

MOGADISHU
LOST

By

Gregory S. Carr

MOGADISHU LOST

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MOGADISHU LOST

*for the American Veterans who served in Operation Restore Hope and
the people of Mogadishu*

MOGADISHU LOST

Mogadishu Lost was originally produced at the Bank of America Theatre, Emerson Performance Center at Harris-Stowe State University, February 21-23, 2013, featuring the following cast:

Halima Ibrahim..... Anoa Jones
E.J. Jackson..... Michael Green
Jamila Ibrahim..... Esther Easley
L-Dog Johnson..... Quentin Mobley

CAST: 2 men, 2 women

HALIMA IBRAHIM	Early twenties, idealistic, vulnerable, soft-spoken, but passionate. Somali-born female
E.J. JACKSON	Mid-twenties, intelligent, sensitive and insightful 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment African-American male
JAMILA IBRAHIM	Late thirties, cynical older sister of Halima. Somali-born female
L-DOG JOHNSON	Late twenties, loud, humorous, self-centered and opinionated. E.J.'s confidante. 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. African- American male

TIME: 1994

PLACE: Mogadishu, Somalia

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ACT 1
SCENE 1

A clearing, about a mile from the American military base. HALIMA, a young Somali woman, walks into the clearing carrying a basket on her head. She is in her early twenties and is wearing a traditional Muslim head wrap. She puts down her basket and curiously peers over into the direction of the base. She smiles, and seems to be entranced with what she sees. JAMILA, her older sister, who is in her late thirties, stops and notices Halima's curious observation. Jamila frowns and is disgusted by her sister's naïveté.

JAMILA. I don't know what you see in those Americans.

HALIMA. They're just people, Jamila.

JAMILA. These people are occupying our land. How many times must I tell you this?

HALIMA. They are here to help us. The United Nations sent them.

JAMILA. They are here because the United States wants to control us. Just like the Italians...

HALIMA. ...Italians and the British, and on and on.

JAMILA. You think all of this is some kind of game don't you? We should not be here, Halima. It is dangerous. Or have you forgotten that one of those occupiers killed our brother?

HALIMA. No, I have not forgotten! I think about Omar every day. *(Beat)* Are you afraid, Jamila? We're only going to be here a little while. Or are you just as curious as I am?

JAMILA. Curious? Why should I be curious about an American? I have a husband.

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HALIMA. You mean to tell me that you don't want to see an American soldier up close?

JAMILA. All occupiers look the same to me. Evil. I see no difference in them.

HALIMA. Even if one looked like, Denzel Washington?

JAMILA. Like, Denzel Washington? Halima, stop talking nonsense. *(Beat)* What exactly do you mean?

HALIMA. Do you think that Denzel Washington is handsome?

JAMILA. Do I think that Denzel Washington is handsome? What kind of foolish question is that?

HALIMA. Just answer my question. Do you think that Denzel Washington is handsome?

JAMILA. I don't know. Well, for an American, he's...

HALIMA. Handsome. Admit it, Jamila.

JAMILA. Admit what?

HALIMA. That Denzel Washington is handsome, and that he's an American.

JAMILA. Oh, now I see where this is going. You keep your eyes where they belong, Halima. These Americans, especially, the black ones, are not to be trusted. To them, you would be another conquest. Dirt under their boots when they are through with you.

HALIMA. And Somali men don't do the same thing? Men are men, Jamila.

JAMILA. We have a culture and a history. A past. These black Americans have no idea where they come from. We do. They are Bantus. That is what separates us.

HALIMA. You still have avoided my question. Do you think, that Denzel Washington, is *handsome*?

JAMILA. Yes. He is handsome. He is a handsome black American. Are you satisfied? *(Jamila begins to smile. She then begins to laugh.)* He is beautiful.

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HALIMA. Oooooo! Beautiful. I never thought that I would hear my sister say that about a man.

JAMILA. I have opinions. About things. Many things.

HALIMA. I know, Jamila. It's just that...

JAMILA. It's just that my husband does not allow me to express my opinions, right?

HALIMA. I didn't mean that...I didn't say...

