THE PLAYWRIGHT’S CONCERN WITH THE PLAGET OF CHILDREN IN
ILLEGAL MINING COMMUNITIES IN GHANA

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THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON,
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of a Master of Fine Arts degree

JULY 2015
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own undertaken research and has not been presented by anyone for any academic award in this or any other university. Any scholarly work that has been quoted or cited has also been duly acknowledged by means of referencing.

Any errors of commission or omission in the entire work are entirely my own.

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ABSTRACT

Theatre is a powerful means through which humanity is informed, educated and entertained. The playwright thus, plays a very important role in achieving these in the theatre. Through observations and research, the playwright instigates change in society. Presently, we live in a society where children live and work under very difficult conditions which affect their social, psychological and physical well-being. One of such conditions is in the illegal mining sites. Interventional efforts against children in the Illegal mines were discussed. The research focused on using drama as a tool to curb child work in the illegal mines and established ways in which drama has helped in mitigating such social issues. As a result, the techniques in playwriting and theories of dramatic writing were examined. The qualitative method, specifically unstructured interviews and participant observation were used in gathering information. Findings from the research informed the writing of the play, Money Stone. The play portrays the working conditions of children working in illegal mining communities. It also educates stakeholders on the dangers these children are exposed to, emphasizing the need for a change for the better.
DEDICATION

To my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Adu-Kumi for showing me true love in its rarest form.

Thank you for being my heart’s first home.

To Maame Dokua Adu-Kumi and Kwadwo Asare Adu-Kumi, thanks for the support.

You have proven that in the journey of life, siblings are the escalators that make the climbing easier.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

“The Lord who began this work with me has brought it to a successful end”. I’m so grateful Daddy for your mercy and loving kindness towards me.

I am indebted to my supervisors, Mr. Africanus Aveh and Mr. John K. Djisenu. I could not have come this far without your help. God bless you sirs for your constructive criticisms and your patience with me.

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I appreciate the affection given me by my colleagues, especially Tara Chiamaka Obiago, Benedicta Marwutornyo Adzraku, Martha Frimpong, Selasi Bonuedie, Vivian Agbovi and Iddrisu Seidu Kananzoe. God bless you for your love and care.

I appreciate the cast and all those who in diverse ways helped in having a successful play reading of Money Stone. It could not have been possible without you.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CCPC</td>
<td>Community Child Protection Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAP</td>
<td>Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoGCSP</td>
<td>Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOWAC</td>
<td>Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAU</td>
<td>Organization of African Unity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHC</td>
<td>Primary and Health Care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFP</td>
<td>School Feeding Program.</td>
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<td>TFD</td>
<td>Theatre for Development.</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the whole thesis. The reader is able to understand what the researcher’s work is all about. It gives the background of the study and clearly indicates the problem statement. This chapter also states the objectives and research questions and concludes with the scope of study and the significance of the study.

Theatre has been in existence for centuries; during the 5th Century B.C in the Greek era, particularly in Athens. During that period, the Greeks held annual religious festivals which honoured the god: Dionysus. At the time of the festive occasion, “series of contests between individual citizens and major Athenian major groups” took place (Wadsworth, 2004, p. 11).

In the sixth century B.C however, dramatic performances during the festival were introduced into the Theatre of Dionysus of which prominent playwrights like Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides emerged. These playwrights wrote plays which discussed pertinent issues in their Athenian society. As a result, the Greeks embraced going to the theatre as it was a place they visited to discuss “politics, religion and society” (Worthen 2004, p. 11).

Greeks were however famous for their tragic plays which “dramatized climactic events in the lives of legendary heroes from pre-history and myths, bringing ethical problems of motive and action to the stage” (Worthen, 2004, p.11). An example was a Greek mythology concerning the sphinx in Oedipus Rex. The sphinx according to Atsma (2000, p.1) was a female monster with a body of a lion who was always taught new riddles by the gods. She appeared in any town or community whenever that town committed a crime against the gods. She terrorized the community by killing anyone who could not find answers to her riddles. In Sophocles’ Oedipus the King, a sphinx intimidated the people of Thebes for not having
answers to her riddles until Oedipus answers her, thereby putting a stop to all the killings in the society.

While theatre in Greece began to decline, it became very vibrant in the Roman Empire. Drama formed an integral part in educating, entertaining and informing the audience. The main forms of drama for the Romans were tragedy and comedy. Apart from involving in theatrical performances, the Romans also engaged in various games such as boxing, wrestling, gladiatorial combats, horse racing and chariot racing whenever there were military victories, political rallies or even birthdays (Cameron and Gillespie 1989, pp.235-237).

After the decline of Rome was the period of the dark ages. In the 10th Century however was the middle and golden ages out of which came medieval drama. Plays during this time were liturgical and performed on religious occasions such as Easter and Christmas. The plays were centred on bible stories and were categorised into three-mystery, miracle and morality plays. The famous play “Quem Quaeritis” meaning “whom do you seek?” is a play about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Plays later moved from the church, themes were not limited to Bible stories, dialogues were in vernacular and not chanted (Cameron and Gillespie 1989, pp.246-249).

After the medieval era came the Renaissance. The Renaissance is also known as the age of ‘rebirth’. The Renaissance period was a time where new ideas evolved. It started in Italy with a type of comedy called the Commedia l’arte. In this kind of comedy, characters were unmasked and performances were not done on religious occasions. Commedia l’arte influenced the European theatre where dramatists like William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe began their writing careers.

Owing to the drastic transformation and complex revolutions and modernisation, theatrical plays moved from being only mythological in nature. This gave birth to the Avant-Garde
movement in the mid-nineteenth century. An example of such Avant-Garde movement is Realism. Realism is simply the playwright’s ability to present on stage real happenings and issues in society for the audience to discuss and react to. Henrik Ibsen, a modern European playwright, is believed to be the father of Realism. His play, *A Doll’s House*, raises issues on marriage which could not be discussed in his society particularly among the bourgeois class. The play tells a story of a nineteenth century wife (Nora) who is devoted to her family. Her husband condemns and describes her as “unfit” to be a mother for taking a loan to save his life; but without his consent. At the end of the play, Nora leaves her matrimonial home in search of true happiness and freedom from the pains as against the initial love she was exposed to. Fjelde (2003, p.553) recounts that when Nora leaves her matrimonial home, the audience describe the play as scandalous. Ibsen projects how the modern European society cannot challenge the conventional way which women were never allowed to leave their matrimonial homes in spite of the pain they suffered. The audience after the performance are left to think and reflect on their own lives.

In Ghana, a number of playwrights discuss societal issues through their dramatic pieces. One of such prolific writers is Mohammed ben Abdallah. Abdallah focuses on the use of dance, drama and music to tell his story. Kerfoot and Killam (2008) opine that “Ben-Abdallah’s plays analyse historical, political and social issues in a controversial and sometimes scandalous mode” (p. 52). In an interview with him, Abdallah states that “A true artist is one who works for his society, its present and its future; that is the sense in which I mean the authentic African theatre… the artist should be at peace with himself, in that sense of being able to hold up a mirror to his own society, for good or bad”. (Agbenyega and Gibbs, 2004, p. 64). *The Slaves*, for example tells, a story of the precarious conditions of slaves in a castle. Eight slaves of both sexes are kept in a slave dungeon and fed daily with cassava. Abdallah portrays through his characters how the trans-Atlantic slave has affected the black man.
While Africans are bitter about their people being forced into slavery, Abdallah cautions the African to stop pointing accusing fingers at the white man as the black man is responsible for some of the misfortunes in slavery. In the play, the character, Man, tells his fellow slaves; “the white man is not guilty in the first place… who took you away from your homes… your wives and children… your grandchildren and your people? … And sold you to the men who brought you here? Tell me that. Answer me, all of you…” (2006, p. 19). Through his play, Abdallah admonishes black leaders to “stop competing with each other to satisfy their own and the White Man’s greed” (2006, p. 21).

Abdallah expresses his interest for national issues through his writing. His masterpiece, *Land of a Million Magicians*, is a political play. It was written during the PNDC era when Abdallah held a ministerial position in the country under the leadership of Chairman Rawlings. The central message of the play stresses the need for “strategies for development” (Kerfoot and Killam, 2008, p. 53). *Land of a Million Magicians* tells the story of Asana, a prostitute who changes to become a leader in her community. She receives money from the gods and decides to help her people. She strives to bring development to the community by providing children with free education and buses to take them to school without a fee. Farms are cultivated to provide food for the people, houses and other social amenities are also given to persons without a charge. Unfortunately, Asana’s good deeds do not bring about positive change. The people abuse the freedom given them as they refuse to take proper care of property entrusted into their hands. With time, property and books for children get stolen and people embezzle government funds. Also, people put in less of their energy at work with the excuse that it belongs to the government. Asana disguises herself in the form of her twin brother, Fuseni, to help the situation. Unlike Asana, Fuseni is quick tempered, rigid and strict. Fuseni asks the people to account for every government property that has been entrusted into their hands. He fires the drivers and ejects workers from the houses built for them. In the end, everything the
state owns is sold back to the people for them to learn the importance of maintenance. Abdallah projects the life of people in the country who mismanage state owned property because it is not theirs. Through *Land of a million magicians*, Abdallah educates the public on the need to own what belongs to the state as the people are supposed to participate in government. Every state owned property belongs to the people, as such; however they handle it will either help or destroy them.

Another Ghanaian playwright, Efo Kodjo Mawugbe, discusses social issues through his creative works. His play, *Upstairs and Downstairs* tells the story of three characters; Maa, Paa and Sony who find themselves in a local lunatic asylum. The play “paint[s] a vivid picture of the African socio-economic disposition on the global front of commerce and economic policies” (Ben-Daniels, 2014, p.89). Mawugbe’s play *Upstairs and Downstairs* is satiric, condemning the division between the rich and the poor in African societies. The only three characters in the play, Paa, Maa and Sonny, are representatives of the lower class (the poor and helpless) and are depicted as lunatics. Each of them tells their story of how they became lunatics and they discuss the socio-economic issues majority of Africa’s lower class face. As Paa says,

> Don’t forget we are lunatics from the asylum and as a rule, we are not allowed to meddle in the affairs of those who are supposed to be in their right minds from uptown, I mean upstairs. We are supposed to confine ourselves to the fringes of their thoughts (p. 34).

