

SCENE 1

(Southampton airport, late April. A notice reads 'WELCOME TO BRITANNIA - CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE'. TOM enters, pausing to look at the banner before taking a seat)

TOM Twenty years of freedom? Maybe. Sure, we're not an Ashanti colony any more. There's no African governor to tell us what to do. But the Ashanti are still here. You can't go anywhere without tripping over some African advisor. Is that independence?

(KOFI enters and looks at the banner)

TOM See what I mean? Mr Agyman, Finance director of the British Livestock Board. As he was in colonial times.

KOFI Amma must be twenty as well. Things change without you noticing.

TOM Too stuck-up to give me a nod. Sometimes I wish independence was just ten years ago. Don't think I'm going daft. The Ashanti empire is dead and good riddance. But Dad's generation had hope. We get the disappointment.

KOFI I made a promise Independence night. Britannia might be a poor child in a rich world, but I'd love her. Just as much as I'd love our child when it was born.

TOM Even when Dad's back, he'll be hanging around. I betcha.

KOFI I've kept that promise.

TOM You won't believe this, but I asked him to stay once. Well, I was only four.

KOFI I said to Yaa, if it's a girl, let's call her Britannia. She started crying.

TOM The first day back after Independence Dad was so hung over he forgot his lunch. Mum went down to the Livestock Board to give it him.

KOFI Yaa was always crying then, wanting to go home. The baby. That's what I thought.

TOM Mr Agyeman was there. 'Mummy, why hasn't he gone home?' She turned bright red. Dad was just a clerk then, see. Mr Agyeman said 'Britannia's my home too, Tom'. And he gave me one of the bright new British pennies with Queen Elizabeth on them instead of the Ashantehene, and I said, 'Mr Agyeman, you mustn't go away. Not ever. I won't let you.' That was twenty years ago. Agyeman's still here.

*(The arrival of flight ASH 708 from Kumasi is announced. **KOFI** and **TOM** both spring up to watch the plane land)*

TOM Hello, Mr Agyeman. Meeting Dad?

KOFI I'm sorry?

TOM I'm -

KOFI No, don't tell me. Er... Um...

TOM Tom.

KOFI Tom. That's right. Tom Glover. Your Pa will be on this flight, won't he? I must say hello.

TOM Don't put yourself out.

KOFI I should welcome home the hero.

TOM Seeing it was you that sent him.

KOFI He earned his further training.

TOM It took time coming. It'll seem strange when he's in charge, won't it?

KOFI I'll be around to advise.

TOM You won't be retiring.

KOFI A need to work a few more years yet.

TOM Of course. Where is he?

KOFI They let the big men out first.

TOM Like your friend?

KOFI That would be something, wouldn't it? Ah, here comes economy.

(KOFI pulls out a photo and compares the passengers against it)

TOM There he is. Hi, Dad!

KOFI He won't here you. You can't see a young lady, can you?

TOM Several. Where are they going?

KOFI Passport, baggage, customs. Not like the old airport. Airside, landside - all one room. No waiting about then.

TOM We've made progress.

KOFI All the same... Look, I'll speak to someone. They may let us into Customs.

TOM I'll do it.

(He gets up and looks around. KOFI points the way. TOM exits. KOFI rereads his letter. TOM soon returns)

TOM It's not allowed.

KOFI I'll have a word.

(KOFI exits)

TOM You don't make the rules now, mate.

(TOM pulls out some papers. KOFI returns)

KOFI The man will call us once they are through passport.

TOM How did you manage that?

KOFI He knows me.

TOM He was at school with me.

(He goes back to his papers in a bad temper)

KOFI You're very like your Pa. He was a studious man. I always knew he'd be my star.

TOM I'm giving a talk at the library.

*(He rummages around for a shoddily printed leaflet, which he gives to **KOFI**)*

KOFI Gold Gleaming Brightly - Reflections on the Importance of Wessex in World History. Very interesting.

(He offers it back)

TOM Come along? You might learn something.

KOFI You never know. Tom...

TOM What?

KOFI I was wondering... What do young people your age like doing?

TOM Dancing; drinking; pulling. Why?

KOFI I don't want Amma to be bored.

TOM What does he like?

KOFI She's always lived with her mother.

TOM A girl... Horses.

KOFI Horses?

*(**KOFI** starts making a note in his dairy)*

TOM Posh girls love horses.

KOFI If she's more ordinary?

TOM Boys.

KOFI She's just finished art school.

TOM Definitely boys.

KOFI Oh. Ah, we've got the call.

*(**TOM** hurries forward. **KOFI** stops him)*

KOFI They won't let us go any further. Do you think that girl over there could be Amma?

*(He shows **TOM** the photo)*

TOM She's pretty enough.

KOFI She's very like her mother.

TOM It definitely could be.

*(**KOFI** tries a tentative wave)*

KOFI Amma? It is!

*(**AMMA** enters. **KOFI** hugs her)*

KOFI Welcome back!

AMMA Pa! *(Seeing **TOM**)* Hello.

TOM Hi.

KOFI This is Glover's son.

TOM Tom.

AMMA Glover?

KOFI My number two.

TOM He was on your plane. He's been doing further training.

AMMA Good for him.

TOM Well... thanks.

*(**GLOVER** enters)*

KOFI Glover! Welcome home. You remember Amma, don't you?

GLOVER This is Amma?

KOFI She wrote - right out of the blue.

GLOVER You used to be knee high to a grasshopper.

KOFI It's certainly been a long time.

GLOVER When I saw you getting on the plane I thought who's that lovely lady. And it's little Amma.

AMMA Pa said you were doing further training.

GLOVER Six months. Sounds like a sentence, doesn't it?

KOFI It means promotion.

AMMA Congratulations.

KOFI We've worked at it, haven't we, Glover? (*Putting his hand on Tom's shoulder, which TOM doesn't like*) Don't leave your Pa with too much of a hangover for Monday. (*TO AMMA*) Would you like a drive through town, or go straight home?

AMMA I just want to sleep a million years.

KOFI If that's what you want. Hey, Porter!

TOM Enjoy your stay, Miss Agyeman
(AMMA and KOFI walk away. TOM watches them go)

GLOVER Yes, she is pretty.

TOM He didn't recognise her.

GLOVER There's a story to that.

TOM The one with Tunde Bah?

GLOVER Maybe. And I've had a great time, thanks for asking.

TOM Sorry.

GLOVER It's a different world, Tom.

TOM We'll catch up.

GLOVER They've given themselves a hell of a lead. Funny, though, what you can't find in Ashanti is a decent pint.

TOM That's a hint?

GLOVER What do you think?

TOM You'll want somewhere posh now you've been to Africa.

GLOVER No need to be cheeky.