

BBC RADIO DRAMA

RADIO 4 AFTERNOON DRAMA

FINAL SCRIPT AS BROADCAST

**TRIPLE WORD SCORE**

by

**Ben Tagoe**

YOMI.....	TUNJI KASIM
AMIRA.....	ADURA ONASHILE
VICTOR.....	JIMMY AKINGBOLA
THE COACH.....	JUDE AKUWUDIKE
SUNDAY/RANDOM VOICE (Sc4) .....	BEN ONWUKWE

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**SCENE 1 - TAXI**

The streets sounds of a bustling African city. Horns beep. People shout. Hawkers shout by the roadside, peddling everything from water to batteries and toilet roll.

1. SUNDAY: Come out of the way. It is a double road.  
Two cars! Idiot!

*After a frenzied flurry of beeping horns, SUNDAY (the taxi driver) shouts out of the window. A voice from further afield responds with unintelligible insults, which only serves to make Sunday madder.*

2. SUNDAY: Do you wanna see doctor today? If I come out of this car I will injure you here.

*More unintelligible shouting from a distance.*

3. YOMI: Could you wind up the window please?

4. SUNDAY: Wha' say?

5. YOMI: The window.

6. SUNDAY: How am I supposed to instruct these idiots with the window closed?

7. YOMI: It's just...the fumes.

8. SUNDAY: You do not like fumes?

1. YOMI: Well-

2. SUNDAY: Okay. No problem Boss Man. You must excuse these people. Their mothers must have dropped them on their heads when they were babies.

*FX: The background sounds gradually dampens as the driver rolls up the window.*

3. SUNDAY: There you go. No more fumes. I like to keep my customers satisfied.

*Beat*

4. SUNDAY: So, you are a yankee?

5. YOMI: A yankee?

6. SUNDAY: From the States? Bringing the big dollars.

7. YOMI: I'm from Scotland.

8. SUNDAY: Whatland?

9. YOMI: Scotland.

10. SUNDAY: Only joking Boss Man. I know Scotland.  
That is in England, right?

11. YOMI: Not exactly, it's-

12. SUNDAY: So you are bringing the big pounds then.  
You have got pounds in Scotland? Right?

1. YOMI: Well, yeah-

2. SUNDAY: And you know you need to look after me when I deliver you safely?

3. YOMI: You mean the fare?

4. SUNDAY: Plus a little something on top.

5. YOMI: A tip?

6. SUNDAY: Oyinbo always leave a nice tip.

7. YOMI: Oyinbo?

8. SUNDAY: White man.

Beat

8.a YOMI: White man?

9. SUNDAY: You have never been to Naija before?

10. YOMI: My dad's from here, but-

11. SUNDAY: Your daddy is from Naija? He went all the way to Scotland Whatland? And now you have returned.

12. YOMI: I've never actually-

13. SUNDAY: Welcome home Boss Man. Welcome to Naija.

14. YOMI: Thank you.

1. SUNDAY: You do not have family to meet you at the airport?

2. YOMI: Not that I know of.

3. SUNDAY: Your daddy forgot his people?

4. YOMI: Not exactly-

5. SUNDAY: So you have travelled on your own? For a holiday?

6. YOMI: I've come to play Scrabble.

7. SUNDAY: Scrabble?

8. YOMI: Yeah.

9. SUNDAY: So you are a sportsman?

10. YOMI: A 'sportsman'?

**SCENE 2 - HOTEL FOYER**

1. THE COACH: So you have arrived. Mr Yomi from Scotland. ~~I did not actually expect to see you here.~~

2. YOMI: ~~I sent you a copy of my ticket.~~

3. THE COACH: ~~I receive suspicious emails every day.~~  
~~Don't you?~~

4. YOMI: ~~Well, yeah, but-~~

5. THE COACH: ~~So I do not believe anything until I see it with my own eyes.~~

6. YOMI: Well, here I am.

7. THE COACH: And you think you are a Scrabble player?

8. YOMI: That's why I'm here.

9. THE COACH: Confident enough to travel to a new country. A new continent. To come and play with dedicated sportsmen.

10. YOMI: Well-

11. THE COACH: If you were not good enough to represent your own country, what makes you think you are good enough to represent Nigeria?

12. YOMI: I just want to play.

1. THE COACH: Your commitment is admirable. But you seem to have come here with assumptions.  
Correct me if I am wrong?
2. YOMI: I don't know what you mean.
3. THE COACH: 'Assumption is a heavy armour'. Do you know who said that?
4. YOMI: I don't.
5. THE COACH: Well you should. It was your own countryman. Robert Burns.
6. YOMI: (Hesitant) Okay-
7. THE COACH: To play Scrabble you must have the correct attitude. The Tile Gods do not favour the arrogant.
8. YOMI: 'Tile Gods'?
9. THE COACH: To be successful in this sport requires a unique combination of dedication and fate.  
Tell me, are you a humble person?
10. YOMI: I think so.
11. THE COACH: Do you work hard?
12. YOMI: Of course.
13. THE COACH: Because, without dedication, how can you expect the Tile Gods to smile upon you?

*Beat*

1. THE COACH: Come with me.

**SCENE 3 - NARRATION**

2. YOMI: I used to have this recurring dream. Where I'd fall into this huge pool of Scrabble tiles. Like one of them kids' ball pools. But full of little plastic squares. Right now, I feel like I'm choking on Zs, Xs and Js. As I stand there in front of them. Rows and rows of men behind desks. All looking at me. Some bemused. Some smiling. Some not. But all of them staring right at me. And that's when I see her. The only woman in the room. She's hostile and intense. Stares right through me. Then looks away.

**SCENE 4 – THE HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM**

The sound of a gavel. And the hum of conversation quickly fades to silence.

1. THE COACH: Okay. Gentlemen. And lady. You are gathered here, Nigeria's most elite band of Scrabble players. During the next three weeks you will attempt to take the final steps. This year we are going to the World Championships with full force. No African team has ever returned victorious.
2. RANDOM VOICE: Until now.
3. VICTOR: Correct.
4. RANDOM VOICE: By the Grace of God.
5. THE COACH: I did not believe our new arrival from the UK would actually make it. But he did. So you will each play two knockout games, leaving us with eight players. Then one of those eight will be selected at random to have a playoff with our new arrival.