Those upstairs represent the rich and powerful in society who adopt different policies and schemes such as the “Internal Monitoring Farmers” to squeeze the miserable salaries of the civil servants, the traders, teachers and drivers. This powerful group charges the poor with
huge taxes inconsiderate of the fact that they (the poor) struggle daily to make a decent living for themselves.

In Yaw Asare’s *Desert Dreams*, illegal migration through the desert is of primary concern to the playwright. Asare discourages the youth from travelling to the European world in the desert because it is a dangerous venture. The play tells a story of five youngsters who are caught up in the desert on their journey in search of greener pastures. Initially, the characters are all optimistic about getting to Europe, with big dreams of how their lives will change when they get there. However, after they are abandoned by their desert guide, all but one of them realise that their journey through the desert is a long shot. Oklu is a thirty-six (36) year old young man who never listens to the opinion of the others. He steals his family’s sacred shrine idol in order to pay for his passage to the Western world to make more money. Amina is a prostitute who is not satisfied with the money she gets in her country. She is bent on working in the night clubs of Paris, Amsterdam and Hamburg. Atongi struggles on the desert in order to get to Europe and make money to better his condition of living and that of his wife, Yuora. Tetteh has two motives for travelling; first, to search for greener pastures to rebuild the Naa Korley shrine he has destroyed and secondly, to get married to his fiancée Korley who was snatched from him by his church pastor. The last character, Mansa, finds herself in the desert because she wants to be fashionable and wealthy as she is tired of being the wife to a cocoa farmer.

From the above examples, it is undeniable that playwrights play many roles in society. Some of their roles include serving as instigators of change and posing as teachers. A playwright believes that, any society that does not reflect on the processes of development continues to live in the dark. From the few examples of gist given about the playwrights above, dramatists are concerned with humanity and how society can be developed. It is in this light that as a playwright, I write about children in illegal mining, show the hazardous nature of the work.
and suggest ways to put such children away from such work. Using the theory of realism, the playwright is able to present on stage social happenings in society which conscientises the audience or educates them on such issues.

In recent past, Ghana has been facing the challenges of battling certain social cankers; one of such prevailing issues is child work in the illegal mining sector. Agbu (2009, p. 4) states that children who work in the illegal mining sites:

1. Work full time at an early stage
2. Spend long hours at the site under stressful conditions.
3. Lack access to adequate education.
4. Do not have enough remuneration.

All these he states affect the total well-being of the child. Despite efforts to solve the problem, child work in the mines continues to be a problem in the country.

The illegal mining sector is locally referred to as galamsey and otherwise known as artisanal mining. For the purpose of this thesis; illegal mining, galamsey and artisanal mining, were used interchangeably. Aryee, Atorkui and Ntibery define illegal mining as “Those operations using only rudimentary implements [or a] more sophisticated mining activity operating at a relatively low level of production and which generally require limited capital investment” (2003, p.132). In some cases however, the situation is different. Aryee et al further explain that some illegal miners neither go to the tunnels, nor do the “dirty jobs” to get gold; instead, they own vast lands and employ other people (including children) to pay them a commission. Children are therefore at the mercy of these employers since the state does not require them to obtain a license to work, they are left with no other option than to obey every instruction given to them even if it is life threatening (2003, p. 132).
This research did more than reading other policies and coming out with a theory. The researcher believed that drama is a powerful tool which can be used to raise awareness on the adverse effect working in the illegal mines can have on the child. Since change was the primary aim of the situation, the playwright was interested in engaging the miners (which includes children), listening to them and highlighting the unfortunate situation they find themselves in. The play is a reflection of the predicament of the child and suggests ways of curbing the situation. Unarguably, children in Ghana are a very important unit in the society, as such, their welfare should be at the heart of guardians and stakeholders. The Children’s Act states that

Every parent has rights and responsibilities whether imposed by law or otherwise towards his child which includes the duty to protect the child from neglect, discrimination, violence, abuse, exposure to physical and moral hazards and oppression (section 6, sub clause 3) … no person shall subject a child to exploitative labour (section 12)

1.2 Background

The research originated from an interest in trying to understand why people engage in *galamsey* despite the risks attached to the activity. The desire to research into children was based on an article by Ernest Gyamfi captioned “The Effect of Illegal mining on School Attendance and Academic Performance of Junior High School Students in Upper Denkyira West District of Ghana” (2014). Gyamfi asserts that over the last three decades, the standard of children in education had fallen greatly because the children preferred to work in the
illegal mining site (2014, p. 526). My interest heightened when as a Sunday school teacher, I went to church one Sunday only to be told we had lost two Sunday school children who went on holidays in the Western Region of Ghana at a *galamsey* site.

The research informs the writing of a play which addresses the underlying factors of child work in the illegal mining sites. Since theatre is a medium through which societal issues are discussed, drama is usually the tool which helps educate guardians and children themselves on the dangers of child work in illegal mining.

1.3 Problem Statement

Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs reveals that, Ghana joined 188 other countries in the year 2002, pledging to create “A world fit for children” during a U.N conference. However, of the estimated 3.7 million children in Ghana, about 800,000 of them (representing 22%) are not in school in spite of the legal protection for them (2008, p. xvi), the reason being that, these children engage in hazardous forms of labour that threaten their health and well-being. To solve this problem, the government resorts to using arms to fight the illegal miners (Banchirigah, Hilson and Yakovleva 2007, p. 414). That action has in several ways proven futile; there is therefore the need to adopt another strategy to solve the problem which is drama. It is sad that children, during the developmental stages of their lives devote time to labour rather than schooling. Unfortunately, many of these children are ignorant of the dangers involved in working on the artisanal mining sites. The situation worsens when the child is exposed to money at a tender age. If our future leaders (children) are not properly taken care of by the parents and stakeholders who are involved with their welfare, the future of the nation is likely to be in jeopardy.
1.4 Research Questions

This research is organized around the following questions:

1. What are the conditions in the illegal mining sites under which children work?
2. Apart from financial constraints, what are the other reasons children engage in illegal mining?
3. What consequences do children face when they indulge in illegal mining?
4. What are the efforts made by stakeholders to curb child work in the mining sector?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

This study aims at the following through playwriting:

1. Examining the working conditions of children in the illegal mining sector.
2. Finding out the causes and incidents of child labour in the mining sector.
3. Creating awareness of the consequences of child work in illegal mining.
4. Investigating the efforts made by stakeholders in curbing illegal mining.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Researching in the field of illegal mining will lead to writing a play that:

1. Highlights the need to provide alternative livelihood systems that can help children from engaging in hazardous mining conditions.
2. Sensitises the community, especially parents who are the primary stakeholders in childcare and development on the dangers of child work in illegal mining even when most of the attention is shifted to the hazard it causes the environment.
3. Can be performed both in the communities and the modern theatrical stage to educate the masses about the kind of problems these children go through.
1.7 Methodology

The qualitative research approach was used to help me gather data to help me in the writing of the play, *Money Stone*, which projected the plight of children in illegal mining. Selected key informants such as the chairman of small scale mining, parents, engineers in the large scale mining site as well as children in the illegal mining were interviewed for this research. Unstructured interviews and participant observation helped me gain deeper understanding of the issue. However, my objectives and research questions served as my interview guide. Interviews were recorded both on audio and video. Recording was transcribed for my work.

1.8 Scope of the Study

Research was done in areas where illegal mining thrived. Various mining sites were visited in Tarkwa and Bogoso. In Prestea, towns such as Himan, Asompa, Nankaba and Bondai were not left out. Each town had over fifteen illegal mining sites.

The focus of the work is to write a play on children involved in illegal mining and the negative effect it has on them. My concern as a playwright was about their working conditions in the mining sites which tend to affect their education, health and corrupt their morals.

1.8 Expected Outcome

A number of committed people and institutions have researched into this area in various disciplines. My findings from the research both literary and on the field informed the writing of a play to sensitize the greater number of people about the plight of children in *galamsey*. The play is a representation of the suffering of children in society. This, I believe adds to the
fight against child work in the mining site. Just like Worthen (2004, p.1) wrote, “Of the many kinds of literature, drama is perhaps the most immediately involved in the life of its community”
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of relevant literature on children in illegal mines and points out how this project intends to contribute to the subject matter of children who work under harsh conditions in these sites. The literature review will discuss the definitions of a child and illegal mining. It again touches on children and the various reasons they work in illegal mines. What my concerns are as a playwright about the subject matter are also discussed in this chapter. Interventional efforts against children in illegal mining will also be looked at. Techniques in playwriting and theories of dramatic writing will also be examined in this chapter. Analysis will be done on some Ghanaian and Nigerian dramatists whose works aim at delving into some of the problems their immediate society faced.

2.2 Who is a Child?

A number of institutions aim at protecting the rights of the child in society. Among such organisations are the United Nations Conventions on the Right of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). The UNCRC (1989, p. 1) and the ACRWC (1990, p. 3) define the child as every human being below the age of eighteen. As a member state of the UNCRC and ACRWC, Ghana is bound to protect the rights of the child. In view of this, The Children’s Act of the Republic of Ghana was passed in 1998. The Ghanaian child according to s. 1 of the Children’s Act 1998 is “a person below the age of eighteen years”.

For the purpose of this work, I will use the definition given by UNCRC and ACRWC as reflected in the Children’s Act of Ghana. The Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs
(MOWAC) reveals that until an individual attains eighteen years, “they cannot develop sufficient intellectual, emotional and physical skills and resources to fend for themselves and to make successful transition into adulthood” (2008, p. xvii). Since the focus is to highlight and create awareness on the plight of the child in illegal mining, I wish to explain the predicament of these children with reference to their ages when they are not fully developed.

