

Safe Passage

By: Elizabeth Lamb

Based on the experience of millions of refugees around the world

Act 1, Scene 1

SETTING: Refugee camp

Rows and rows of small white tents

*Mom, Dad, Daughter and Son walk with the worker
towards an empty tent*

WORKER

Alright, here is where you'll stay. After a few days,
you'll need to fill out the paperwork to become an official
resident here.

*Worker exits; Family enters the now crowded tent and
lays down on the ground to sleep*

Lights fade; Narrator walks on; Spotlight on Narrator

NARRATOR

Can you imagine fleeing your home with nothing but the
clothes on your back, only to arrive somewhere that
promises "safety" yet offers poor healthcare, minimal food
and water, and an under-resourced educational system? This
is the reality for the 117 million displaced people living
in overcrowded refugee camps. Facilities such as these are
meant to be temporary, but many families stay for years or
even decades because it is not safe for them to return
home, and they have not been granted residence to stay in
another country. Organizations such as the United Nations
do their best to provide shelter, food, and medical
assistance to those in need, but without proper funding
there is only so much they can do.

Narrator walks off

Act 1, Scene 2

SETTING: Inside the family's tent

It is night time, the family is all sleeping

Son wakes up and nudges Mom

SON
(Whispers)

Mommy?

(Shakes Mom)

(Raises voice a little)

Mommy?

MOM
(Grogely)

Mhm?

SON

I have to pee.

MOM:

The nearest restroom is miles away. Can you wait until morning?

SON
(Whines)

Fineeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee.

They go back to sleep

Lights dim; Narrator walks on; Spotlight on Narrator

NARRATOR

Little do they know, the restrooms in these camps are nothing like the ones they're used to. Not only will they have to share a restroom with 100 other people, the majority of toilets and showers lack basic amenities such as soap, running water, and privacy.

Narrator exits

Act 1, Scene 3

SETTING: The family's tent; early in the morning

Family is asleep in their tent, then family begins waking up

MOM

(Yawns and stretches)

Oh my gosh, I could not sleep. The ground is so uncomfortable.

DAD

I know this isn't as cushy as our old home, but let's try to be grateful we have anywhere to go at all.

SON

Ya ya super grateful, can we go to the bathroom now? I have to peeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee.

DAD

Alright, alright. Why don't we all go? That way we won't have to make as many trips. I think it's this way...

They all rise and exit the tent, Dad and Son walk farther ahead while Mom and Daughter talk in the back

DAUGHTER

Hey Mom?

MOM

Yes?

DAUGHTER

Um, I think it's that time again.

MOM

Ok, well why don't we see if they have any products in the bathroom?

DAUGHTER

Ok

The family arrives at the restroom

DAD

Alright everybody, wait outside when you're finished ok? I don't want anybody wandering around by themselves.

The family enters the restroom, the girls on the women's side and the boys on the men's side

Scene changes to a dirty cramped restroom; lots of people all already in there

MOM

Oh dear.

DAUGHTER

(Looks around)

Mom, I don't see anything.

Woman turns around and faces the Mom and daughter

WOMAN

Oh, are you looking for period products?

MOM

Yes. Do you know where we can get some?

WOMAN

Not here. Menstrual supplies are almost always unavailable or inconsistent.

DAUGHTER

Well then what are we supposed to do?

WOMAN

Sew cotton into your underwear. Blood washes out of it easily. You'll have to make more trips to the water pump though.

MOM

Water pump?

WOMAN

Ya. A couple miles from here is the water pump. It's not filtered very well but it's water. However, I would recommend not traveling there alone.

MOM

Why is that?

WOMAN

Well you almost always have to walk alone for extended periods, so you become exposed to potential violence and rapes.

Daughter gasps, obviously frightened

MOM

Surely that can't be true? I thought I brought my family here so they would be safe.

WOMAN

(Shrugs it off)

I don't know what to tell you.

Woman walks away and exits the bathroom; Mom and Daughter look at each other, unsure of what to do

Light dims; Narrator walks on; Spotlight on Narrator

NARRATOR

Unfortunately, she's not wrong. About 1 in 5 refugees or displaced women in large humanitarian settlements experience sexual violence. And, since water is crucial for human survival but the only way to access it is to walk miles on end everyday, the females who are responsible for collecting it are put into positions no one should have to be in.

Scene changes to the outside of the restroom, where Father and Son are waiting

DAD

Ah! There you are!

(Notices uneasy expressions on Mom and Daughters' faces)

What happened?

MOM

(To Daughter)

Honey, why don't you go play with your brother for a second? I need to talk with your father, but stay close ok?

DAUGHTER

Ok Mom

Walks over to brother, the two play games while Mom and Dad have an inaudible conversation

DAD

Alright, well let's hurry back. We have a lot we need to do today.

Dad protectively walks with Mom and Daughter

Lights dim into a blackout

Act 2, Scene 1

Spotlight on NARRATOR

NARRATOR

Gathering water is not the only necessary journey that puts families in danger. Many must also walk long distances to food distribution centers, only to receive only three kilograms of rice, one kilogram of lentils, and five-hundred milliliters of cooking oil - just 28% of the calories needed to meet basic nutritional standards. Without sufficient nourishment, people experience extreme fatigue, weakened immune systems, and muscle loss as their bodies struggle to conserve energy. Without more support, these limited rations will continue to leave vulnerable families in constant danger.