*FX: A murmur of surprise goes around the room, then quickly fades.*

1. THE COACH: The remaining eight will make it to camp. But only six will be on the plane to China. And remember. Do not be afraid. Because fear is like fire. It can be your greatest friend. But if you let it rage out of control, it will burn you. Use your fear my brothers and sister. When it feels like the Tile Gods are against you. That is when you must draw down upon your innermost resources and earn your victories. Now, let us pray together.

*FX: The room is filled with murmurs of prayer in the background.*

2. THE COACH: Dear father, we pray that you will support us today, and bring us luck and judgement in our honest endeavours....

*FX: The murmurs of prayer are gradually replaced by the sound of clacking tiles.*

#### SCENE 5 - NARRATION

3. YOMI: I open my eyes during those prayers. And she's staring right at me. Everyone else is praying. Except her and me. And she just stares. Doesn't flinch. Doesn't look away. Just stares. And after those prayers, I wander around. Watching the games. Waiting for the biggest game of my life. Observing the intensity. Then, during a break in the action...

**SCENE 6 - HOTEL FOYER**

1. YOMI: Hi, I'm Yomi.

2. AMIRA: Good for you.

3. YOMI: It's all a bit intense in there, eh?

4. AMIRA: I beg your pardon?

5. YOMI: The matches. It's a bit-

6. AMIRA: They do things differently where you come from?

7. YOMI: Well-

8. AMIRA: Better perhaps?

9. YOMI: Not better. Just-

10. AMIRA: Scrabble at this level is not supposed to be a frivolous activity.

11. YOMI: I know that-

12. AMIRA: I presume you did not travel all this way for a holiday? Or to make idle chitter chatter?

13. YOMI: Of course not. I was just trying to be friendly.

1. AMIRA: I am not here to make friends. I am here to compete.

2. YOMI: So am I, but you can surely have a wee natter as well?

3. AMIRA: What is 'a wee natter'?

4. YOMI: Forget it. Doesn't matter.

**SCENE 7 - NARRATION**

5. YOMI: And with that. She's gone. And I'm wondering why I'm here. (Beat) But he loved Scrabble. That's what they said. Everyone in Nigeria loves Scrabble. It's a national obsession. But him more than most. Nobody could ever beat him. He was the champion of Robert Gordon's University. Beating students from all over the world. And he was going to teach me. She told me that. As soon as I could read. To expand my vocabulary. Like they did in Nigeria. It was the thing he was most excited about. Teaching me Scrabble. In the end, I had to teach myself.

**SCENE 8 – CONFERENCE ROOM**

1. VICTOR: My name is Victor.
2. YOMI: Yomi.
3. VICTOR: You have come here from the UK?
4. YOMI: Scotland.
5. VICTOR: Why?
6. YOMI: I beg your pardon.
7. VICTOR: Why did you come here?
8. YOMI: My dad's from here.
9. VICTOR: But you are not.
10. YOMI: Well I'm here now.
11. VICTOR: I can see that. These spectacles do not mean I am blind. And you have still not answered the question. (Beat) You're a Scrabble player?
12. YOMI: I am.
13. VICTOR: But you do not represent Scotland?
14. YOMI: I wanted to play for Nigeria.

1. VICTOR: You were not good enough for Scotland?
2. YOMI: I just want to play.
3. VICTOR: But you are good enough for Nigeria?
4. YOMI: Can we start?
5. VICTOR: We have rules here. There will be a bell.
6. YOMI: Right. Sorry.
7. VICTOR: I suppose we are about to find out how good, or otherwise, you are.
8. YOMI: **And this is it. Just me, him and the tiles. Only the board between us. Man against man. A battle of wills. He stares at me through these huge milk bottle lenses. White eyes. Magnified against black skin. He's psyching me out. Full of intensity. We're like two boxers at the weigh in. One more intense. But still more at ease than the other.**
- FX: A bell rings, then the clacking of tiles as the bag is shaken.
9. VICTOR: Let us play.

SCENE 9 – NARRATION

*FX: The rapid fire clacking of Scrabble tiles to accompany a high stakes match.*

1. YOMI (rapid fire): So I start with PAVE. Straight 9. Doubled up for 18. And I'm already sweating. His R on the end makes PAVER. And then it's down to make RENT. Double word score. 18. Then BLAT, an old Soviet term. An informal agreement. 14 points. I'm watching. He's thinking. I'm thinking. He shuffles his rack. Tension mounts. And it goes on like that. Tit for tat. Word for word. Until there's 18 tiles in the bag. He's surged ahead. 389/302. The triple word squares are in play. He places AYES for 24. 413/302. He's poker faced as I play KO. Across the top of ORGIAC. Relating to orgy. YAY in the top corner. 437/324. Then I see it. The bingo that could save me. JUTTIES for 72. Plural of Jutty. The S at the top of SPA. Maybe those 'Tile Gods' are smiling on me after all. Then I see another bingo. But it's one I can't place. He roars back with REJOIN for 49 points. 496/396. No tiles left. All I can play is DENIM for 12. And he's got 5 left. Best single play is MIAOW. I know this. And he knows it too. It ends 521/408. An annihilation.

**SCENE 10 – CONFERENCE ROOM**

1. VICTOR: I believe you have been defeated.
2. YOMI: Yeah. I'm not blind either.
3. VICTOR: Victor by name. Victor by nature.
4. YOMI: Fair play. You deserved it.
5. VICTOR: Correct.
6. YOMI: You got lucky with the tiles though.
7. VICTOR: There was no luck in this game.
8. YOMI: The 'Tile Gods' then. They were smiling on you.
9. VICTOR: Perhaps. Perhaps not. But I suspect this particular victory was more about experience and talent.
10. THE COACH (approaching): At the expense of humility?
11. VICTOR: Coach-
12. THE COACH: What?
13. VICTOR: I just-

1. THE COACH: Save your explanations. I have told you many times about your conduct. Now, if you will excuse us, I would like to speak with your defeated opponent.