JAMILA. You didn't have to say it. I could tell you were thinking it. I could hear your thoughts.

HALIMA. I wasn't judging you, Jamila. It just seems so unfair. You are a very intelligent woman.

JAMILA. Ah, my little sister, the bright one. She thinks that her older sister is so smart.

HALIMA. Well, you are. It is a shame that your husband won't allow you to get an education. Why are Somali women treated with such contempt? Because we are not born men? Is it our fault? Why must we pay?

JAMILA. It is our way.

HALIMA. I do not agree with it.

JAMILA. Besides, all of the brains fell to you. You were the one who would make us proud. You made us so proud when you were enrolled at Somali National University.

HALIMA. Until the civil war came. Then I had to leave. Because men who were unable to settle their differences, had to use guns to speak for themselves.

JAMILA. Halima, can I tell you a secret?

HALIMA. What is it?

JAMILA. Do you promise not to tell?

HALIMA. I promise, I won't tell.

JAMILA. I was at the University once.

HALIMA. When?

JAMILA. I wanted to see a movie. I had a friend at the University who was showing "Malcolm X" at the library. She

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was able to sneak me in without some man asking me, “Where are you going? Why don’t you have a man with you?” “Where is your brother?” I didn’t want anyone to know. Not even mother. She would have been so angry with me. And it was so wonderful. I had only seen a movie once before, but I was too young to remember it. I was mesmerized just watching him. Dressed in his suit, that hat, and those glasses. A handsome Muslim man. I really believed he was Malcolm X. I especially loved it when they were dancing in the ballroom.

HALIMA. It’s called the Lindy Hop.

JAMILA. Yes, that’s it. The Lindy Hop. They were all dancing so beautifully. They looked like they were having so much fun. I could have watched them for hours.

HALIMA. I know a few steps. Do you want me to teach you?

JAMILA. No, no. That would be silly.

HALIMA. Come on, come on. I’ll lead.

JAMILA. That would make you the man.

HALIMA. I couldn’t do any worse than any other men. (*The two sisters begin to “jitterbug.” Halima is lively, but Jamila seems stiff at first. After a while, Jamila begins to enjoy herself and begins to laugh.*)

JAMILA. (*Sighs*) You are so much like father. He loved to dance, too. (*Beat*) I hate what Aidid has done to our family. What he’s done to Somalia. So much has happened to us, Halima.

HALIMA. You have so much experience, Jamila. So many people could benefit from your wisdom. I know they could. I have. You have taught me so much about life, and who I am. I owe a great debt to you Jamila. Maybe someday, when the Americans leave, and the civil wars and the clan fighting is over, we’ll go to school together. We can study together. Like when we were children. You taught me to read. Do you remember?

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JAMILA. Oh, Halima, you dream too much! Ahmed will not let me go to school. I am married. My duty is to be at home with my husband, and take care of the house...

HALIMA. Like a good Muslim woman should, right?

JAMILA. It is our culture, Halima. The way of Islam has been our way for many generations.

HALIMA. When I marry, it will be for love. Not because my parents have chosen someone for me; someone that I don't even know.

JAMILA. And where will you do this, Halima? Are you going to run away to Europe or to America and find your husband? Don't be so silly. That's not going to happen. We are Somalis, Halima. And Mogadishu is our home. What would you do with all this newfound freedom?

HALIMA. I would live, Jamila! I would breathe the air, I would let the sunshine warm my face, and I would speak as I would like to speak. And no one would tell me how I should dress or how I should feel.

JAMILA. The Qur'an teaches us to dress with modesty. A good Muslim woman follows the teachings of Prophet Muhammad.

HALIMA. We dress with modesty because it is what the men tell us to do. Haven't you ever thought about questioning why we must cover ourselves and they can walk about as they please?

JAMILA. You have been reading too many American magazines. It will lead to trouble.

HALIMA. And what if I do? At least I know what's going on the world. (*Proudly*) I have a copy of *Ebony Magazine*.

JAMILA. Where did you get this from?

HALIMA. I found it, lying here on the ground a few days ago.

JAMILA. (*Shocked*) You have been here before?