2.3 Definition of Illegal Mining

After a number of readings on illegal mining, I agree with D’souza (2014, p. 45) and Aryee, Ntibery and Atorkui (2003, p. 131) that “there is no widely accepted definition for illegal mining”. This is probably because of the several names that have been associated with the activity. Illegal mining is locally referred to as galamsey and it is derived from the phrase “gather and sell” (Reisenberger 2010, p. 33). During an interview with Mensah (2014), an artisanal miner in Prestea, he explains that galamsey is not an individualistic kind of job. The services of several others are required to have a successful operation. D’zousa (2014, p. 45) states that, artisanal mining is a synonym for illegal mining. He further adds that the name artisanal came to being not only because the activity is illegal but also because of its “low level of production, size of concession, capital investment and the kind of machinery needed for mining”. Irrespective of the name given to this group of miners, they lack the official license for mining on the concessions on which they work “even though the government has long legalised Artisanal and Small Scale Mining which requires them to follow regulations in order to obtain concession” (Banchirigah 2008, p. 29). However, “ineffective policies and bureaucratic inefficiency have impeded formalization, making illegal activity more appealing” (Banchirigah 2008, p. 29).

Appiah (1998, p. 307) and Hilson (2001, p. 3) posit that gold mining is “deeply rooted in Ghanaian history” and it dates back to the fifth and sixth centuries. Mining during that period
did not experience any conflicting situations because traditional rulers at the time kept close watch over them. Hentschel (2003, p. 1) opines that quite a number of discourses in journals and books on illegal mining throws more light on the negative aspects of the sector. Singha and Tschakert (2007; p. 1307) agree to Hentschel’s submission by establishing that, “non-miners perceive illegal miners as criminals and reckless polluters of drinking water and other natural resources” In spite of these negative issues, the illegal mining serves as an important source of employment although more “labour intensive than large firms and thus appreciably [has a] larger share of recorded employment” (Hilson and McQuilken, 2004, p. 105)

2.4 Causes of Child Work in Illegal Mining

Illegal mining as explained earlier is an informal activity. Johannisson (2013, p. 12) avers that although the total number of unlicensed small scale miners is yet to be known, it is sad that children form a great part in the sector. The International Labour Organisation (2011, p. 7) estimates that thirteen million people work in the illegal mines of which Johannisson (2013, p. 9) states that children constitute a total of between a million and a million and five hundred thousand. In Ghana, however, Mottaz (2006, p. 4) reports an estimated ten thousand (10,000) children who are actively involved in illegal mining in the various parts of the country. Hilson (2008, p.1234) reveals that, “the number of children working in the illegal mine is not static as it doubles by each generation”. Lots of families are again involved in these mining communities and this makes it easier for their children to be directly involved in artisanal mining.

Children come from far and near to work in the illegal mines for various reasons. Some of the reasons are the Socio- Cultural values of a community, poverty and lack of economic activities.
2.4.1 Social and Cultural Traditions and Structure

Observers of child work have varying opinions. The line between what is acceptable and unacceptable becomes difficult to draw, especially in cases where the work children engage in form part of their socio-cultural practice. (Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, 2008, p. 6 and International Labour Office, 2004, p. 19). There are local customs and traditions where a child is expected to be of help to family and society at large. Therefore, the child is given the notion that work is good for character building and skill development. These children grow up believing that hard work is good for them no matter the kind of work they get involved in. Others tow a particular kind of job their parents are involved in without asking further questions.

Glasinovich and Salavar, as cited by the ILO (2004, p. 19) state that the definition of a child and what kind of work the child does differ, “largely depending on the social class and culture”. In Ghana, for example, there are “about fifty (50) ethnic groups and linguistic groups are in eight broad categories” (Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs 2008, p. XVIII). It cannot be disputed that there are differences in the cultural practices of the people in the various ethnic groups. The ILO further explains that, “in some rural areas where boys and girls are simply considered “mini adults”, children are required to perform certain chores as natural parts of their roles.” (2004, p. 19). In the Ghanaian community for example, Gachago clarifies that an individual who is healthy and is fifteen years is considered an adult and can engage in all kinds of work. Guardians therefore do not see anything wrong when their children work in the mines even at the expense of their education. In such cases, leisure and child play is considered a waste of time, and children who work hard in places like the illegal mines are given a tap on their shoulders by parents mainly because “they feel its immediate benefit to them”. No matter the different opinions individuals have, Gachago
holds the view that the legal definition sets the age of a child under eighteen years and the
Constitution is supreme and binds all people in Ghana. (2014, p.17)

On the other hand, the ILO (2011, p. 13) condemns the social practice where children work in
risky places. Working in the mines, ILO posits, is dangerous to the child

... in every way and has the potential to do harm.

Being a child is therefore a transition from childhood to
adulthood; therefore, a child cannot be referred to as a
“smaller adult” because their physical and mental-
being is not developed. The effect being their
reproductive systems and brain functions are
susceptible to any form of hazard”.

Towing the line of the ILO, MOWAC (2008, p. 6) postulates that children who work in the
mines exert more energy and burden on themselves. It is wrong for these parents to burden
their children with their adult responsibilities. Deviating from Glasinovich and Salavar’s line
of argument, MOWAC (2008, p. 6) explains that it is never a waste of time when children
take part in indoor and outdoor games; rather, it forms a part of the developmental stage of
the child. The Ministry further explains that, children are traditionally assigned chores based
on gender-specific roles. Girls are faced with the responsibility of engaging in domestic
chores such as fetching water and sweeping whilst boys help their fathers with jobs like
weeding in the house, cleaning and washing a car if there is any at home. These are the kinds
of jobs that aid in responsible adulthood and less stressful on the child compared to children
working in the mines.
2.4.2 Poverty

Poverty is another driving force for child work in illegal mining. (Thorsen, 2012, p. 4 and Kids Right Report, 2014, p. 7). When families are so poor that they are unable to afford a day’s meal, illegal mining becomes an option for them. Parents who watch their wards work in illegal mines instead of schooling may not entirely be ignorant of its adverse effect; rather, it may be due to the fact that they are financially handicapped. Banchirigah (2008, p. 30) argues that children strive to work hard in artisanal mines in order to cater for themselves. Children were interviewed in the bid to know how much they earned daily. The survey showed that majority of them earned up to GHC50.00 in a day. However, these children are unable to “get rich quickly” as they are “trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty” mainly because of the different issues they need to attend to. (Banchirigah, 2008, pp. 30-32) Children use the money they make to contribute to the household needs such as food, clothes and shelter. When there is more money, they take care of their personal needs.

2.4.3 Lack of Economic Opportunities

ILO opines that, children get involved in illegal mining because they do not have any other sources of income which are less perilous to support them. After completing the Basic Education, “some children end up with bad grades which make it impossible to gain admission to a Senior High School. A number of these children are reluctant to rewrite the exams, and will therefore want to work in order to support themselves” (2002, p. 41). Unfortunately, these children do not easily end up with jobs, neither do they know any craft they learnt in school. Therefore, they resort to working in hazardous conditions at the expense of their health and safety. In Ghana for example, Hilson and Osei (2014, p. 89) state that the youth unemployment rates were as high as 80%, leaving “hundreds and thousands of the youth [to] pursue work in the artisanal sector of the economy” Emmanuel is a fifteen year old
boy who works with eight other children his age in an illegal mining site in Prestea, a town in the Western Region of Ghana. He comes from a family where he is required to fend for himself in order to survive. He explained the only major source of employment in the community is illegal mining. The story was not any different from that told by three other friends of his. This suggests that the situation of the children would have been worse if they had not gotten a job in the sector (2014, personal interview).

2.5. Interventional Efforts Aimed at Protecting Children in Illegal Mining

In Ghana, children work in various punitive conditions in sectors like agriculture, fishing and mining. This creates problems for the country as the future leaders gradually sink in the development of their being. In an attempt to curb the situation, Gachago accounts that over forty laws and policies have been established in Ghana to protect children against harsh conditions and illegal forms of work. There are also statutory bodies responsible for the welfare of the child (2014, p. 6).

2.5.1 Legal Framework

Ghana has signed on to several international conventions on the rights and welfare of the Child. Some of these are the UNCRC, The OAU’s ACRWC and The Minimum Age Convention (ILO Convention 138 and Gachago 2014, p. 6). In Ghana however, the Children’s Act of 1998 ensures that the child’s safety is assured.

The UNCRC (1989, p. 1) is an international treaty that recognizes the human rights of children and defines a child as “a person below the age of eighteen years”. It has made efforts to ensure that “its state parties assume responsibility for children to benefit from special protection measures without any form of discrimination” (p. 1). UNCRC insists that children must have access to education and health care which will help them (children) fully
develop their talents and abilities. State parties are also expected to submit their legislation, policies and practice in accordance with the standards of the convention.

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1990 developed a child’s policy called African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). This charter came about as a result of the Organisation “noting with concern the situation of most African children, remaining critical due to the unique factors of their socio-economic, cultural, traditional and developmental circumstances” (African Charter 1990, p. 1) The Charter recognizes that, the child occupies a unique privilege in an African society for the full and harmonious development of his personality; therefore, “any custom, tradition, cultural or religious practice that is inconsistent with the rights, duties and obligations contained in the present charter shall to the extent of such inconsistency be discouraged” (African Charter 1990, p. 2).

The ILO Convention 38 establishes the minimum age for children to work. The Convention, according to ILO (1973, p. 2) “was developed to regulate children who worked by setting a minimum age for admission to employment that signatories are expected to respect”. The Convention adds that a number of countries, Ghana inclusive, “have adopted a legislation to prohibit or place severe restrictions on the employment and work of children, much of it stimulated and guided by standards” (ILO Convention, 1973, p.2). One of such ways to ensure that children do not start working too young is to establish an age limit of when they can be legally employed. Children between the ages of thirteen and fifteen “may indulge in light work, as long as it does not threaten their health and safety or morals” (ILO 1973, p. 5)

The Ghanaian Children’s Act of 1998 (s. 6.3) charges parents with the responsibility of “protecting children from neglect, discrimination, violence, abuse, exposure to physical and moral hazards and oppression”. Parents are equally expected to provide “good guidance, care, assistance and maintenance for the child and assurance of the child’s survival and
development” (s. 6.3). The Children’s Act (s. 91) protects the child from engaging in hazardous work such as working in the mines. The minimum age for employment for hazardous work is eighteen years. According to s. 94.2, any individual who goes contrary to the clause of s. 91 commits an offence and is liable to punishment.