2. VICTOR: Of course. No problem.

*FX: The scrape of a chair as Victor leaves.*

3. THE COACH: You have the air of a disappointed man Mr Yomi from Scotland.

4. YOMI: I lost. What do you expect?

5. THE COACH: One must accept finite disappointment. But never lose infinite hope.

*Beat*

6. THE COACH: You have not heard those words before?

7. YOMI: I haven't.

8. THE COACH: Doctor Martin Luther King Jnr. And you certainly should not lose hope. You played a decent game.

9. YOMI: I'd prefer good to decent.

10. THE COACH: There were positive signs. You know a lot of words. Your problem is technique.

11. YOMI: He beat me fair and square.

1. THE COACH: Of course he did. Victor is one of Nigeria's best players. He has genuine talent, even if his attitude can be somewhat lacking at times.
2. YOMI: Some of his plays were amazing.
3. THE COACH: You are surprised by that?
4. YOMI: Well, no, but-
5. THE COACH: He is more experienced than you. Why wouldn't he beat you so comprehensively?
6. YOMI: I reckon your 'Tile Gods' were smiling on him as well though.
7. THE COACH: Despite what anyone says, you can never discount the God Factor. People talk about luck, but God has a part to play in everything. However, The Tile Gods never smile upon suspect technique. (Beat) You do not believe in that?
8. YOMI: I didn't say that.
9. THE COACH: You did not have to.

*Beat*

10. THE COACH: So, what now?
11. YOMI: What do you mean?

1. THE COACH: You will go home? With your tail between your legs as they say in England.

2. YOMI: I'm from Scotland

*Beat*

3. THE COACH: What if I was to give you another chance?

4. YOMI: You said I had to compete on equal terms. No second chances and no favours.

5. THE COACH: This is not a favour. You can trust me on that one. It is a management technique.

6. YOMI: It feels like a favour to me.

7. THE COACH: You know, another famous man once said....'if you have the opportunity to play this game of life, you need to appreciate every moment'. Do you know who that was?

8. YOMI: No idea.

9. THE COACH: Guess.

10. YOMI: Nelson Mandela?

11. THE COACH: It was Kanye West.

12. YOMI: The singer?

13. THE COACH: You are aware of his work?

1. YOMI: Of course-
2. THE COACH: But you do not appreciate his talents?
3. YOMI: Well-
4. THE COACH: I think Kanye West is a lot like our friend Victor. He lacks modesty at times. But he is a talented artist and I find his rhythms compelling. Maybe they will both learn.
5. YOMI: I don't really understand -
6. THE COACH: His words ring true do they not?
7. YOMI: I suppose they do.

*Beat*

8. THE COACH: The offer is there for you to come and compete in camp. 'Losing should give you an extra determination to work harder'.

*Beat*

9. THE COACH: Would you like to guess that one?
10. YOMI: No idea.
11. THE COACH: Wayne Rooney of Manchester United. Now. The choice is yours. Do you want to stay? Or do you want to go home?

**SCENE 11 - NARRATION**

*FX: The distant street sounds of an African city by night.*

1. YOMI: **That night. In my hotel room. No sun in the sky, but the heat is still sweltering. I listen to the sounds of night time Lagos drift past my window. I've always dreamed about this place. In a strange way it feels like home. And I want to stay, but nobody likes being a loser. Especially a loser surrounded by winners. The Coach is right though. This is too good a chance to turn down. The chance to stay here. And learn. With purpose.**

**SCENE 12 - TRAINING CAMP**

*FX: The buzz of conversation in a busy room.*

2. THE COACH: Gentlemen. And lady. May I have your attention please? Congratulations to you all on making it this far. As you will see, I have awarded a 'wildcard' place in camp to our friend from Scotland.

*FX: A disapproving murmur goes round the room.*

1. THE COACH: You must accept my decision and sharpen your focus. We have the makings of the best team Scrabble Nigeria has ever seen. But the coming few weeks will be crucial. You must learn to work together. Sportsmen are notoriously temperamental. You must quickly learn how to checkmate your emotions.

*Beat*

2. THE COACH: Mr Yomi. Perhaps by way of proper introduction, you can lead us in our morning devotion?

3. YOMI: I beg your pardon?

4. THE COACH: It is traditional in camp that we pray each morning.

5. YOMI: You want me to do it?

6. THE COACH: Of course. Why not? We are building a team. We must work together. Pray together. Eat together.

7. YOMI: It's just-

8. THE COACH: You do not pray?

9. YOMI: Not really.

10. AMIRA: It is up to him if he prays or not.

1. VICTOR: We have already made accommodations for those who cannot pray together. Now we are making accommodations for people who do not want to pray at all. They are newcomers and they want to invent the rules?

2. AMIRA: I am not 'inventing the rules'.

3. VICTOR: We have always done our morning devotion together. Just as we have always done our afternoon run together.

4. THE COACH: There is no rule that says we have to always continue as we have been doing. Change is the law of life.  
*Beat*  
That was John F Kennedy by the way. It is a very wise quote.

*FX: Murmurs of approval around the room.*

5. VICTOR: We cannot just dispense with established methods.

6. THE COACH: Says who?

7. YOMI: Can I just ask about this afternoon run?

8. THE COACH: We will come to that later.

9. YOMI: It's just-

10. THE COACH: For now, we must decide on the morning devotion.

1. VICTOR: Surely there is nothing to decide? We have always done our morning devotion collectively.

2. THE COACH: We have always done lots of things. And none of them have brought us home from the World Championships victorious.

3. VICTOR: But-

4. THE COACH: Perhaps we should let democracy decide?

5. VICTOR: This is nonsense.

6. THE COACH: You think democracy is nonsense?

7. VICTOR: Democratising prayer is nonsense.

8. THE COACH: I beg your pardon?

*Beat*

9. VICTOR: Excuse me coach.

10. THE COACH: You are excused. On this occasion. Now, all of you that are in favour of a collective morning devotion? Raise your hands please.