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HALIMA. Yes, I've talked with a young black American soldier several times. He seems very nice. I don't even know his name. *(Hesitant)* We've just...talked.

JAMILA. Halima, why have you done this? Somebody could be watching your every move. Come, let us leave this place and go home.

HALIMA. Nothing will happen to us Jamila. This is neutral territory.

JAMILA. A bullet or a grenade is not neutral as to where it lands and who it hits. Let us go.

HALIMA. Don't you want to look at the magazine?

JAMILA. I will look at it later. Let us go.

HALIMA. You go ahead. I will catch up with you.

JAMILA. I am not leaving without you Halima. *(There is a noise in the underbrush near them.)*

HALIMA. What was that?

JAMILA. Get down, Halima! *(They both drop to the ground. EARL "E.J." JACKSON, an African-American Army Ranger in his mid-twenties comes out into the clearing with full combat gear and a rifle. He notices the two women and draws his gun. Jamila stares angrily at him, but Halima looks away.)*

E.J. This is a restricted area. What are you doing here?

JAMILA. I am not restricted in my own country. I go wherever I please.

E.J. Not in this area. Ma'am, this area is off limits except for authorized military personnel. I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

JAMILA. You can put your weapon down. We are unarmed. My sister and I were about to leave.

HALIMA. *(To E.J.)* Were you here the other day? Do you remember me?

E.J. Excuse me?

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HALIMA. I think you may have lost something. (*Holds out a magazine.*) Is this yours?

E.J. Yes it is. Thank you. Where did you find it?

HALIMA. It was lying under the bushes over there. It looks like you left it in a hurry.

E.J. Well, I was reading it the other day when I was on patrol...

HALIMA. You were reading it, and you suddenly dropped it?

E.J. Well not exactly. I was, well, you know...

HALIMA. Oh! You had to relieve yourself?

E.J. Yes, I guess you could say that.

HALIMA. And you were, interrupted?

E.J. Yeah, I heard some gunfire pretty near me, so, I just kinda took off. I only had time enough to zip up my pants and get outta there. This is really embarrassing.

JAMILA. Well, thank you. We will be going now. Halima, let's go.

E.J. Halima.

HALIMA. Yes?

E.J. So that's your name. How come you never told me your name before?

HALIMA. You have never asked. (*Curious*) And what is your name?

JAMILA. Halima!

HALIMA. I'm coming Jamila.

E.J. Earl Jackson, Jr. But I go by E.J.

HALIMA. E.J. Nice to meet you, E.J.

E.J. Nice to meet you, Halima. (*E.J. extends his hand to shake Halima's*)

HALIMA. You know I cannot shake your hand – I am Muslim.

E.J. I knew that! I'm sorry; I didn't mean to offend you. It's just that...

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HALIMA. You don't have to apologize. It's not proper for me to shake your hand. (*Glares at Jamila.*) It is a part of Muslim culture. A woman should not have contact with a man other than her husband or a male member of her family.

JAMILA. Halima, I am leaving. We *need* to get back home.

HALIMA. I will meet you back there.

JAMILA. Do not stay long. It is not safe here. (*Jamila glares at E.J. and walks away.*)

HALIMA. You will have to excuse my sister...

E.J. I know; she doesn't like Americans. Most of the Somalis I've met here don't.

HALIMA. We've endured so much war here in Somalia in the last ten years. We don't trust anybody. Everyone who has come to Somalia has tried to exploit us. The British colonized us, the Italians enslaved us. And since they have been gone, Barre's clan fights Aidid's clan. And since you Americans have been here trying to catch Aidid, tensions have risen. Many Somalis don't trust you Americans.

E.J. We're just trying to keep the peace Halima. Aidid is a bad man.

HALIMA. (*Scoffs*) Aidid is bad and you Americans are good? Is that what you are trying to say?

E.J. Listen, we're just trying to bring some civility to this place...

HALIMA. Somalia is not an uncivilized country! We don't always need outsiders coming in to settle matters for us that we can handle ourselves.

E.J. What's that supposed to mean?