According to Gachago, the legal framework in Ghana which protects the child is fairly strong; on the other hand, children in Ghana continue to engage in activities which threaten their well-being. (p. 17). She expands the argument by stating that, there are not enough enforcers to help curb the rate at which these children work under tough conditions.

2.5.2 Statutory bodies which protect Children

MOWAC asserts that there are quite a number of government institutions in Ghana who see to the welfare of children (2008, p. XX). The Ministry, now the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) and the Ministry of Education “work independently to address the different facets of children’s lives” (Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs 2008, p. XX).

The MoGCSP has no independent child protection policy yet; however, it is working on developing one with the support of the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (Gachago, 2014, p. 12). The Ministry “has the primary objective of enhancing women’s access to economic resources, protecting children from direct and indirect physical and emotional harm [and] recognizing and strengthening children’s department to promulgate the rights of children” (Ministry of Women and Children Affairs 2012, p. 1). At the national level, the Ministry works with the Department of Social Welfare who in turn works with the Child Protection Committee at the district level. Community Child Protection Committee (CCPC) was then formed in various communities (Gachago, 2014, p. 22). The Ghana Moderate Advancement (2013, p. 3) posit that CCPC had over six
hundred (600) branches in Ghana unlike Gachago (2014, p. 22) who is of the view that the Committee had over thousand (1000) communities.

In spite of the different figures, the CCPC was established to inform Communities on the dangers involved if children worked in tough conditions. They investigated why children worked in harsh conditions and monitored the kind of work these children indulged in. This they believed was going to stop children from engaging in such activities. The CCPC worked “hand in hand with the Ghana Police Service, Department of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection” (Ghana Moderate Advancement 2013, p. 3).

Unluckily, the project did not thrive for long. Few people followed up on meetings regarding this issue and to make matters worse, the Ministry could not generate enough funds to sponsor the project (Ghana Moderate Advancement 2013, p. 4).

Later, the MoGCSP came up with another project. This was called the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP). This project was to help children from the less privileged families and orphans as well as older persons who lived over sixty-five years (Gachago 2014, p. 8). Once every two months, targeted families receive money from the Ministry. An individual receives an amount of GHC 48 while four persons in a household receive GHC 90 (Gachago 2014, p. 28). Unfortunately, the LEAP project, like the CCPC fell on rocks. One major challenge with the LEAP project was funding. Gachago records that “at the time of the Assessment, the scheme owed for months remittances to families”. The failure of this project sent children back to unsafe working places such as the illegal mines. (2014, p. 28)

The Ministry of Education protects the educational welfare of the child. The Education Act 778 (s.2.1) postulates that “a child who has attained school going age shall, at the basic level attend a course of instruction as laid down by the Minister in a school, recognized for the purpose by the Minister.” The act also stresses that, there is the need for “Education at the
basic level [to be] free and compulsory” (s.4.2). It is the responsibility of the district assembly “to provide infrastructural needs and any other facilities of the education of the population in the area of its authority. (s.4.3). The Ministry believes that the number of children who work in serious conditions because of money will be reduced once education has been made free and compulsory. The Education Act s.5 charges parents to obey the rule. “Any parent” according to the Act “who fails to comply with the appropriate action agreed on with the social welfare committee, commits an offence and is liable on conviction by the District court ... for the first offence, to a fine not exceeding five penalty units … continuing the offence, to a fine of one penalty unit in respect of each day during which the offence continues”. Hilson (2008, p. 235) after conducting a research on children who work concluded that, when children are vigorous in school, “it reduces the available time the child has for work and other things”. Other side of the coin remains, that a child is not given enough motivation to be in school. Hilson and Osei (2014, p. 85) apportion blame to the situation on the nature of schooling system in Africa. They explain that “the school system is not improving in Africa because of the poor quality and delivery of services being offered”. Hilson adds to the earlier submission and points out that “Classrooms are congested. Schools are located vast distances from villages, which will discourage children from attending classes; and blackboards, chalk and other essential materials are in short supply” (2008, p. 1235). Although children in government schools are given free tuition in Ghana, they are required to get some things they need for themselves. Children are “therefore forced to buy books, pens, uniforms and pay for extra classes” (Hilson 2008, p. 1235). When children lack financial support, they quit school to find work.

To prevent school going children from becoming stressed in school, “the Government of Ghana initiated some social support schemes to support children who are at risk at work, particularly to support education (Gachago 2014, p. 28). The School Feeding Programme
(SFP) was put in place in the year 2005 “to provide children [with] one hot nutritious meal during school hours” (Gachago 2014, p. 28). A year after the establishment of the SFP, enrolment increased to about twenty-five per cent (25%) and school attendance shot up to ninety five per cent (95%). During an interview with some teachers in a basic school, Twumasi, a teacher, sadly said that the school feeding programme was not effective anymore. “Children do not pay attention in class because of hunger. Others do not come to school anymore because they do not want to learn on an empty stomach. The food provided to the students is not on daily basis. The food available to the children is in small quantities; only the strong are able to get a portion of it” (2015). If the educational structures and facilities as well policies regarding the education of children are not treated properly, the children are likely not to go to school. The result is, the child is not assured of a secure and bright future. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) summarizes this:

The whole child approach to education is defined by policies, practices, and relationships that ensure each child, in each school, in each community, is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. It engages all stakeholders—educators, families, policymakers, and community members. (2010, p.1)

2.5.3 The Media and Child work in Illegal Mines

Undoubtedly, the media plays a very significant role by “strengthening and serving as a mirror to society” (Karachi, 2010). Media reaches out to people in different forms; it could be documented in print, orally or electronically. In any of the forms, the media serves as a powerful tool for communicating to the public societal happenings. Thousands of people depend on it to be able to keep up with community. Illegal mining activities in the country
have caused endless havoc to the people, especially children; hence, the frequent update by reporters to help prevent it in society. The involvement of children in the sector is alarming and individuals have expressed their worry on several platforms, explaining the hazards children are likely to face when exposed to working in the illegal mines. Among such individuals who speak against children in illegal mining is Lady Julia, the wife of the Asantehene, Otumfu Osei Tutu. On the 15th of April, 2015, Frimpong brought to light Lady Julia’s submissions under the caption “Let’s stop children from illegal mining” on Graphic News. The Member of Parliament for Manso-Adubia was also reported by Citi Fm on the 17th of April, 2015 to have charged the public to uphold the rights of the child under the heading “Don’t engage school children in galamsey”. Furthermore, the Ghana News Agency on their webpage published an article by the Asutifi Directorate of Education. This was captioned “Illegal small scale mining affecting Education” (March, 2012). Other Media Firms also highlight the safety risks to these children through their publications. For example, in June, 2013, the Ghana News on their Web page posted “Ghana: Mine Accident Highlight Risk to Children” and Adu Beatrice (June 2014) made a report cautioned “Illegal mining pits endanger lives of 200 deaf students”.

Although some articles and journals discuss this issue at length, it is difficult finding a movie or play about children working in the illegal mines especially in Ghana. This statement receives backing from Gachago (2014, p. 17) that all projects which are done in Ghana to help prevent children from engaging in dangerous forms of work “concentrated in the cocoa growing areas”.
2.5.4 The Role of the Traditional Rulers in Illegal Mining

Owusu (2014) charges leaders to sit up and perform their duties in society diligently. Traditional leaders, Owusu explains “are expected to initiate and champion the cause of development [al] activities in their areas of jurisdiction”. They have the obligation of maintaining law and order in their communities “and settling non-criminal civil disputes”. Traditional leaders in most communities follow a hierarchical system of ruling. The paramount chief, the head of them all, is preceded by the Omanhene who rules at the district level. The local or town chief also known as the “Odikro” rules in a community. At the base is the family head, otherwise known as “Abusuapanyin” in local Akan language. It is sad however that these leaders have been tagged “in Ghana’s Socio-economic development” as being greedy, ignorant and deliberately mishandling funds when it comes to giving out of land for illegal mining (Owusu 2014, p. 1). Adom (2014, p. 1) on Spy Ghana reports that, the indigenes of South and North Amansie and Obuasi Municipal are “disgusted and tired of the way their lands have been given out by these leaders in exchange for money”. Reports have it that this attitude is deeply affecting the people. In an interview with some activists in the communities, Ebenezer Aboa is said to have told Spy Ghana that the “Odikros” are the ones responsible for the sale of lands in the community. Hun Huem is a Chinese who told the reporter Adom that he paid as much as $120,000 to “secure parcels of land between Adaase and Anyinkrerem towards Kwapia area” to the chiefs whose names he withheld. The Ghana News Agency (GNA) on Ghana Web (2010) informed the public about the Eastern Regional Minister’s disappointment about the involvement of the Kyebi chiefs in illegal mining. To a large extent, the activity has destroyed a number of farm lands belonging to farmers in the community. Despite the numerous attacks on traditional rulers’ to desist from involving in illegal mining, the Upper West and East Regional House of Chiefs have openly declared their non-involvement in the illegal activities in their communities and have expressed worry on
the increasing participation of illegal mining in the district and thus, cautioned individuals to desist from it (Osam 2014, p. 1). These lands, the chiefs say, were not given to the miners by any of the traditional rulers and it is causing havoc in society.

In situations where traditional chiefs are actively involved in illegal activities, it is difficult to point out the wrong doings in the sites. Little or no efforts will be made to reduce the number of children who find themselves in the mine and the children will continually be exposed to risky situations and happenings at the site. However, it is very important for chiefs to be able to initiate projects to help children in such situations. It will be easier to make progress because their subjects will find it difficult disrespecting their orders especially when it becomes a societal norm.