*Beat*

11. THE COACH: 5/4 in favour of choice. Is everyone happy with that?

*FX: A murmur of agreement.*

**SCENE 13 -COURTYARD**

*FX: The distant sounds of a city in the background*

1. YOMI: I just wanted to say thank you.
2. AMIRA: Thank you for what?
3. YOMI: For backing me up in there.
4. AMIRA: I was not 'backing you up'. I was expressing an opinion.
5. YOMI: I know that, but-
6. AMIRA: It was a fortunate coincidence.  
Nothing more.
7. YOMI: Well thanks anyway.
8. AMIRA: You are welcome.

*Beat*

9. AMIRA: Why are you here anyway?
10. YOMI: The same reason everyone else is here.
11. AMIRA: 'Everyone else' is here because they are Nigerians who want to play Scrabble for Nigeria.

1. YOMI: And I want to play Scrabble for Nigeria too.

2. AMIRA: A white man?

3. YOMI: How can you even say that?

4. AMIRA: A brown man then. It is the same thing. And you still have not answered the question.

5. YOMI: I want to go to the World Championships.

6. AMIRA: And you think you are good enough?

7. YOMI: I used to think I was.

8. AMIRA: Until Victor taught you a lesson?

9. YOMI: Well, yeah.

*Beat*

10. AMIRA: You know, I actually hoped you would beat him. Even if it meant you stole a place from a proper Nigerian.

11. YOMI: Stole?

12. AMIRA: Yes. Stole.

13. YOMI: A bit harsh. I'm-

14. AMIRA: You are what?

*Beat*

1. YOMI: It doesn't matter.
2. AMIRA You are here now. You should be happy.
3. YOMI: I want to learn.
4. AMIRA: Learn then. What is stopping you?
5. YOMI: I watched you playing earlier. Will you help me?
6. AMIRA: Why would I do that?
7. YOMI: Maybe we can help each other.
8. AMIRA: What exactly can you do to help me?
9. YOMI: It was only an idea.
10. AMIRA: The Coach will help you. You are his responsibility. It was him who asked you to stay.
11. YOMI: I just thought-
12. AMIRA: That we should be friends?
13. YOMI: No, just-

*Beat*

1. AMIRA: You are a strange man.

2. YOMI: (Downbeat) Thanks.

3. AMIRA: There is no need to look so sad. I am sure your behaviour is perfectly normal in your own country.

*Beat*

4. AMIRA: You know. Maybe we can play one practice game tomorrow during the break. I will instruct you. And observe. Only once though.

5. YOMI: Fair enough.

6. AMIRA: And, by the way, my name is Amira.

**SCENE 14 - NARRATION**

7. YOMI: She's right though. This place is different. It might feel like home in a strange kind of way. But I'm the one who talks different. And acts different.

**SCENE 15 – TRAINING CAMP**

1. THE COACH: So, this morning, we overcame the first major hurdle that stood in the way of team bonding. But, as we all know, this game is about more than just words.
2. VICTOR: It is about technique.
3. THE COACH: Of course Victor.
4. VICTOR: And mental composure.
5. THE COACH: Absolutely. Being in the right state of mind to play the game. And what else?
6. VICTOR: Physiology.
7. THE COACH: Very good. It is about putting yourself in the best physical state for maximum performance.
8. YOMI: Physical state?
9. THE COACH: We need to be attuned both physically and mentally.
10. YOMI: We're sat at a table playing a board game.
11. THE COACH: This afternoon, we will partake in the first elements of our physical programme.
12. YOMI: Can I ask a question?

1. VICTOR: Do not tell me. He wants to tinker with this too.
2. YOMI: I just don't understand what running has got to do with Scrabble.
3. THE COACH: It is physical activity. Which makes the blood flow faster in your brain.
4. VICTOR: And when the blood flows faster in your brain it makes you ready to play Scrabble properly. Perhaps you should have run before you played me.
5. THE COACH: That is enough Victor.

*Beat*

6. THE COACH: You must have heard the saying, 'healthy body equals healthy mind'?
7. YOMI: Of course I have.
8. THE COACH: Then you will know what I am taking about.
9. YOMI: Is the running compulsory?
10. VICTOR: Of course it is compulsory.
11. THE COACH: Nothing is 'compulsory'.
12. YOMI: I'll just leave it then.

1. THE COACH: But if you want to opt out, then you must explain why.
2. VICTOR: Let him do what he wants. He will only slow us down anyway.
3. THE COACH: For now, he is part of the team. Same as anybody else.
4. VICTOR: Then he should not be asking us to change our methods.
5. YOMI: I'm not asking anybody to change anything.
6. VICTOR: Then what exactly are you doing? Perhaps you should ask fewer questions and concentrate on learning words and improving on your techniques.
7. THE COACH: I will not tell you again Victor.  
Beat
8. THE COACH: But I am afraid I have to agree with your colleague on this occasion.
9. VICTOR: Thank you Coach.
10. THE COACH: If you are part of this camp then you should join us on the run.
11. YOMI: What if I can't keep up?

1. THE COACH: Any performance improvement will be welcomed. 'Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning.' Do you know who said that one?

2. YOMI: No idea.

3. THE COACH: You are not going to guess?

4. YOMI: I don't know. Usain Bolt?

5. THE COACH: It was Benjamin Franklin. Now go and get ready to run.

#### SCENE 16 - NARRATION

*FX: The sound of feet pounding the pavement and the puffing of breath.*

6. YOMI: When in Rome and all that. Or when in Lagos, as the case may be. I hadn't run anywhere for years. I made an art form out of avoiding cross country at school. And I've added a good few pounds since then. But I find myself slogging through the streets of Lagos. With a bunch of 'elite' Scrabble players. Lagging at the back, puffing and panting in a pair of brown brogues. It's madness. Utter madness.