HALIMA. We know what you Americans think of us. You call us "skinnies". So you can dehumanize us. If you dehumanize us, then you can justify killing us without feeling.

E.J. That's not what I think. I think of people as people. Don't put words into my mouth.

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HALIMA. Then what do you think? Why are you here?

E.J. I'm serving my country, that's what I'm doing over here. I'm a soldier. That's what I do. My country sends me somewhere to help somebody out, I go.

HALIMA. No questions asked?

E.J. No questions asked. I follow orders. That's what we do in the United States.

HALIMA. Sounds much like uncivilized Somalia.

E.J. Would you like to elaborate on that?

HALIMA. It has only been three months since the Americans were shot down in their helicopters. The Qur'an teaches us that we must have justice. The people felt that those who killed Somalis should be punished. An eye for an eye.

E.J. (*Angered*) They had no right to torture those Rangers! They were only doing their job.

HALIMA. Doing their job! You Americans had no right to try to capture Aidid like some rabid dog! No one told you to that we needed you. Who gave you that right?

E.J. (*Defiantly*) Uncle Sam gave me that right. The President of the United States gave me that right. The United States Army gave me that right. That's who. (*Turns away*)

HALIMA. Then you should understand that we had the right to do what we did.

E.J. Those soldiers had families. Some of those guys had kids. Do you know what it must have been like to hear that your husband or your father died after being beaten to death by an angry mob?

HALIMA. It is no different than what my people had to endure. We had to bury our dead as well. It is why I hate war.

E.J. (*Calming*) I'm sorry about that. We just never thought that anybody could shoot a Blackhawk helicopter out of the sky like that; let alone two of them. Those helicopters seemed indestructible.

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HALIMA. My sister Jamila says that is a part of your “American arrogance.”

E.J. What’s that supposed to mean?

HALIMA. You Americans have come to save the poor Somalis from themselves, and all will be well after you have given us democracy. *(Sarcastically)* That is because we are completely incapable of governing ourselves.

E.J. Well, thank you for the anti-American sentiments. I thought we could talk about something else besides this war. If you just give me my magazine, I’ll be going.

HALIMA. *(Contrite)* I’m sorry; I didn’t mean to offend you. If I went to America, could I succeed like the women in this magazine?

E.J. Yeah, those articles in there about the Black Miss Americas. I was so in love with Vanessa Williams when I was in high school. She was had a hit album called “The Comfort Zone.”

HALIMA. *(Pointing)* And who is she?

E.J. Now, that’s Debbye Turner. Dr. Debbye Turner. She’s got a Ph.D. in Veterinary Medicine and she is a television reporter in St. Louis.

HALIMA. It seems like a black woman can achieve a great deal in America.

E.J. It’s getting better, but sisters still have challenges when it comes to climbing the corporate ladder.

HALIMA. *Your* sisters? They are *your* sisters?

E.J. No, no. Sisters, like in, black women, in general. It’s a figure of speech.

HALIMA. I knew that.

E.J. No you didn’t. I just explained it to you. *(There is a wailing voice heard in the distance. It is the melodic voice of the muezzin, calling Muslims to prayer.)* Who’s that?

HALIMA. One who calls Muslims to afternoon prayers.

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E.J. He's got a hell of a voice to blow like that. He sounds like an instrument. Like a horn.

HALIMA. A horn? I never thought of his voice sounding like a horn. That is an interesting observation.

E.J. That goes to show you, no matter how different the culture, everybody has some kind of music that brings people together. It sounds kind of jazzy.

HALIMA. Like jazz, music?

E.J. Yeah, kinda like that. *(Beat)* Halima, when can we talk again sometime?

HALIMA. I do not know. We are not really supposed to be...

E.J. I know, but I'd like to continue our conversation sometime. I tell you what, you keep the magazine. Finish reading it, and meet me here in a few days. Then we can discuss what you've read. Fair enough?

HALIMA. All right.

E.J. Friday afternoon.

HALIMA. I will see you then. Goodbye.

E.J. Goodbye. *(Halima leaves. E.J. watches her for a time, then exits. A few minutes later, LARRY "L-DOG" JOHNSON comes into the clearing. He is in his late twenties and has a certain "swagger" about him.)*

L-DOG. I saw you trying to holler at one of them skinnies. I didn't get a good look at the other one, but that one you was talkin' to was fine.