2.6 The Playwright’s Concerns

“A writer needs something to say, an attitude about life and a point of view about existence”. (Smiley 2003, p. 3). A playwright shoulders the responsibility of discussing pertinent issues in society. Saleh (2000, p. 45) is of the view that “whatever positions a writer may take or the class he may belong to, his writing should [gear towards] moving the society forward” This will shape people’s attitude to life as they would be able to draw conclusions. Plays are often a vehicle not only for entertainment but for the expression of the ideas and concerns of the playwright. As a budding playwright, it is horrifying and disturbing to know that some children in the country are employed in the illegal mining where their dreams and inspirations are shattered. I am of the opinion that the welfare of all children should be preserved. Unfortunately, children are exposed to daily challenges in the mines. Amongst my concern for these children are their working conditions, health challenges, educational disadvantages as well as the social vices they tend to learn.
2.6.1 Working Conditions

In a bid to create awareness and sensitize the public on the predicament of children in working in the illegal mines through my play, there is the need to understand the conditions under which these children work. These conditions include the number of hours they spend on the site, the kind of activities they indulge in, the wages they earn and their safety. Illegal mining is a labour intensive extraction of minerals and children work to gain this gold under very harsh conditions. Thorsen (2012, p. 3) states that children work between eight to ten hours in a day with little or no rest which becomes stressful for them. Similarly, the Bureau for Gender Equality (2007, p. 9) records that, children in Ghana work in artisanal mines for over eight hours a day; five to six days in a week.

Children engage in all sorts of low-skilled tasks at the mines (Mottaz 2006, p. 4); beginning with the process of getting into dark tunnels for gold rocks through to the cracking and crushing of stones and finally to the washing stage where gold nuggets are obtained. Brown (2012, p. 4) observes that, in West African countries like Burkina Faso, children especially boys as young as twelve (12) are directly involved in working in narrow tunnels of which Mottaz (2006, p. 4) throws more light and explains that their “small size and agility allows them to easily work in the tunnels and galleries”. In the same way in Mali, Mottaz (2006, p. 6) explains that, children as young as the age of six (6) dig shafts, work in tunnels, haul rocks and use mercury to separate the gold and ore. Children in Ghana are not treated in any better conditions; “they sit for hours under the sun cracking and crushing stones while others squat the whole day in dirty waters panning gold” (Johannisson 2013, p. 11). According to Mottaz, at age five, children are exposed to working in the mines in Ghana where they “carry rocks, wash dirt, process gold dust with mercury” (2006, p. 4). Girls who work in the mines engage mainly in two kinds of work. In addition to engaging in the extraction, transportation and
processing stages, they pose as food vendors and run errands in the mines. (Bureau for Gender Equality 2007, p. 1)

Although children engage in all aspects of the labour work, working in like manner as adults, they receive little pay. Mottaz (2006, p. 3) opine that, the remuneration for these children is a combination of “kind and cash”. Children who do not receive any pay or income are provided with food, shelter and security by guardians. The average child who receives a daily wage earns between GH₵ 3 and GH₵ 50 (Johannisson 2013, p. 11 and Banchirigah 2008, p. 32).

Children use tools like chisels, hammers and axes to make their work in the mines a successful venture but they are usually without any form of protective clothing (Mottaz 2006, p. 1). This usually threatens their lives in the mines. In April 2013, for example, BBC News reported a mine collapse in Kyekyewere, a town in the Central region of Ghana. This killed a total of about sixteen people. Maama, as she is affectionately known, is an elderly woman in Tarkwa. In an informal interview with her, she laments how living and working in the mines has killed numerous of their young men (November 2014, personal interview).

Kwame is an eleven year old boy who works in an illegal mining site in Tarkwa and works each day whilst Atta, fourteen years works in Prestea but does not report to work on Sundays. With the exception of using mercury for amalgamation, Kwame engages in all the other processes of mining and earns a minimum of GH₵ 7 a day. “On days that work is good”, Kwame recounts, “I can earn GH₵ 25”. Atta receives a minimum of GH₵ 10 and a maximum of GH₵ 30 on days that market is good. (December 2014, personal interview)

Sadly, in over fifteen mining camps that the researcher visited and about twenty children who were interviewed, only one miner was spotted to have a helmet on. Other protective clothing such as gloves, goggles and boots were not found on the field. Additionally, miners who crushed stones tied their noses with a little cloth. Sadly, they still inhaled the dust.
2.6.2 Health Challenges

Due to the nature of their work in the artisanal mines, children are exposed to various forms of health dangers. Mottaz observes that, when children work long hours in the illegal mines, it leads to constant headaches. (2006, p. 1). Children frequently complain of joint pains, for that reason, they resort to taking pain killers instead of visiting a health care for proper treatment. When children squat or sit for long hours in the sun cracking stones, they develop spinal cord problems. Their use of tools like hammers, chisels, and axes exposes them to serious injuries, cuts and bruises and in extreme cases, can lead to disability.

Children are also at the mercy of the dust they inhale during the cracking and crushing of rocks. Aryee et al (2003, p. 135) adds that, the dust causes “emissions of gaseous pollutants”, a kind of pollution which could be detrimental to both miners and the community at large. When children inhale dust in the illegal mines, they develop chronic respiratory diseases especially since their immune system are not developed as that of the adults. Eventually, children find it difficult breathing (Mottaz, 2006, p. 1).

Further, children are unprotected from infections and diseases because of the inaccessibility to clean water and sanitation in the mines. There is stagnant water at the mines which is resulted from the gold washing procedure. Apart from the risk of the stagnant water breeding mosquitoes, miners rely on the polluted water for drinking. This leads to diseases like “dysentery, diarrhoea, malaria, meningitis and tuberculosis” (Mottaz 2006, p. 3).

Another important health risk children face in the illegal mines is the use of mercury to amalgamate gold. Mercury according to Singha and Tschakert (2007, p. 1308) is a highly toxic substance used “in more than fifty (50) developing countries”. It is used to attract gold nuggets from the crushed ore or sediments during the panning process. In an interview with Fynn, a chief engineer at Prestea Goldfields, he stresses that, even after miners wash their hands with soap, there is still the likelihood that mercury remains in their palms. The mercury
attracts metals, like pin outside the site; in the same way it attracts gold from the solute. He expresses his displeasure about mercury being the leading cause of death among artisanal miners, since it contaminates their food and water unknowingly. Others who detect their health deteriorate do not find it necessary to visit the hospital; instead, they rely on self-medication. Singha and Tschakert (2007, p. 1316) inform the public on how mercury can be poisonous to persons. According to them, mercury can pollute in three ways: through burning after amalgamation, dispersal into water bodies after spillage and through the mouth when hands are not washed. Children nevertheless are attacked most when they inhale mercury during the burning stage. It increases their risk of “heart attack, hypertension and destroys the nervous system” (Pfeiffer 2012, p. 4).

In a mining town in Himan, a suburb of Prestea, Amprofi (fifteen years old) admits; “the work is difficult, everything about it is really difficult. I have joint pains every day and I take in paracetamol. The pains do not go away but I always come to work.” (2014). Kwame also discloses that the crushing and cracking of the stones gives him aches in the chest. He coughs anytime he closes from work but his uncle gives him soda water which they believe will cure the cough. He does not go to the clinic because his uncle says coughing is not a serious ailment to warrant a doctor’s consultation (2014, personal interview).

2.6.3 Educational Disadvantage

Children who work in illegal mining sites are usually at a disadvantage of acquiring good education. Gyamfi (2014, p. 523) posits that when children work in illegal mines, it has “negative effects on school attendance and academic performance”. Thus, children who aspire to succeed and hold great positions in society should cultivate the habit of going to school regularly. Unfortunately, majority of the children do not receive quality education. Thus, they turn out as illiterates. In sub-Saharan Africa, Hilson and Osei (2014, p. 84) state
that, an “estimated 133 million, more than 50% of the youth are illiterates and many more have little or no skills and therefore, largely excluded from productive economic and social life”. Judging from the number of hours children spend in the mines, only a few of them are able to combine it with attending school. They record that in the year 2010 for example, “a total number of 11.4 million children in sub-Saharan Africa repeated the same grade representing more than one third of the global percentage.” (2014, p. 85). MOWAC (2008, p. XVII) confirms Hilson, L.O’s argument by saying that there are 3.7 million children in Ghana between the ages of six and eleven years. Of the above figure, about 800,000 representing close to 22% are not in school, for the reason that they engage in “hazardous work that threatens their health and well-being”.

Bachman (2000) reveals that, “studies on child development suggest that children's ability to work, and benefit or suffer from it, varies significantly from child to child”. Children who can combine the two could be encouraged. However, those who cannot catch up should opt for one. While it is true that children in a class do not have the same Intelligent Quotient, choosing to attend school demands as much time as working in the illegal mines and this makes it almost impossible for the child to combine the two and effectively execute them. If the child runs a shift programme of schooling, he will eventually get tired from work and concentration will be lost in class. Later, he begins to lose interest in school and is likely to skip classes if the mine is fetching money.

Findings from visiting illegal mines in Himan and Bondai, all suburbs in Prestea, revealed that a number of illegal miners are either illiterates or semi-literates. They could barely express themselves in the English language. During an interview with some children on the field, majority of them claimed to be pupils in school working to support themselves. Ironically, most of these children could barely answer when the researcher asked for their names in English. Emmanuel (fifteen years) started working in the illegal mines at age ten. In
order for him to know how long he has been working at the mine, he was asked by the researcher to subtract ten from fifteen. All he did was nod his head. This was a difficult mathematical problem for him. It was obvious he did not know the answer. Children who worked in the mine rushed to the site immediately school closed and hardly made time to learn.

This is a concern which needs immediate attention. Illegal mining is not a stable job; my concern thus is what the future of the children would be when they are out of work with little or no education.

2.6.4 Social Vices
Coupled with the educational and health problems, children are believed to indulge in some bad habits while working in the artisanal mining site. Naturally, children adopt practices adults and others immediately surrounding their environment involve themselves in. It is believed that, when miners earn money after work, they spend it “openly on sex and alcohol” (Thorsen 2012, p. 9) which raises concerns for the moral upbringing of children. Before men get into the tunnels to chisel rocks, they take in alcohol to help them work very hard. Eventually, boys learn from this habit and later become alcoholics in society. Other miners prefer to take in hard drugs like weed and cocaine to keep them awake in the tunnels.