**SCENE 17 – OUTSIDE TRAINING CAMP AS THE  
RUNNERS RETURN**

1. AMIRA: The running is a problem for you?
2. YOMI: I just don't see why it's necessary.
3. AMIRA: They have already explained it to you. Are your ears made of cloth?
4. YOMI: I don't run anywhere at home.
5. AMIRA: You're not at home now.
6. YOMI: I'm just not used to it.
7. AMIRA: Well you should get used to it. You can train yourself to do anything you want. Anything at all.
8. YOMI: But I don't want to train myself to run.
9. AMIRA: And that is your problem. You think you should always be able to do what you want. You have no discipline. You are out of shape. You need to reduce your size.
10. YOMI: What?
11. AMIRA: I think you heard what I said.
12. YOMI: Are you for real?

1. AMIRA: You want me to say nice things about you?  
To butter you up and flatter your ego?
2. YOMI: Well no, but-
3. AMIRA: The running will help you. You should do it.
4. YOMI: Fair enough.
5. AMIRA: Back home in Daura, I ran to and from school. Miles and miles every day.
6. YOMI: Daura?
7. AMIRA: Do you want a geography lesson or a Scrabble lesson?
8. YOMI: The Scrabble's fine.
9. AMIRA: Good. Stop asking questions and listen then.
10. YOMI: I think you could maybe do with being a wee bit more forthright.
11. AMIRA: Shall we start?
12. YOMI: Of course.
13. AMIRA: I watched your game with Victor. And your main problem is that you do not control the board properly. You are too focused on making big plays. It makes your game loose.
14. YOMI: Loose?

1. AMIRA: You know lots of words. But you do not know how to use them properly.
2. YOMI: I'm not that bad.
3. AMIRA: It is like owning a Ferrari sports car and not being able to drive. You would be better with a pedal cycle.
4. YOMI: I'm not sure I-
5. AMIRA: The small words are also important. They can make a big difference.
6. YOMI: I already knew that.
7. AMIRA: Then you should practice it if you know it. You need to make sure you know all of the words. You need to learn them in patterns.
8. YOMI: I know most of them.
9. AMIRA: How much time do you spend learning words?
10. YOMI: Quite a lot.
11. AMIRA: I was looking for a quantifiable response.
12. YOMI: I don't know exactly.

1. AMIRA: Well you should know 'exactly'. Every night I return home from University. I eat my evening meal. Quickly. Then I learn words for four hours until it is time to sleep.

2. YOMI: Four hours?

3. AMIRA: Then I spend two more hours in the morning before work.

4. YOMI: What time do you get up in the morning?

5. AMIRA: That is not relevant. I have already learned all of the five letter words. Now it is the sixes. How many of the fives do you know?

6. YOMI: Some of them.

7. AMIRA: And the fours?

8. YOMI: Most of them.

9. AMIRA: Most?

10. YOMI: I'm working on it.

11. AMIRA: On Saturdays and Sundays I spend 12 hours learning words. Friday is my only day of rest.

12. YOMI: That's unbelievable.

1. AMIRA: It is true.
2. YOMI: No I'm sorry, I didn't mean-
3. AMIRA: There are 24,043 allowable 7-letter words,  
15,801 6-letter words-
4. YOMI: Alright, I get the message.
5. AMIRA: In the past three months I have written  
down 35, 000 of these words. And I will  
not stop until I have learned them all.  
Greatness does not come without work.
6. YOMI: You've surely got to live a bit as well?
7. AMIRA: One day, Scrabble will pay my bills. I  
have won trophies. But trophies will not  
feed me. A scholarship is worth 350,000  
Naira every year for three years.
8. YOMI: Wow!
9. AMIRA: You have turned up here to have fun. Some  
of us are not here for a holiday.

SCENE 18 – NARRATION

1. YOMI: As the days went by I started to see what Amira meant. That old Benjamin Franklin quote started making sense as well. All that Scrabble. And running. And Scrabble. And running. I replaced my brown brogues with a pair of running shoes from a fancy shopping mall on the outskirts of Lagos. And by the second week, those daily runs were getting easier. Maybe that blood was starting to flow faster in my brain. I was improving. For whatever reason, that one game became a few. Maybe, under the surface, Amira was feeling just like me. ~~Because that hard shell began to crack.~~ And with her help, I started to look at the game differently. At strategy. At placing. I got better at probabilities. At playing the numbers in my head.

SCENE 19 – TRAINING CAMP

2. VICTOR: Who exactly do you think you are talking to?

3. AMIRA: I am looking at you am I not?

4. VICTOR: Then you should look away. Immediately.

5. AMIRA: I beg your pardon?

1. VICTOR: This is serious business we are doing in this camp. You should not even be here, speaking to me in this manner.
2. AMIRA: I was merely pointing out an error in your game.
3. VICTOR: And I have already told you, if I want your opinion, I will ask you for it.
4. YOMI: Steady on there fella.
5. VICTOR: What has this got to do with you?
6. YOMI: There's no need to speak to her like that.
7. AMIRA: I did not ask for your opinion.
8. YOMI: I was only saying.
9. AMIRA: Well don't. I can fight my own battles.
10. YOMI: Fair enough.
11. VICTOR: The Coach should remove you both from this place.
12. YOMI: What exactly is your problem?
13. THE COACH (approaching) : And who are you to be telling me what to do?
14. VICTOR: Coach. I did not see you-

1. THE COACH: I do not care if you saw me or not. I asked you a question.
2. VICTOR: Her behaviour is unacceptable. You need to manage this small girl-
3. THE COACH: You are telling me what is acceptable now?
4. VICTOR: No, but-
5. AMIRA: All I did was point out an error in his strategy.
6. VICTOR: She should not be speaking to me in that manner.
7. THE COACH: And what manner is that?
8. VICTOR: It was inappropriate.
9. THE COACH: Please explain to me what is inappropriate about a fellow player assisting you in camp?

*Beat*

10. THE COACH: Go on. I am waiting.
11. VICTOR: I have nothing more to say on the matter.
12. THE COACH: You are sure?
13. VICTOR: Yes.

1. THE COACH: Good. From now on, I presume you will have nothing more to say on how I run this camp. Do you understand me?