E.J. I've seen her around here a few times before. And don't call them skinnies. They're Somalis. Besides, we were just talking.

L-DOG. Yeah, "just talking." That's how it always gets started.

E.J. How does what get started?

L-DOG. The freak show. Come on E.J.; don't tell me you don't know about this lil spot right heah.

E.J. Naw, L, why don't you tell me, since you know so much.

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L-DOG. This heah's the spot that the brothas and them skinnies hook up. They always come to this spot looking for brothas. That's what your girl was up to.

E.J. Does everything always have to be sex with you?

L-DOG. Most times, but not always. A brotha gets lonely out here from time to time and needs a lil female companionship. I think they get lonely, too. (*Lustfully*) They gotta be – all wrapped up in all them veils and robes. I betcha sometimes, they wanna get up outta that stuff, come off that stuff, and give up that stuff, if you know what I mean.

E.J. Man, your mind is forever in the gutter.

L-DOG. Look man, I'm just keeping it real.

E.J. Actually, the young lady I met seemed very intelligent. Her name is Halima.

L-DOG. You actually know her name? You a better man than me. I don't wanna know nothin' about 'em. Just hit it and quit it. You know what I mean?

E.J. So, do you grab them by the hair, and drag them back to your cave like some caveman?

L-DOG. Laugh if you want to. All I know, is when I hook up with one of them skinnies, I'm not gonna get all emotionally tied up with 'em. Females can get kinda crazy like that you know.

E.J. I guess.

L-DOG. Oh shit! I see what's happening heah! You one of them sensitive, Babyface type niggas.

E.J. L, what are you talking about?

L-DOG. One o' them, (*Singing*) "I'll pay your rent, buy your clothes and cook your dinner, too soon as I get home from work." She gonna put that (*swivels his hips*) 'whip appeal' on you.

E.J. And what's wrong with a brotha showing some love to a woman?

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L-DOG. Cause we ain't talkin' about no love thang here.
HUA?

E.J. (*Obligingly*) HUA.

L-DOG. This is a hit-it-and-quit-it type 'o situation here. We're not talking about no long term relationships. We're gonna be shippin' outta here in a few months. You get that in your head homey. HUA?

E.J. HUA. But like I said, we were just talking. I'm not interested in any long term relationship either. But at the same time, I'm not looking for no one night stands either.

L-DOG. Suit yourself homey. Don't say L didn't warn you.
Let's get back to the base.

E.J. All right man. Here I come. (*E.J. and L-Dog start to leave. E.J. looks back wistfully, then continues on.*)

SCENE 2

The next day. It is the same clearing as in the previous scene. Jamila comes into the clearing with L-Dog closely behind her.

L-DOG. So, what's up slim?

JAMILA. (*Warmly*) Hello.

L-DOG. I saw you over there, standing with your girls. You kinda look like you were interested. Am I right?

JAMILA. Perhaps.

L-DOG. Aw, I dig. You tryin' to play that hard to get game.

JAMILA. You could say that.

L-DOG. Yeah, yeah, yeah. You sure got a pretty face. Wonder what you look like without that head scarf?

JAMILA. I've been told I'm quite attractive.

L-DOG. So, are your friends all right with you coming over to talk with me? I wouldn't want them to think that you're in any

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type of trouble, you know what I mean? This ain't official Army business.

JAMILA. I'm a grown woman. I make my own decisions. They know that. (*Jamila signals for them to leave*)

L-DOG. Well, all right. So, what's your name, slim?

JAMILA. Why do you want to know my name?

L-DOG. I just like to know who I'm talking to.

JAMILA. Why would you care what my name is? I don't wish to know yours.

L-DOG. Aw, I get you. You know the drill. Cool. We can just cut to the chase then.

JAMILA. Cut to the chase?

L-DOG. You know, do what we came here to do.

JAMILA. Which is what?

L-DOG. O.K. You really playin' this game now. I likes that.