Thorsen explains that in the mines, women run their own businesses by engaging in petty trading at the mines; although some of them pan gold and carry loads. Also, a number of these women are “unmarried and divorced women living in mining communities and often assumed to be sex workers” (2007, p. 9). The Bureau for Gender Equality records that, in the illegal mines, adolescent girls are perceived to be either promiscuous or vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation. For example, in Tanzania, girls engage in full time commercial sex work. Girls view their attitude as a unique way of finding prospective husbands as well as a
means of acquiring their basic needs like food, clothes and shelter (2007, p. 6). When these social vices are copied by children, it becomes habitual and leads to irresponsible behaviour. On the field to gather data, it was noticed that illegal miners chased after women on whom they spent their money. Although some of them denied engaging in such practice, the researcher through observation and participation was able to know that quite a number of them could not cultivate the habit of saving because of this habit. Children, especially the males, stuck to alcohol to “make them stronger”. In a society like ours, a playwright can be instrumental in drawing attention to what children go through while working in illegal mining and establishing the need for a change.

2.7 Techniques in Playwriting

Over the years, hundreds of books have been written and published on the techniques or rules of playwriting. Most dramatists share the view that the “creative impulse” or “intuition” serves as a motivation for the writing of a play. Playwrights like Selden, Grebanier and Rowe believe that, writing solely from intuition is the best for the playwright. The intuitive method, Klinger (2003, p. 7) explains is “a spontaneous expression of feeling”, solely based on the writer’s imagination of an idea. For Rowe (1939, p. 45), an artist should be given room to write or create a dramatic piece based exclusively on intuition and inspiration as it provides the basis for enough creativity. Playwrights who recommend the intuitive method of writing argue that, writing plays with basic principles or rules is a form of “Soulless formulae” because it can greatly “limit creativity, result in manufactured fill-in-the blank, mechanical plots” (Downs & Russin, 2004, p. xv). In his book, Macgowan agrees with Rowe that, the intuitive approach of writing is best. He appears to be very tired and fed up with the numerous literature on rules on playwriting and explains that “All the nonsense about rules for playwriting began with Aristotle” (1951, p. 9).
Aristotle is a Greek philosopher whose Poetics has served as a template for modern playwrights.

The other school of thought proposes that, writing solely on imagination and intuition is not good for a playwright. Egri argues that, there are rules governing other art forms like music, dance or painting; why should writing therefore be an exception? He states that over the years, good playwrights have not always written extraordinary dramatic pieces because “they wrote on the basis of instinct, rather than from exact knowledge. Instinct may lead a man once, or several times to create a master piece but as a sheer instinct, it may lead him just as often to create a failure” (1923, p. xiv). Undoubtedly, there is no definite route ensuring that, a playwright writes a good script. However, “exploratory writing” or “intuitive writing”, Catron (2002, p. xv) opines, is not always helpful. There is the need for a writer to be guided, or work with some specific techniques that will shape the play. It is after you learn and understand the rules that you can break away from them or twist it to suit a particular kind of play or the requirement of the theatre. Similarly, Smiley (2005, p. 10) says that the playwright’s intuitions produce images which are good for writing, however, “every playwright needs a working process, a method of developing a play from the first impulse to a completed manuscript… developing the process, however it may vary from project to project is essential” (Smiley 2005, p. 20)

In my opinion, it is necessary for the playwright to know some rules or techniques of writing. It is true that a playwright’s creativity is key to writing a play, but, over reliance on intuition alone can only promote pretty bad plays, just as the strict compliance to rules can be an easy way of limiting creativity. The issue lies with the playwright’s ability to strike the balance. Just like Currant (1985, p. 10) explains, “finding the right degree and nature of constraint is the ultimate and vital task of playwriting theory”. Although writers like Maegowan and Rowe have some form of dislike for the principles of playwriting, there some forms of techniques or
rules of writing in their books. This is to say that playwrights have some principles they adhere to.

In view of this, I adopt Smiley’s model of writing a play because he outlines systematic guidelines which could help the playwright have a completed dramatic piece. Klinger (2003, p. 54) illuminates that, Smiley’s model of writing helps a “student of playwriting for not only its clarity of thought, but also because it provides for the reader, specific and discrete exercises which should culminate in a complete play script”. According to Smiley (2005, pp. 21-40), the play begins with the creative impulse and the germinal idea. The playwright should then collect data and think through the work. It is also important that a playwright builds scenarios before the drafting of the play. After drafting, a play reading exercise will help to shape the play.

2.7.1 Creative Impulse

The creative impulse is a discipline, the inner drive of the writer. Creative impulses cause a stir in the playwright and push him to complete the processes involved in the writing phase. In other words, the creative impulse is the artist’s “psychological readiness [which] precedes the process of writing” (Smiley 2005, p. 21). At this stage, Smiley records that, the writer’s view of life broadens and his imagination becomes very lively. This leads to the playwright finding “initiating ideas” for the play.

2.7.2 Germinal Idea

A germinal idea is the initial idea conceived by the playwright. Germinal ideas come from various sources, but Smiley proposes that writers usually get their ideas from “direct
experience, listening, reading and imagination” (2005, p. 12). The germinal idea could be a very great task for the playwright in spite of the fact that ideas are everywhere. For this reason, the playwright’s germinal idea should first be of interest to him so that his writing is “connected to [his] intimate experiences, fantasies, dreams, nightmares… or the writer’s reaction to some form of social injustice” Downs and Russini (2004, p. 1).

Germinal ideas could evolve from several sources: (Smiley 2005, pp.26 – 28)

1. A person (writers naturally use people because human actions form the core of the drama. Therefore, an individual’s way of living could fascinate the playwright who would want to write about the character).

2. A place (certain kinds of human actions tend to happen in particular and different locales and the playwright can develop an idea from there).

3. Incidents (incidents can also make great exciting germinal ideas for a play. A playwright could write about happenings in a class, family house, excursion, etc.).

4. Conceptual thought (these are normally philosophical ideas that a playwright intends to explain. It could also be the strong religious/political stand of the writer).

5. Subject matter (a germinal idea devised around an informational area – these are usually deductive plays discussing current social issues/social injustices).

2.7.3 Collection of Materials

At this stage of the writing process, the playwright gathers information relevant for his work. Collecting materials for a piece of dramatic writing could be time consuming, on the other hand, it is important because it helps in expanding the germinal idea and exploring the potentials of the play (Smiley 2005, p. 29).
Smiley (2005, p. 33) opines that “For any creative writing process, research can be fruitful, writers needn’t dream up everything from their imagination”. When a play is based on a subject area, the writer must do his research properly. He must be able to “know the locale, people involved as well as the subject of discussion” (Smiley 2005, p. 33). Playwrights could brainstorm to get new ideas on the current issues of the nation and hold some discussions on those issues. The writer could also travel for sight-seeing as “travelling enhances the playwright’s intuitive feel for a subject or setting of a play” (Smiley 2005, p. 32). With a thesis play such as this, the playwright could hold interview sessions with people who are knowledgeable in the research area and can contribute to developing his ideas of study. At this stage, he could record, take field notes and observe happenings since ideas can disappear in a flash.

After collecting materials, it is prudent for a playwright not to restrict himself with the information gained as it can limit creativity and aesthetics in the play. Smiley advises that, writers should be free to “imagine, explore and broaden their horizon” (2005, p. 32).

2.7.4 Thinking Through

Smiley recommends that, it is very important for a playwright to develop a system of thinking through before writing. This, he says, will prevent the play from turning “out thin”. Thinking through a play, Smiley enlightens (2005, p. 34) can be very useful in three ways: it saves revision time, deepens the quality of the play and helps the playwright to stay focused. Four elements in playwriting were examined as very important in the thinking through process- the title, theme, character and setting.
2.7.4.1 Title

Until a play is finished and ready to be performed on stage, most playwrights use a ‘working title’. Working titles are usually not the final title a dramatist may give to his dramatic piece. In situations where a writer is not sure of a title to give his dramatic piece, he is advised to give the play a ‘working title’ because titles “give [the] play an identity, a focus, and direction”. It is not a new phenomenon to change titles. Before Tennessee Williams chose *The Glass Menagerie* as the final title of his play, *The Gentleman Caller* was the working title (Downs and Russin 2004, p. 95).

Sources of ideas can be gotten in various ways and so are titles of plays. Titles could be in a form of a name, place, proverb, idiom, incident, poem etc. Titles should be catchy; it should arouse curiosity in the audience and push them into the theatre (Downs and Russin p. 96).

2.7.4.2 Theme

The theme forms the core or central idea of the play and helps in creating characters. However, dramatists like Grebanier (1961, p. 23) dislike the idea that a theme should be given so much importance before writing because it has much influence on the process of writing. When a theme is thought of before the play is written, Grebanier explains “it too easily may lead the writer into contriving heavily moralistic or propagandistic demonstrations of an idea”.

Every play has a central idea. It is difficult for playwrights to create characters and dialogue for example without thinking through the theme of the play and especially if he is not using the intuitive method of writing. For this reason, writers like Egri strongly believe that thinking through the theme will help develop the plot of the play. Egri(1923, p. 7) states, “Until you develop a premise [theme], you still would wallow, struggle and develop other
actions in your play which might even shift your focus”. The purpose of a play is like the seed, out of which others grow. Having a clear theme serves as “a thumbnail synopsis of the play” (Egri 1923, p. 8). It aids in conflict, dialogue and character building. I believe that discovering a theme does not necessarily guarantee a propagandistic or heavily moralistic play or placing characters as mouth pieces for the message of the play as Grebanier opines.

2.7.4.3 Characters

“Characters are fundamental materials that a playwright is forced to work with”, as such, he should be very familiar with the characters he creates. The playwright “should know how much weight they can carry, how well they can support his construction: the play” (Egri 1923, p.32). Downs and Russin (2004, p. 132) share a similar idea. To them, “a character without an essential function does not belong in your play. Each must add a unique and necessary quality, without which the story would not only be less effective, but would collapse”. That is to say that, a playwright should know the importance of each character in the story, to what extent they move the plot and create conflict.