*Beat*

2. THE COACH: I asked if you have understood me?

3. VICTOR: Yes.

4. THE COACH: Yes, what?

5. VICTOR: Yes, Coach.

6. THE COACH: Very good. Now, I would like to speak to these two in private.

7. VICTOR: But-

8. THE COACH: I will not tell you again, Victor!  
You two, come with me.

*FX: The scrape of chairs as Yomi and Amira follow The Coach*

**SCENE 20 – COURTYARD**

1. THE COACH: It is important that we have a harmonious camp.
2. YOMI: I'm sorry, I just-
3. THE COACH: I know that Victor can be troublesome. But you must temper your emotions at all times. Both of you.
4. AMIRA: He attacked me verbally.
5. THE COACH: I will take this opportunity to remind you of the old story about the madman and the clothes. Have you heard that one?
6. AMIRA: No.
7. YOMI: Me neither.
8. THE COACH: One day, you are taking a bath. You fold your clothes up neatly while you are taking a soak. And a madman bursts in and steals your neatly folded clothes. So you chase him out into the street, through the busy market place. Remember, you are naked. Because he is carrying your clothes. But you are the one shouting and screaming. Naked in the busy market place. Ask yourself this. Who will the people think is the mad man?

*Beat*

1. THE COACH: Do you understand the point of this story?
2. YOMI: Of course.
3. AMIRA: Yes Coach.
4. THE COACH: You must make sure you are never pursuing a madman through the streets when you are naked. And do not ever be the madman either.
5. AMIRA: But Coach, please, you know exactly why he had a problem with me challenging him.
6. THE COACH: Perhaps I do.
7. AMIRA: Then, please, why do you not do something about it?
8. THE COACH: Because I am not a one man court of law. And Victor is a very talented player.
9. AMIRA: So am I.
10. THE COACH: There is no question mark over that. There is also no question that he is lacking in manners.
11. AMIRA: So someone should teach him a lesson.
12. THE COACH: I would not disagree with that. But it should happen on the field of play.

1. AMIRA: Then it is settled. I want to play him. In a challenge match.
2. THE COACH: Do you really think that you are the correct person for this task?
3. AMIRA: Of course. I will defeat him.
4. THE COACH: It is highly likely that you will. And then you will probably have to spend two weeks in his company in China. Two weeks while he is wounded and even more difficult. With you as a constant reminder.
5. AMIRA: I do not care about that.
6. THE COACH: Well I do. Because, in order for us to return victorious from China, I need a harmonious atmosphere in the camp at all times. So we need an alternative plan.

*Beat*

7. YOMI: No way. I'm not ready to play him again.
8. THE COACH: Whatever happened to that young man who came here full of confidence?
9. YOMI: I was never all that confident.
10. THE COACH: Perhaps now is the time to 'earn your stripes'. To gain your place in the team legitimately.

1. YOMI: I know that, but-
2. THE COACH: And you have shown excellent levels of dedication. As the great Sammy Davis once said, 'you have two choices: your commitment versus your fear'.
3. YOMI: So this is a choice then?
4. THE COACH: Everything is a choice.
5. AMIRA: You can beat him.
6. THE COACH: We need to have the wildcard game anyway. So it is time for the rematch between you and Victor.

### **SCENE 21 – TRAINING CAMP**

7. AMIRA: I want you to beat him. I want you to ground him into the dirt. I want you to-
8. YOMI: Steady on.
9. AMIRA: This time. You can do it.
10. YOMI: Easy for you to say.
11. AMIRA: You just need to focus. And to stop playing so haphazardly.

1. YOMI: Thanks for that. Very helpful.
2. AMIRA: You need to stop looking for so much meaning in the words all the time.
3. YOMI: I don't understand-
4. AMIRA: I have watched you learning words. You ponder far too long with your dictionary.
5. YOMI: How can you learn words without the dictionary?
6. AMIRA: It is an essential tool, yes. But for the purposes of this game, the words do not need to have any meaning.
7. YOMI: I know all that, but-
8. AMIRA: You say you know that. But you still seem to be learning words the wrong way. You need to think of them as mere combinations of numbers. A means to an end. Nothing more.
9. YOMI: How can I remember words if I don't even know what they mean?
10. AMIRA: Nobody can know everything.
11. YOMI: Except Victor.
12. AMIRA: This is not a time for joking.

1. YOMI: Sorry.
2. AMIRA: Some people always want to search for the meaning. But there is no time for that. There is not enough room in our brains.
3. YOMI: But that's half the fun.
4. AMIRA: There is a time and a place for 'why'. Most of the time you just have to get on with it.
5. YOMI: And that's what I'm doing.
6. AMIRA: I have observed that. You have been applying yourself properly.
7. YOMI: Was that a compliment there?
8. AMIRA: Remember, in Scrabble, the points are the meaning. There are people playing all over the world. In China, Thailand and Brazil. Some of them barely speak English. They don't know what even 10% of the words mean, but they know how to place them. They have strategy. We need to work on the patterns.
9. YOMI: My brain doesn't work like that.
10. AMIRA: Then you must make it work like that. You must create filing cabinets inside your brain.

1. YOMI: Filing cabinets?

2. AMIRA: Use them to store the words and patterns.  
In an orderly fashion. If we start now,  
you can at least make some more progress  
before you play him again.