JAMILA. Do you think that Somali women are like American women?

L-DOG. Well, I don't know. I've never really had a chance to compare them.

JAMILA. You mean a handsome soldier like yourself has had no female companionship since you've been here? What would your wife think if she knew you were interested in these, exotic African women?

L-DOG. I don't have a wife.

JAMILA. What about your, girlfriend?

L-DOG. I don't have a girlfriend either. I'm just a lonely man, baby.

JAMILA. I guess it does get lonely around here sometimes.

L-DOG. Yes, it does.

JAMILA. You are so far away from your home, your country, your family and friends...

L-DOG. (*Overacting*) Yeah. Sometimes, I wanna break down and cry. It gets to me that bad.

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JAMILA. You would cry?

L-DOG. Oh, yeah. At the drop of a hat. See, we American brothas are in touch with our emotions. American women like that. Like one day I was in the airport...

JAMILA. You were at the Kismayo Airport? Well, that changes things.

L-DOG. What do you mean?

JAMILA. You see, I was looking for a strong man. One that does not so easily show his emotions.

L-DOG. What's wrong with a brotha showing his emotions? I thought that women liked that.

JAMILA. American women like that, but not Somali women. No wonder you are so weak.

L-DOG. Hold on a minute. What you trying to say?

JAMILA. I was looking for, how do you say it, a "real man."

L-DOG. Oh, I'm a real man baby. You just gimme an opportunity to show you.

JAMILA. You are beneath me you, nigger.

L-DOG. What did you just call me?

JAMILA. I said, "nigger."

L-DOG. Now ain't that the pot calling the kettle black! You just like me, sister.

JAMILA. No I am not! Look at you. You are a mixed breed. The product of slaves and a race we deemed no better than dogs. You are no better than our Bantus. And now, the great United States is here to save us. And here you are. With your big fat lips, your hard hair, and your big, flat, nose! *(She spreads her fingers across her nose in derision of him. She laughs at L-Dog. L-Dog cocks his gun)*

L-DOG. Who do you think you are, talking to me like that? I'm one of the good guys here? We're here tryin' to help you skinnies get your act together. If it wasn't for us bein' here, you'd all still be killin' each other and starvin' to death! Now I

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was lookin' for a little companionship. If you don't want to give it, that's cool, but I'm not gonna let you insult me!

JAMILA. What are you going to do, nigger? Shoot me? An unarmed civilian? A woman? Do you think that your government will give you a medal for that? Why don't you walk into Mogadishu and shoot some children? Maybe they'll make you a general! You dog. You filthy American dog! (*L-Dog grabs her by the throat and throws her to the ground.*)

L-DOG. If I was really a dog, I woulda stuck a sock in your mouth, put this gun to your head and took what I wanted! And dare you to say something about it. Huh? What? You ain't so bad now, are you? Besides, you a little old for L anyway. I like some young stuff. Looks like you've been around the block a few times.

JAMILA. Do you feel better about yourself now? Do you feel powerful? That you can overpower a woman? (*There is the sound of a gunshot. L-Dog quickly jumps off of Jamila and looks around.*)

L-DOG. You ain't worth going to the stockade for. (*Beat*) Don't push me like that again, slim.

JAMILA. And don't you put your hands on me again, Bantu. What else happened at Kismayo Airport?

L-DOG. Yeah, I was there. (*Beat*) Why you wanna know?

JAMILA. Because my brother was at the airport that night; my brother Omar. He was shot and killed by an American nigger that looked just like you.

L-DOG. I didn't shoot nobody; that night. And you better quit throwing that word around when you don't even know what it means. We got fired on, so my boy E.J. returned fire. He had to defend himself. (*Beat*) You mean one of them young cats that died that night was your little brother?

JAMILA. Yes. And I think your friend E.J. killed him.

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L-DOG. Yeah, I remember now. It was a couple of them, doped up, looking like zombies. Only they was carrying AK-47's. They was crazy looking. They was trying to take my boy out.

JAMILA. So your friend, E.J. did kill my brother! Cowards! All of you! He was just a child. He was just a little boy.