Playwrights should name characters and avoid calling them by types or tagging them with unique features, unless it is very essential. Naming characters does not mean you give them similar names or rhyming names, it confuses the audience. Character names reflect “on their nature and function […], attitude, class and heritage” (Downs and Russin 2004, p. 131).

Egri (1923, p. 36) proposes that playwrights should identify characters with what he calls the ‘tridimensional character traits’, comprising the physiological (the physical make-up), sociological (social status) and psychological (temperaments and abilities) needs of the individual. Downs and Russin (2004, p. 115) advises that, a playwright should not concentrate heavily on these traits as it could lead to endless questions, even unrelated to the
character and plot. A particular character’s dominant trait and emotion should relate to the story. Certainly, the tridimensional traits help the playwright to build distinct characters (avoiding stereotypical characters) and create believable characters.

A writer should assume the roles of characters, what Konstantin Stanislavski, an acting teacher calls ‘the magic if’. The ‘magic if’ concept helps the playwright to put himself in the shoes of a character and constantly asks what he would do if he were put in the place of the character’s situation. The ‘magic if’ is an imaginary technique used by the playwright “to find similarities between himself and his characters and create honest, intimate emotions and thoughts” (Downs and Russin 2004, p.130).

2.7.4.4 Setting

Every action in a play happens at a particular ‘place’ and ‘time’. That is the setting of the play. The place refers to a particular space where events occur. Knowing the place helps the playwright familiarise with the socio-cultural practices of the people. Market squares, living rooms, classrooms and so on are all examples of places in a play. The time shows the actual period of the play. It explains which century the play was set and whether it happened in the past, future or present. For example, the Greek classics were written in a different era from a modern play. The change in periods gives room for the playwrights to adopt different approaches to writing.

The setting of a play does not only influence dialogue of characters, it also affects the names and actions of characters and creates a believable world for the characters. It also sets the mood of the play.
2.7.5 Scenario Building

After thinking through the title, characters, theme and setting, the playwright can build a scenario. Scenarios serve as a blueprint or an outline of the plot. The scenario includes a working title, characters, setting and sequence of events in a play (according to acts, scenes and French scenes). Building a scenario does not necessarily mean your play is finished and the playwright is not compelled to strictly follow the sequence of events in the scenario. This is because; a scenario could lack some vital details or events that the play will establish. Building a scenario only helps the playwright to know the structure of the play and serves as a guide (Downs and Russin 2004, p. 105).

Although Macgowan seem to disagree with a formulaic technique of playwriting, he does not seem to be a strict follower of the intuitive (non-formula) approach. He believes that, a playwright who begins to write after conceiving an idea makes a grave mistake. To explain further, he establishes that “it is only through a full scenario that one can test whether you are putting together a plot that may mount steadily in dramatic interest, keep your audience worrying over the troubles of your characters, and end in emotional satisfaction” When there is no proper planning, Macgowan concludes, “the job of revision will seem almost endless, and it will be devitalizing to the script and heart breaking to the writer”(1951, p.126). It is after a scenario building that a playwright begins to draft the play; after which the play will be ready for reading.

2.7.6 Play Reading

A play reading session is a helpful process where the playwright tends to get responses from actors and friends on the draft of the play. Usually, the reading is “simple, informal and unrehearsed” (Smiley 2005, p. 49). During the reading session, listeners and readers comment
on the script. The questions and contributions point out some short falls and help shape the plot of the story. At this point, Smiley says it is very important for the playwright to be quiet and listen to constructive suggestions. He is also to observe if the play arouses any form of emotion in the readers. Play reading sessions will help the writer search his inner self and access the comments that could be helpful to the play’s development.

2.8. Realism as my theoretical framework

Throughout history, playwrights have emerged and contributed their quota to developing theories or adopting the existing ones. As a playwright, the thesis is derived from the theory of realism, thus, *Money Stone* is a realist play. Due to this, the theory of realism will be discussed in details to show how it has a bearing on the work.

Realism was the first theoretical movement in modern theatre. It was a break away from the Aristotelian poetics. It started in the late eighteenth century through the nineteenth century and aimed at changing society. In realism, “everything on stage is made to resemble observable everyday life” (Wilson and Goldfarb 2002, p. 320). Instead of Kings and Princes who were used as characters in the classical era through to the Renaissance, the realist opted for ordinary people in daily lives who faced real life problems. This was for the audience to relate to the issues portrayed on stage. Realist playwrights asserted that, it was characteristic of human beings to avoid problems instead of facing them, as such, they aimed at awakening the social conscience by presenting plays that would help the audience “recognize problems, dissect them, sometimes solve them and perhaps even admit that they themselves may be part of the problem (Downs and Russin 2004, p. 27).

Before the writing of *Money Stone* for example, child work in the illegal mines was and is still not a thing of the past. Children from across the country get involved with work in the
illegal mines without focusing on the strenuous nature of the job. During the interview session with children especially in the illegal mining communities in the Western Region of Ghana, there were some of them who admitted that working in the illegal mines stressed their physical, social and psychological lives. However, their motivation for continuing to work in such a place was the money they got to cater for their basic necessities. One major disadvantage of child work in the illegal mines is the inability of the child to concentrate on going to school. This eventually jeopardises their future since working in the illegal mines is not a stable job. The central message of the play *Money Stone* is to depict that, children working in hazardous conditions is not in itself fictitious. It is a social problem which is very dangerous for the child. *Money Stone* also proposes other alternative sources of income that children could engage in rather than illegal mining and will make it easier for them combining with school work.

Realists aim at drawing objective analysis of social issues. In order to achieve this, one must be an active observer of life’s happenings. While gathering information on the field, it was realised that, the major cause for child work in the mine was poverty. Although this was no fault of the child, he must suffer for it anyway. There were situations where children were responsible for their upkeep and well-being and their parents found nothing wrong with that. In other cases, guardians or parents justified their actions by saying that they were training the child to be responsible at such an early stage. Irresponsible parenting and child negligence cause the child to suffer greatly. While this is true, some children were not forced into the mines due to irresponsible parenting and poverty. There were some of them who wanted to make so much money at their tender ages to live a luxurious life. In Prestea for example, a number of children were interviewed and they expressed their desire for material things. This was evident during the evenings and extended late into the nights. When such children earned some money after working in the illegal mines, they would ride in very expensive cars in the
town, buying all sorts of meat and drinks and looking around for pretty ladies to spend the nights with.

In addition to the above, realists are of the opinion that, the kind of issues one would like to discuss or write on and the environment where such issues take place go a long way to influence the characters one creates in a dramatic piece. Children come from all parts of the region to work in the illegal mines; therefore characters were created to represent real children in society. For example, in *Money Stone*, Ebo, a child worker in the mines is a representation of children who work in order to live an extravagant life which they cannot afford under normal circumstance. Abu and Lawal in the play are examples of the many children in illegal mining communities, who suffer and work in such places because they come from polygamous, broken and poverty-stricken homes. Pencil, the teenage girl in the play, depicts peer-pressured children who would do anything to get money and lavish it on material things. In *Money Stone*, she quits her relationship with Ebo to be with the Baron, because the Baron had more than enough money to cater for her needs.

Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen (1828-1908), is believed to be the father of the realist theatre. Downs and Russin (2004, p. 30) explain that Karl Marx, a German philosopher was very instrumental in the creation of theatrical realism. He was against the unfair treatment meted out to the ordinary citizens by the ruling class. One of Ibsen’s major dramatic works, *A Doll’s House*, for example was a social issue which discussed women’s relegation to the background. When *A Doll’s House* was initially performed, it did not go well with the public. There was a sudden outburst and the play did not receive any applause. Ibsen was tagged with so many bad names such as a “lunatic” or a “pervert”. In view of this, an alternative ending was written for A Doll’s House and Nora was made to beg her husband and stay at home (Downs and Russin 2004, p.28).
Also, Ghanaian playwright, J C De Graft, writes a play on the issue of racial discrimination in his popular play, *Through a Film Darkly*. The playwright portrays how the black man is treated in the white man’s land. The character Fenyinka tells a story about his stay in England and stresses that go with it. For the African to maintain his dignity outside, one needs so much courage. He recalls his experience with a white man when he asks a question at the train station and instead of the white man answering his question, he coolly spits on the ground directly in front of Fenyinka and then turns on his heels and walks away. This action is a reflection of what happens in the land of the white man. The characters used in these plays may be fictitious but they symbolise people in real life dealing with issues happening in real life.

When realism was gradually becoming influential, there were some theorists and playwrights who found this movement very limiting. Such theorists argued that it only depicted real happenings on stage but it lacked other theatrical elements like “music, dance, symbolism, poetry, fantasy and the supernatural”. Bertolt Brecht was one of such theorists who kicked vehemently against the realist movement. He was especially against Constantine Stanislavski’s method of the actor putting himself into the situation of a character to bring out emotion. He developed the epic theatre based on his concept of the alienation effect. In his theory “the audience should not be emotionally hypnotized but should be involved intellectually” (Wilson and Goldfarb 2002, p.330-336).

As a realist playwright, it is my responsibility to portray possible characters, dialogue, setting as realistic as possible just like Stanislavsky’s advocacy for the playwright to create believable characters and for an actor to bring out the life of the character on stage. In spite of Brecht’s theory of the alienation effect, Stanislavsky believed that the actor was responsible for carrying out the message of the playwright in such a way that the audience could relate to. To achieve this, Stanislavski focused on observing human behaviour and advocated that, an
actor must be very “true” to himself in order to bring to life the intention of the playwright to the live stage. The actor must use observation, research and intelligence to access the playwright’s character. By so doing, the development of the character in the play becomes more feasible (Johnson 2011, p. 4). The concept of the ‘magic if’ by Stanislavski helps actors in making performances look real. The ‘magic if,’ according to Price (2010, p.4) is a “spontaneous reaction by the characters to draw on memories in order to bring out the right emotions”. When the playwright succeeds in creating characters that face plausible situations, it makes the concept of the ‘magic if’ helpful. Constantly, the actor asks himself what he would do if he was in the shoes of the character. These concepts under the theory of realism help me to achieve a realistic play.

