

SHARM EL-SHEIKH

By Lila Whelan

28 Plays Later – Challenge 12

*A stands in the street in a hi-vis jacket, holding a clipboard and wearing a big smile*

*B enters, stressed, hurrying and determined in a crumpled suit with mismatching socks and battered briefcase*

A Hello!

B No

A How're you doing today?

B Sorry

A Ah, that's what they all say!

B Sorry

A Do you care about children?

B What?

A In Africa, one child dies every 10 seconds

B What

A Of hunger – every ten seconds, do you have children?

B Two

A Really? What do you have?

B Twins.

A Boys or girls?

B One of each

A Wow! That's amazing

B Yeah

A Can you imagine then, if they were dying of hunger? If they were lying in your arms, unable to ask for help, and you couldn't give it to them anyway? Disease, poverty, famine, war – all of these things face our Help For Children every day, but we're here to offer help, help to those in desperate need, without alternatives, without any chance/

B /What?

A Oh, er, we're here to offer help/

B Help.

A Yes. We, erm, Help For Children, we send aid to them, and for £3 every month you can  
B £3?  
A Yeah, for just £3 a month you can send them aid  
B What kind of aid?  
A Well, er, we send all sorts of things! Blankets, vaccinations, clean water kits, tents, malaria tablets, clothes, classroom bits and bobs/  
B /bits and bobs  
A Yeah!  
B Like what?  
A Oh, erm. Like, er, erm. Books. Paper, pens, that kind of thing.  
B You don't know do you.  
A No, no definitely – school books and satchels. All sorts of things.  
B That's a lot of stuff.  
A Of course! Help For Children tries to cover everything a child could possibly need in Africa.  
B Where?  
A Africa.  
B Where in Africa?  
A Er  
B Egypt? Botswana? South Africa? The Sudan, Sierra Leone, Chad, Chana?  
A Er  
B Namibia, Angola, Algeria, Zimbabwe?  
A Yes.  
B Yes?  
A Yes.  
B All of them  
A Yup  
B Even Jordan  
A Yeah  
B And Syria  
A Yeah  
B

A

B

A So, for £3 a month

B Stop

A Sorry

B Just. Stop.

A oh, erm. Did I say something wrong?

B How much do they pay you?

A Excuse me?

B Are you hourly, or on a commission?

A Oh! Er. I don't know.

B You don't know.

A I don't think I should say

B Fine.

A Are. Are you ok?

B Do you believe in this – all of this? I mean, if you weren't being paid £6.20 an hour, would you still care? You would pay – do you pay £3 an month?

A Oh, you actually want to know?

B Yes. Yes. Do you pay £3 a month help the kids?

A Yes. Yes I do

B How long for?

A When did I start paying?

B Yes

A Five years.

B That's a long time.

A Yeah

B And when did you start doing – this?

A Six months ago. But I've been working for them for nearly 2 years. It's important, you know. The kids over there. I know I shouldn't say it, but they're fucked. Like, really fucked. It's awful. I went there when I were 18 for a couple of weeks and oh my god, you've never seen anything like it.

B Where did you go?

A Egypt.

B Egypt.

A Yeah

B Where exactly?

A Sharm el-Sheikh

B Right

A Is that ok?

B Sharm el-Sheikh

A Look, I don't want to be funny but if you're not going to/

B Where does the money go?

A I said – Help For Children goes to blankets, vaccinations/

B /No. Where does it go.

A Sorry?

B My money. If I were to give it to you. Right here, £3s in your pocket. Would it buy that blanket?

A Yes/

B /Or would it go to your company's bureaucracy?

A No, we/

B /Let's say it gets out there, manages to avoid your marketing department and your London lease and your membership brochure printing costs and your admin fees and your website design and your conferences and your receptionist and your account manager and your Christmas parties/

A /Sir

B No! No. Don't interrupt. Let's say my three quid manages to bypass all of that faff, all of that bullshit and it lands over there, it washes up on the shores of *Sharm el-Sheikh*, and...where does it go? Into your charities agencies over there? Maybe, eventually, but first it'll be wrung through customs, and the customs officers, and the government officers, and the security guards and the hidden-in-the-background backhanders, and the bribes, and the payoffs and the cuts and the creamed-off-the-top-ers and the smiling sweet suckers all of the poster cover child pornographers and maybe, just maybe 20p of my three quid might make it to a blanket or a vaccine or a pencil lead or two. Or maybe not. But all the while my two young kids, my two young prematurely born oxygen tank pneumonia suffering post natal depressed mothered kids are dying. Next door. Right here. Behind where you're standing. Behind where you're preventing me from stepping in. Because you want me to give you 20p that won't make a shit-pennies-worth of difference.

A I/

B            /It's sweet that you care, it's charming decent, it's refreshing and kind, but it won't make any difference. No war lord will change their mind, no drought will fail to hit, no disease will stop in its tracks, no mosquito will decide not to bite. Look after your own. Keep them close, keep them safe, keep them locked up in a room of organically grown cotton wool and their mother sedated and then maybe, *maybe* once they're all grown-ed up and healthy and happy then perhaps we can have this conversation again and you can remind me yet again as to why I didn't throw myself under the 7.55 or the 8.03 tomorrow morning.

A

B

A

*B kisses A on the cheek. B exits*