L-DOG. A little boy with a round of ammunition that coulda took half a unit out if E.J. hadn't gotten to him first. They were trying to steal our supplies. And they was high on khat. How you know my boy, E.J.?

JAMILA. *(Beat)* I've never heard of his name until now. Omar was drugged by Aidid. He feeds them khat to keep them loyal to him to keep them addicted. Sometimes he doesn't even pay them. He just gives them khat instead of food. That's how he controls them.

L-DOG. It's too bad we couldn't have gotten Aidid that night; otherwise I'd be heading home to the Lou to be with my girl, instead of having this pathetic conversation with you. I'm outta here, sister. Don't leave the light on for me tonight.

JAMILA. Nobody wants you here anyway! Even your own people could care less about you. Why do you think there are so many black soldiers here in Somalia? Tell me that! *(Beat)* Because they think that you are just as worthless as we are, that's why. *(L-Dog starts to walk away.)* Did I strike a nerve Mr. Nigger? Afraid that I've told you what you already know? That's right, keep on walking. Walk until you fall off the face of the Earth! Nobody will miss you! Not a soul. Not a single soul!

MOGADISHU LOST

SCENE 3

A day later. The same. E.J. comes into the clearing. He whistles that the coast is clear. Halima comes into the clearing clutching the Ebony Magazine. She seems nervous, but excited.

HALIMA. Hello.

E.J. Well, hello. I'm glad you decided to take me up on my offer.

HALIMA. What offer?

E.J. About our discussion. About the Ebony Magazine.

HALIMA. Oh, oh yes. The magazine.

E.J. You seem a little nervous. Are you, O.K.?

HALIMA. Yes. It's just that there's been a lot of shooting lately. I don't like the sound of guns.

E.J. Well, what do you think of some of the articles? Anything stand out to you?

HALIMA. I liked the article on Martin Luther King. He was a great man.

E.J. He was respected all over the world.

HALIMA. I know. It said that he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

E.J. A man who lived for peace and nonviolence died a violent death.

HALIMA. Martyrs are common in Africa. It is the only way many get to see freedom.

E.J. People should be able to sit and talk, instead of always fighting.

HALIMA. That is ironic! Coming from a soldier.

E.J. But I'm more than just a soldier Halima. The military is just what I do not who I am.

HALIMA. What do you do? When you are not a soldier?

MOGADISHU LOST

E.J. What do I do? Lots of things. I read and write poetry, songs...

HALIMA. Poetry? Could you say recite a poem? Aloud?

E.J. Right here on the spot? That's a lotta pressure. I'll see what I can do. What kind of poems do you like?

HALIMA. I like poems that deal with love, and feelings.

E.J. Are you sure you'd be ready for something like that? I know some poems that have some weight to them.

HALIMA. I will try to remain on my feet.

E.J. All right, but don't say I didn't warn you. Oh yeah, I got one.

HALIMA. What is the name of it?

E.J. It's called, "Afraid."

HALIMA. I like the sound of it already.

E.J. We cry among the skyscrapers, as our ancestors cried among the palms in Africa Because we are alone, it is night, and we're afraid. We should have a land of trees Bowed down with chattering parrots, brilliant as the day, And not this land where birds are grey. We are related—you and I. You from the West Indies, I from Kentucky. We are related—you and I. You from Africa, I from these States. We are brothers—you and I.

HALIMA. Who wrote that?

E.J. Langston Hughes. He was big during the Harlem Renaissance.

HALIMA. Why did he write about Africa?

E.J. I think I read somewhere that he went to Africa when he was very young. And I guess it must have stuck with him. So, which article did you want to talk about?

HALIMA. The black doctor...

E.J. Dr. David Satchel.

HALIMA. Yes, him. He is the new director of the Center for Disease Control. We could use someone like him here in Somalia.

MOGADISHU LOST

E.J. Why do you say that?

HALIMA. Because of the spread of all the diseases all over Africa. Many people are dying because of so many different diseases. Starvation, lack of clean water, and AIDS.

E.J. We've got the same problem in the States with AIDS...

HALIMA. No, you don't understand. It is a death sentence to anyone who has it. Families abandon children and relatives who have the disease. And many who are spreading the disease do so by raping young women.

