can do things for you.

Jeneba

Yes Grandma

Mama Modu

Don't let any boy touch you because they will impregnate you and spoil your future.

Jeneba

I noh go allow that to happen to me Grandma.

Mama Modu

I am happy. By the way you might have to meet those my car men ...

Jeneba

... my car men?

Mama Modu

Yes .. they are bigmen big fools. They call themselves bigmen but they don't have respect for themselves.

Jeneba

I hear you Grandma.

Mama Modu

Those men would want to destroy innocent young girls and foolish them.

Jeneba

The men in cars Grandma?

Mama Modu

Yes. Although all of them are not like that. You didn't come to Freetown with any man and your mami did not introduce you to anyone, if any my car say they want to take you to school in their cars, tell them no.

Jeneba

I won't go into no car, grandma.

Mama Modu

If you can take the car number do so and tell me, we don't want these men to spoil your future. They will spoil you and disappear.

Jeneba

I will not allow them to do that to me Grandma.

Mama Modu

Krio man say put you yei dong for see you nose. I spoke to the white woman your mother is working for about you.

Jeneba

Mi mama working for a white woman?

Mama Modu

Yes, she has agreed to pay your school and college fees if you continue to do well.

Jeneba

(She was so emotional, so excited when she thank Mama Modu) Oh Grandma thank you very very much for me and mi mama, God will bless you God will bless you for us Grandma.

Song

Act III Scene II

Guest Speaker

(From time to time the MGHS invites motivational speakers to speak to the girls, this is a way of motivating the girls. They are in the school hall)

Principal

Good Morning School

School

Good Morning, Mrs. Cole

Principal

I want to introduce Dr. Marion Perry to you, she is a motivational speaker, she will be talking to you about self-esteem building.

All the girls give loud applause

Dr. Perry

Good Morning Girls!

School

Good Morning Madam!

Dr. Perry

Do you all love school?

School

Yes (it was resounding)

Dr. Perry

Great – I will talk to you about how you can become the best by building your self-esteem.

School

Yes Madam.

Dr. Perry

Do you sometimes feel that you are not good enough or that you don't have self-confidence?

School

Yes Madam.

Dr. Perry

We've all had that feeling at some point in our lives. Don't feel that you are alone ... we have some good news to get rid of that feeling. I'll list those out for you,

1. Try to identify what you are good at, some of you may be good at sports, drama, music braiding, cooking, sewing, caring for your younger siblings, or just being nice to others.
2. Ask yourself, what do you like about yourself – you are all nice and loving and there is something you like about yourself. So work on it.
3. Be positive and put away any negative thought – treat yourself the same way you want others to treat you.
4. Don't compare yourself to others (this is a way of being jealous and jealousy is not healthy).
5. Make yourself happy.
6. Have friends who are great influence on you.

I will touch for a short while on bullying. A bully has the tendency to harm and humiliate others. These harmful and humiliating habits include verbal or even physical attacks, name-calling, and making fun of others. Studies indicate that a lot of bullying is between 11 and 13, I am sure most you are in that age range.

Jeneba

(She whispers to her friend) this is what Isa and her friends did to me.

Dr. Perry

Most bullying occurs in the school playground. I am sure when some of you are there playing and picking on some of your school mates it doesn't occur that you are bullying someone else. You must remember that during self-esteem building, you must treat others as you want them to treat. You don't bully if you don't want someone to bully you. Bullying is not pleasant.

There are many challenges in life but with a great self-esteem you will have enough confidence to overcome your challenges. Thank you.

(The students were happy, and they applauded Dr. Perry for her talk).