Light fade; Narrator walks off

Family is now back at their tent

DAD

Ok here's the deal, starting today, we need to start a routine of gathering food and water every week, both of which are at the very minimum a mile away.

SON

More walking? But we had to walk for weeks just to get here! Now we have to walk miles and miles every day?

DAD

I know, but just try to be grateful ok? We are all together, and we have access to food and water, even if its far away.

SON

Ugh fine, I guess I can help with the food. That way I get first dibs!

DAD

Look, we aren't going to have the food we used too; we aren't even going to have as much of the food we did, so we need to save it so that everyone can eat. It's very likely that we are only going to eat once a day.

SON

(Starting to tear up)

But... thats so little...

Father pulls everyone into a hug

DAD

(Reassuringly)

It'll be ok. It has to be ok.

Lights fade; Narrator walks on; spotlight on Narrator

NARRATOR

Adjusting to these conditions is incredibly difficult for many families, so some parents chose to send their children to school to lighten their hardships. Tuition in camp schools is often free, although families are still required to pay for uniforms, textbooks, transportation, and supplies. These added costs discourage attendance and cause many students to drop out. Meaning more than half of displaced children are unable to attend school, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and limiting their future opportunities.

Spotlight fades; Narrator walks off

Act 2, Scene 1

SETTING: SON and DAUGHTER playing outside the tent while MOM and DAD discuss inside tent.

MOM

Honey, I don't know if I'm okay with sending our five and eleven year old children miles just to collect water. Especially if there is the possibility that they could get hurt.

DAD

I know, but what are the other options?

MOM

Well is there a school or something we could send them to? I'd rather they be learning how to be a good samaritan than them breaking their backs gathering water.

DAD

Why don't we go check it out, and while they're there, we can see if we can handle gathering water and food ourselves.

MOM

Ok. Kids? Can you come here?

Children enter the tent and sit down next to MOM and DAD

DAD

Your mother and I have been talking, and we feel that is unfair to expect you guys to make the long journeys to the water pump and food distribution center, so today, you guys will go check out the school, while we see if we can handle the "housework" by ourselves.

MOM

But don't worry, we will walk to and from school with you guys since none of us really know our way around here yet.

DAUGHTER

Where is it? How long will we be there each day?

DAD

I'm sure someone around here can tell us where it is, and once we get there you can ask all your questions to the teacher.

Lights fade

Scene changes to a larger but still small tent loaded with children; tent is very loud and teacher is standing in the back looking uncertain of what to do; Family walks in

DAD

EXSCUSE ME?! IS THE TEACHER HERE?!

TEACHER

OVER HERE!

Family treads through the children over to the Teacher

MOM

WHY IS IT SO LOUD IN HERE?!

TEACHER

YOU SEE THE TENT, IT'S TINY! THEY PACK FIFTY KIDS IN HERE DAILY AND I HAVE TO RILE THEM DOWN ALL BY MYSELF! I'M JUST A VOLUNTEER! THE ONLY INSTRUCTIONS I WAS GIVEN WAS TO MEMORIZE THE LESSON PLAN, WHICH NEVER MENTIONED ANYTHING ABOUT QUIETING DOWN CHILDREN!

DAUGHTER

I CAN HELP!

Whistles loudly; children quiet down

TEACHER

Wow. Thanks. Are you a student here? I don't think I've ever seen you here before.

DAUGHTER

No. We just got here. Me and my brother came to check out the school. You said it's just you right? Does that mean the five-yearolds like him and thirteen-yearolds like me learn the same thing?

TEACHER

Yes, unfortunately. We don't have the budget or interest to have more teachers or classrooms.

DAD

What do you mean not enough interest?

TEACHER

I mean more than half of the children here don't come to school, which is rather unfortunate. Here, they can be learning, but out there, they are vulnerable to exploitation and putting limits on their future opportunities. When access to education is restricted, children face limited emotional development, fewer employment opportunities, and a higher likelihood of lifelong poverty.

MOM

No. Absolutely not. My children will not live like this for the rest of their lives, nor will I have them abused.

TEACHER

Then send them here! Tuition is free, as it is in most camps, and our camp in particular can't afford textbooks, uniforms, or supplies so you won't have to pay for that either.

DAD

Do other schools in camps charge? What do they expect us to pay with?

TEACHER

I know it's not perfect, but it's the best we can do with what we have.

Family looks at each other uncertainly

Lights fade; Narrator walks on; Spotlight on Narrator

NARRATOR

The current level of support for refugee camps does not provide the safety or dignity displaced families deserve. By

increasing financial commitment, the United States could improve healthcare access, strengthen food and water systems, and expand educational opportunities. Addressing these needs would not only save lives today but also help create stable, self-sufficient communities in the future. Providing the resources these camps need is not just the right thing to do; it is essential for the well-being of millions of families.

Lights fully rise; Family walks onto join the Narrator

DAD

But it's not solely up to the government, you can help too! By donating to foundations that support refugees across the world and locally, you are making a difference.

DAUGHTER

Donations can be financial, or you can donate supplies like canned food, sanitary supplies, or education materials.

MOM

By volunteering at refugee aid facilities, you are donating your time! This might include sorting through donations or helping refugees settle into their new homes.

SON

And the best way to help is to spread the word! Tell your friends and family about what you learned today, and inform them on how they can help!

NARRATOR

If there is anyone that deserves a safe home, it's refugees. They walk miles and miles away from a bad place, just to come to a new one. What they need, is your help.

ALL

No one chooses to be a refugee. We see you. You are not alone. We stand for refugees.