E.J. I hadn't heard that before.

HALIMA. And you probably never will. Not by anyone in Africa. We know, but the world doesn't. Many of us here in Somalia nearly starved to death during the civil war. We had to eat whatever we could find by the roadside. We would gather grains of rice from the ground as if they were expensive pearls. We would put as many of them together to make a meal, but we survived. So many children died from hunger and dysentery. It was cruel. *(She begins to cry)*

E.J. I'm sorry, Halima. I wish that there was more that I could do. I'm just one soldier. And sometimes I don't even know what I'm doing here.

HALIMA. No, E.J., you have been a great comfort to me. I like talking with you. You see me as a person. Not as an object or a thing, but a living, breathing human being. *(Beat)* E.J., would you hold my hand?

E.J. Are you sure? Didn't you say that a Muslim woman shouldn't...

HALIMA. Yes, I know what I said. *(Halima extends her hand to E.J.)*

E.J. All right. *(He sets his gun down on the ground, and begins to hold her hand. He wipes the tears from her eyes. She tenderly kisses him as she removes her head scarf. They begin to engage in a passionate kiss. They stop and look at each*

MOGADISHU LOST

other. Minutes later, an angry Jamila sees the two kissing. She is mortified to see Halima kissing E.J. Jamila yells out to Halima.)

JAMILA. Halima! What are you doing? *(The two young lovers are startled.)*

HALIMA. What do you want Jamila?

JAMILA. What have you done Halima? What have you done?

HALIMA. Do not question me like a child. I am a woman.

JAMILA. Not in my eyes you are not. You have become a whore!

HALIMA. I am not a whore!

JAMILA. Whore! You are a disgrace! Lowering yourself to be with this dog!

E.J. This is between me and Halima. We are consenting adults here. So why don't you get out of here?

JAMILA. Oh, really? Have you shared all of your secrets with her E.J.? Any deep dark secrets that you need to tell her about yourself?

E.J. What secrets? What is she talking about, Halima?

HALIMA. I don't know. Jamila, would you like to tell me this, secret? I would like to know what is going on.

JAMILA. Ask him about the Kismayo Airport, Halima.

HALIMA. That is where Omar was killed. Why are you talking about this Jamila? You know how it upsets me.

JAMILA. E.J. knows a great deal about what happened that night. Or haven't you talked about that before you become his whore?

HALIMA. E.J., were you there, at the airport?

E.J. Yes, I was there that night, Halima. I was on guard duty.

HALIMA. Did you have to shoot anyone that night?

E.J. What does this have to do with us? What does this have to do with anything?

HALIMA. Just tell me! Did you have to shoot anyone?

MOGADISHU LOST

E.J. Yes, I did. I had to shoot someone. I didn't want to, but I had to.

HALIMA. Do you remember what he looked like? Do you remember his face?

E.J. It was dark, and everything happened so fast. Everything seemed like a blur now. Faces, gunshots, explosions...it all happened so fast.

HALIMA. Did you have to shoot a young man? A very young man...barely eighteen...

E.J. Yes. He had an AK-47... he was about to shoot my boys...

JAMILA. He was about to run and E.J. shot him in the back!

E.J. No, that's not how it happened!

JAMILA. Halima! He shot your brother in cold blood! He shot him down like an animal! He didn't stand a chance! He is the reason our brother is dead!

HALIMA. YOU KILLED MY BROTHER! I HATE YOU!
YOU KILLED MY BROTHER! *(Halima begins to hit E.J. on the chest. She then falls to the ground clutching her scarf and cries into it. Jamila goes to her and puts her arms around her, and slowly lifts her to her feet. She spits at E.J.'s feet.)*

JAMILA. Stay, away from her! If you come near her again, I will swear you tried to rape her. That is the only thing that you Americans do well. Rape, steal and murder. Come Halima, it's time to go home. *(The two leave as Halima continues to sob uncontrollably. Jamila wraps Halima's scarf back around her head slowly and methodically. E.J. stares at the two women who slowly walk away.)*

END OF ACT 1

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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