### SCENE 22 - NARRATION

3. YOMI: **And that was it. The next three days. More intense than ever. Doing it her way. Twelve hours a day. Putting the words and patterns in 'filing cabinets' in my head. And I was just starting to make progress, when the last day of camp arrived. The day of the big rematch.**

### SCENE 23 - SCRABBLE ROOM

4. VICTOR: So, we meet again on the field of play.

5. YOMI: Looks like it.

6. VICTOR: And you believe you will emerge victorious this time?

7. YOMI: I believe I've got a chance.

1. VICTOR: Maybe so. You have been working hard. I have watched you.

2. YOMI: You must have got better yourself.

3. VICTOR: There was less room for improvement with me.

*FX: The shake of a bag of Scrabble tiles as the game begins.*

#### SCENE 24 - NARRATION

4. YOMI: *And that's it. We're off. With everyone watching. She smiles at me and nods. I start with. EMPUSA. Doubled up for eight. He counters with MACK for 12. I'm short on vowels. So I go for a consonant dump. BRR. Double word score. 18 points. I stretch into a lead. But he chips away. Relentlessly banging in two, three and four letter words. ACME for 19. CAM for 14, WAN for 17. Round after round. Like that. Until we reach the closing stages. I'm 10 points ahead. With only 47 tiles in the bag. Then he plays ZIRCON for 63. 41 left. The Q might still be there. If it's not on his rack. That and the J. Last chances for a big score./...*

1. YOMI (Cont) : The next few rounds. More of those little words. Twos, threes and fours. CH, VOW and PA and OM. Then out comes the Q. Eight tiles left. 539/525 in his favour. No room for big words. I catch her eye as I play QANAT for 54 points. She almost smiles. A double word score on the Q. 539/579 in my favour. There's no way he can win now.

*FX: A spontaneous round of applause.*

**SCENE 25 – SCRABBLE ROOM**

2. THE COACH: Perhaps it is time to be a bigger man, Victor?

3. VICTOR: He was blessed with good fortune.

4. THE COACH: It was you who said the game was about practice, skill and strategy.

*Beat*

5. THE COACH: Well?

6. VICTOR: He played a good game.

7. THE COACH: You are correct, but you should say it to him. Not me.

*Beat*

1. VICTOR: You played a good game. It was a deserved victory.

2. YOMI: Thanks. But funny enough, the harder I practice the luckier I get.

*Beat*

3. THE COACH: You want me to guess that one?

4. YOMI: If you can.

5. THE COACH: You really think I do not know the most important sporting quote of them all?

6. ~~YOMI:~~ ~~Are you bluffing here coach?~~

*Beat*

7. THE COACH: It was Gary Player. The golfer.

8. YOMI: Worth a try I suppose.

9. VICTOR: If you will both excuse me.

*Beat*

10. YOMI: He looks upset.

11. THE COACH: Of course he is upset. Victor is a professional Scrabble player. What do you expect?

*Beat*

1. YOMI: When you put it like that.
2. THE COACH: You have your reasons for playing Scrabble. And for travelling here to do it. Victor also has his reasons for playing. He is a family man. People depend on him. Scrabble is how he pays his bills.

#### SCENE 26 - NARRATION

3. YOMI: I tried not to let them, but those words took the shine off my victory. For these guys, Scrabble was something else altogether. I was starting to realise how much this game means to some people.

#### SCENE 27- HOTEL COURTYARD

4. YOMI: Victor, any chance of a word?
5. VICTOR: There is nothing to discuss. You won the match. The Coach has made a decision. I must respect that.
6. YOMI: I just wanted to say-

1. VICTOR: It was only one game, but it was a good game. You worked hard for your victory. Perhaps I could have worked harder myself.

2. YOMI: I got decent tiles to be fair.

3. VICTOR: You deserved to win.

4. YOMI: Thanks.

*Beat*

5. VICTOR: So you go to China now. To represent Nigeria. As a Nigerian. You have got what you wanted. Now, if you will excuse me.

#### SCENE 28 - NARRATION

*Beat*

6. YOMI: After all these days, spent learning new words. And new techniques. Pounding those Lagos streets. Learning the Nigerian way of doing things. All of the discipline. And the focus. I should feel like I've earned this victory. I should feel happy. Ecstatic even. But, somehow I don't. A tiny part of me does feel more Nigerian. But it's not because I'm about to get on that plane to China. It's got nothing to do with that.

**SCENE 29 – COACH'S OFFICE**

1. YOMI: Coach, can I have a word?
2. THE COACH: Of course. What can I do for you?
3. YOMI: I've decided I'm not coming to China.
4. THE COACH: May I ask why?
5. YOMI: It just doesn't feel right.
6. THE COACH: You played a good game earlier. You have travelled a long way and worked hard for this.
7. YOMI: I know that, but Victor's a good player.  
And-
8. THE COACH: And what? You came here to play because your father was a Nigerian. You have earned your place.
9. YOMI: I don't know. It just doesn't feel right.

*The Coach starts to laugh.*

10. THE COACH: You are a good man, Mr Yomi from Scotland.  
Can I be honest with you?
11. YOMI: Of course you can.

1. THE COACH: I had a strong feeling you might come to this decision. I have been expecting your visit. What is it you call it? A hunch?

2. YOMI: I don't understand.

3. THE COACH: ~~It does not matter. Forget about it. I respect your decision.~~ I suspect you have achieved a great deal of what you set out to do anyway. Now, should I tell Victor the news or you?

4. YOMI: I'll leave it to you.

5. THE COACH: You never know. Perhaps Victor will also have learned a lesson from this experience. And you will definitely return home a better player. How is it you say? 'Everyone is a winner'?

*Beat*

6. THE COACH: Are you sure you do not want to join us in China anyway? As part of the official party. Even if you don't want to compete.

7. YOMI: I don't think so.

8. THE COACH: It would be good experience for you. You can prepare for the next time.

9. YOMI: I appreciate the offer. I really do. But I reckon it's time to go home now.

1. THE COACH: You have had enough of Nigeria?
2. YOMI: Of course not. I'll be back one day.
3. THE COACH: I certainly hope so. And I also hope you eventually get the chance to compete at the Championships.
4. YOMI: So do I.
5. THE COACH: As they say, 'You must concentrate all your thoughts on the work at hand. The sun's rays do not burn until they are brought to a focus.'
6. YOMI: Is that another quote?
7. THE COACH: I will let you guess who it is from.
8. YOMI: I don't know.
9. THE COACH: You must guess.
10. YOMI: Beyonce Knowles?
11. THE COACH: You are being ridiculous now.
12. YOMI: I give up then.
13. THE COACH: It was another of your compatriots. Alexander Graham Bell. They are wise words. Do you not think?

**SCENE 30 – HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM**

*FX: The buzz of conversation, which gradually dies.*

1. THE COACH: Gentlemen. And Lady. Before we depart. I have some important words to share with you. 'Men are born. Kings are made. Treaties are signed. Wars are fought. Every country has its own problems. So has Nigeria. So has Africa. Let us bind our wounds. And live together in peace. Nigeria. One nation. Indivisible. Long live Nigeria. Viva Africa'.

*FX: A murmur of assencion.*

2. THE COACH: For the benefit of our departing guest. That was, of course, the one and only Fela Kuti.

*FX: A spontaneous round of applause which gradually fades into background conversation.*

3. AMIRA: So it is time for you go home now.

4. YOMI: Looks like it.

5. AMIRA: You played well against Victor.

6. YOMI: The Tile Gods smiled on me.

1. AMIRA: Because you had prepared properly. QANAT was a good play. I was impressed.

2. YOMI: Was that another compliment?

3. AMIRA: You have improved. You have upgraded your techniques.

4. YOMI: Those compliments are fairly racking up now eh.

5. AMIRA: You like to make jokes.

6. YOMI: There's nothing wrong with a wee joke every now and then.

7. AMIRA: At the correct time and in the correct place.

*Beat*

8. AMIRA: You know, I searched for the Scottish Scrabble team on the internet.

9. YOMI: Why?

10. AMIRA: Because I was curious.

11. YOMI: I didn't think you'd have time for 'frivolous' stuff like that.

12. AMIRA: I saw your name there. It said you had been selected for their team.

1. YOMI: Did it now?
2. AMIRA: So why did you come here?
3. YOMI: I just did.
4. AMIRA: That is not really an answer.
5. YOMI: Because I wanted to.
6. AMIRA: That is not much better.
7. YOMI: I'm not going to play for Scotland in China if that's what you're worried about.
8. AMIRA: I am not 'worried' about anything. I am simply curious. You must have had a reason for coming here when you could have played for Scotland anyway.
9. YOMI: A wise woman once told me that you don't have to understand the reason for everything.

*Beat*

10. AMIRA: Your father never brought you to Nigeria?
11. YOMI: I can't really remember him. He was a Scrabble player though.
12. AMIRA: Same as mine. He taught me to play. Then he sent me here to study a few years ago.

1. YOMI: He's still in Daura?

2. AMIRA: For now. Yes.

*Beat*

3. AMIRA: So, you will travel home now? Back to Scotland.

4. YOMI: I reckon so.

5. AMIRA: And you are finished with Nigeria?

6. YOMI: I'll be back.

7. AMIRA: To attend the training camp?

8. YOMI: Either that or a holiday. But don't worry, I won't be trying to 'steal' any more places from Nigerians.

9. AMIRA: I do not think I would call it stealing. Not any more.

10. YOMI: Thanks.

11. AMIRA: I am only speaking the truth.

12. YOMI: What about you? Will you go back to Daura when you get back from China?

13. AMIRA: Daura is not an easy place for a woman who loves Scrabble.

1. YOMI: Why not?

2. AMIRA: There are people there who do not like this kind of thing.

3. YOMI: They don't like Scrabble?

4. AMIRA: Believe it or not. Some people do not.

*Beat*

5. YOMI: Well make sure you look me up if you ever make it to Scotland.

6. AMIRA: I think I have heard enough of your jokes to last me a lifetime.

7. YOMI: Was that a wee joke of your own in there?

8. AMIRA: Perhaps it was.

SCENE 31 - NARRATION

9. YOMI: Scrabble can be a cruel mistress. Someone said that to me once. A game of words. And patterns. And chance. Divine intervention even. ~~And for some people, maybe even a threat.~~ He was always going to teach me to play. And I had to teach myself in the end. At least I thought I'd taught myself. Until I came here. Back 'home' to 'Naija'.

**SCENE 32 - IN A TAXI**

*FX: The beeping of horns. And the street sounds of a bustling African city.*

1. SUNDAY: I will keep the window up for you. I know you do not like the fumes.

2. YOMI: Can I just ask. Does anybody 'like' fumes?

3. SUNDAY: Sometimes people have to make difficult trades. Air or heat.

4. YOMI: Fair enough.

5. SUNDAY: You people must have cold blood in Scotland Whatland?

6. YOMI: Not that cold.

7. SUNDAY: So, you have got a plane to catch Boss Man? You are going back home?

8. YOMI: That's right.

9. SUNDAY: I read in the newspaper that the national team is going to China? You're not going with them?

10. YOMI: Not this time.

11. SUNDAY: You are not going to represent Nigeria?

12. YOMI: Maybe one day.

1. SUNDAY: Well, maybe its best that you do not go to that place anyway.
2. YOMI: Why's that?
3. SUNDAY: I read that there are over 1.4 billion people there.
4. YOMI: Sounds about right.
5. SUNDAY: And, wherever you go, a certain percentage of people are bound to be crazy. Right?
6. YOMI: I suppose so.
7. SUNDAY: So, if there are 1% crazy people in Nigeria, that makes less than 2m. Right? But in China, 1% makes...14 million.
8. YOMI: When you put it like that-
9. SUNDAY: You did not think about it, did you?
10. YOMI: I didn't.
11. SUNDAY: So I think you made a good decision. The Gods have been smiling on you.
12. YOMI: The Tile Gods?
13. SUNDAY: What?
14. YOMI: It's a Scrabble thing.

1. SUNDAY: No problem Boss man. Whatever you say.

*Beat*

SCENE 33 — EPILOGUE

*FX: An aeroplane lands*

2. YOMI: ~~It ended up being a mixed tournament for my Nigerian team mates. Victor got beat by the eventual winner in a nailbiting semi-final. Some chemist from Thailand who could barely speak a word of English, but knew every word in the Scrabble dictionary. The team finished second overall. Their highest ever placing. But Amira had the biggest victory. She was the highest placed female competitor with the highest ever score by a Nigerian. I could never understand why they have different categories for men and women on Scrabble. But they do. And Amira wrote her place in Nigerian Scrabble folklore.~~

*FX: West African Highlife music plays.*

*Ideally 'Viva Nigeria' by Fela Kuti.*

ENDS