2.9 Using Theatre to Address Societal Issues

Theatre is a powerful means through which humanity is informed, educated and entertained. All through human existence, theatre has been used to communicate issues to all. Arguably, one of the best ways people learn is through visuals, that is, when their sense of sight is stimulated. This is where the role of theatre, and for that matter playwrights, come in. Undeniably, the theatre has played a major role in society over the years to ensure effective development.

2.9.1 Playwriting and Societal Issues

The playwright aims at communicating to the audience through his or her thematic message. The message will raise awareness and sensitize community on the issue discussed by the
playwright. Shalwitz (2011, p. 1) observes that when the audience visit the theatre to watch plays, it

serves as a model for a kind of public discourse that lies at the heart of democratic life and builds our skills for listening to different sides of a conversation or argument and empathizing with the struggles of our fellow human beings whatever their views may be.

Moyo (1997, p. 92) places emphasis on the importance of drama in a community. According to him,

drama incorporates aspects of lived realities, supports progress in people’s lives and effectively grips the audience’s attention and commitment … it conscientises people on aspects of life such as environmental conservation, assists people in spreading and using technological advancement, assists in health, educational and other social efforts and programmes

Some examples of the African plays which aim at instigating change in society are James Ene Henshaw’s *This is Our Chance*, J C De Graft’s *Sons and Daughters* and *Through a Film Darkly*, and Bill Marshall’s *Ali Dondo*.

*Sons and Daughters* by J C De Graft tells a story of a rich but not so educated man named James Ofosu who is not happy with the career choices of his last two children, Aaron and Maanan. James Ofosu insists that Aaron becomes an engineer though he wants to be a painter, while Maanan trains as a lawyer against her wish to become a dancer. James Ofosu is
of the view that being a painter or a dancer is not a “professional career” and therefore does not bring about family prestige. We live in a society where the performing arts is considered less prestigious and rewarding. Through *Sons and Daughters*, De Graft projects the importance of the performing arts. The performing art student in the Ghanaian society is usually referred to as a “concert-party student” and this shows the extent to which society mocks the performing arts. James Ofosu’s speech in the play establishes this fact

... I toil all day all through the year to make enough money to educate my children, to give them the best profession that any rich man’s children can have, and what do they tell me? ‘I don’t want to be an engineer’ and ‘I don’t care about law’-as if what I am offering them was so much cow dung! And what do they want? Dancing half naked on a bloody stage and painting a lot of foolish pictures that nobody who knows the worth of money will care to pay a penny for! That’s what Maanan and that lazy brother of hers want to do. But whilst I’m alive… (p. 23)

In *Sons and Daughters*, the playwright raises the issue of parents determining for their children which profession they should get into without taking into consideration what their children think or feel. In such situations, parents do not give room for their children to speak. James Ofosu uses his position as the head of the family to impose on his children the kind of job he wants them to pursue. However, he considers Aaron and Maanan’s desire to pursue something else in life as gross disrespect. The play is a break away from the social norm where children have domineering parents. Maanan does not agree to her father wanting her to be a lawyer and she objects without giving up. The play empowers children to pursue careers of their choice.
James Ene Henshaw’s *This is Our Chance* is a play that discourages tribalism and promotes unity in our society. When there is peace, leaders think less about solving conflicts, instead, they take constructive measures to develop their society. In the play, Chief Damba spends most of his time thinking about how to cause the downfall of the village of Udura and how he badly needs an opportunity to wring the neck of their “so-called Chief”.

Bambulu is a symbol of unity in the play. Although the villages, Koloro and Udura, are not at peace with each other, in his prayer, he says “…give us all more sympathy and understanding of one another and even of our enemies. Free our hearts benevolent spirits from enmity, disunity, indignity, iniquity and calamity.” (1985, p. 17). Not only is Bambulu used to discourage tribalism in the play, but Prince Ndamu and Princess Kudaro are also used as vehicles to break the shackles of tribalism. In the play, Prince Ndamu and Princess Kudaro plan to get married despite the existing enmity between the people of Udura and Koloro. Thus, for Prince Ndamu and Princess Kudaro to initiate marriage means they wanted to end tribalism existing between their respective tribes.

Further, James Ene Henshaw’s *This is Our Chance* seeks to tell readers or audience to do away with obnoxious laws and traditions. Good traditions are agreed norms in the society which have been passed on from one generation to the other and facilitate development. An example is puberty rite. Obnoxious laws and traditions are the opposite, that is to say, they bring about retrogression. In the play, Chief Damba is an embodiment of tradition. He makes sure that every tradition is kept to the last letter just like his fathers had kept it. We learn that, the father of Chief Damba believed the Chief of Udura was an evil spirit so they were ill at ease with each other. This baseless belief is still held unto by Chief Damba. From this, one can learn that the enmity between the people of Udura and Koloro is as a result of tradition, how their forefathers related to each other. In page 15 of the play, Kudaro says that tradition “…is what will keep us several hundred years behind the world.” Not long ago in Ghana, the
tradition that the place of the girl-child is in the kitchen was very much adhered to by parents. Girls were given no education, especially in the rural areas. However, Ghanaians have now grown to accept Kwegyir Aggrey’s statement that “if you educate a man, you educate an individual but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation.” (Spaulding 2011, p. 80). The acceptance and practice of this statement by Ghanaians have seen the rise of women to the helm of many leadership positions in Ghana. Notable among them include Professor Naana Opoku-Agyemang, the Minister of Education, Justice Georgina Wood, Chief Justice of Ghana, and Samia Yaba Nkrumah, Chairperson of the Convention People Party (C.P.P), among others.

Finally, Ali Dondo, a one act play by Bill Marshall, touches on the need to promote peaceful co-existence. Ali Dondo, the eponymous character is married to Martha, a Christian. Ali Dondo is unemployed although he once worked with the National Telephone Company (NTC) for fifteen years as a linesman. He is dismissed from work because he calls the Prime Minister’s line which infuriates the Prime minister who orders for his immediate sack. Since then, his wife has been selling smoked fish to support the family. A corporal is looking for the Minister of Communications dressed in a priest’s attire (the one who fired Ali) for embezzlement of funds and he ends up in the couple’s house. After being assured the culprit is not with them, Martha shows the corporal the way out and wishes him a good night. After the exit of the corporal, a man walks in dressed like a priest. It is only after Martha confirms that the man in question is not her priest that they find out that he is the minister the corporal is looking for. Ali Dondo threatens to give him up since he could not stand for him when he was fired for no reason. Martha tries to shield the minister after being convinced that they will be paid handsomely. The couple continue to shield the minister until an innocent priest is shot by the corporal.
The playwright touches on the need for peaceful co-existence especially among married couples. Despite the religious differences between Ali Dondo and Martha, they lived as man and wife. It is expected that couples will have disagreements as in the case of Martha and Ali Dondo, but in spite of their petty quarrels and arguments, they should be able to live in peace.

Again, the playwright targets influential and privileged people in society who treat others badly. Ali Dondo worked for the National Telephone Company for good fifteen years and what did he get for it? Dismissal for calling to see if the Prime Minister’s line was working! When Ali Dondo questions the Minister of Communications about the wrongful dismissal, the minister tells him that in order for Ali to charge him with guilt, there is the need for him (minister) to be tried in court (1988, p. 21). The minister retorts to Ali’s question knowing that Ali cannot afford to take the matter to court. It is a representation of how the influential mishandle their subjects. Bill Marshall admonishes powerful people in society to desist from using their affluence and power to make the lives of their subjects miserable as they might never know what tomorrow holds for them. In the play, the Minister of Communication dismisses Ali for no apparent reason; he however ends in Ali Dondo’s house to find shelter.

2.9.2 Playwriting and Illegal Mining

Plays can serve as effective tools in solving the problem of children in the illegal mines and bring about the change society needs. The ILO after implementing several policies and projects has come to the realisation that drama is the tool that can be used to help reach their goals. The organisation (2007, p. 5) states that drama “creates a strong platform for community integration and awareness-raising. According to the ILO (2002, p. 7), drama “provides a unique gateway to learning and affords a dimension of knowledge that is otherwise inaccessible”
In view of this, the ILO (2002, p. 2) resorted to using plays to help in the “developmental process” of shaping the children’s self-esteem in society. The organisation structured a project under the theme “Supporting children’s rights through education, the arts and the media” otherwise known as “SCREAM”. The aim of the project was to develop and perform a play on children who worked in precarious situations as the illegal mines (ILO 2002, p. 1). Children were put into groups and each child was made to enact his or her experience to represent the realistic situation. ILO (2002, p. 6) adopted the roleplaying technique because they believed that “role playing takes the emotional and personalization processes to a new level”. Additionally, “through their dramatic enactment, young people will be given the means to express the emotions that have been aroused throughout the pedagogical process” (p. 6). After going through some techniques, the team came out with a play titled *The Other Side of Life*. The play discussed the difficult conditions under which children worked in places like the quarries, agriculture and the illegal mines.

In 2009, the ILO adopted the technique of educating communities about child work in life threatening areas through entertainment. This project was done in India. In accomplishing their aim, they sought the help of a National Project Coordinator and a playwright called Mahesh. Mahesh understands that the best way to get people in a community to understand the plight of children who work in hazardous communities is to reach out to them through plays. It was not a surprise to Mahesh when the plays attracted members in the community. He recalls that “For a few hours, the pain of poverty is replaced by the magic of performance … [which] has a serious message for the audience”. The plays were rehearsed frequently and performed from one village to the other. Mahesh plays carried the simple message to ask parents and guardians “to keep their children in schools” (2009). In each year, hundreds of plays are staged with the help of a training manual designed for the actors and a total of about two hundred thousand people (200,000) come to see the play. During the report by ILO
(2009), Sanjiv Kumar is quoted to have stressed that “the themes are something that is taken from their life. And they see it as real stories that are being depicted. It is not something that is in Bollywood films. It is something that is very dear to their heart and they immediately understand that” (p.1)

In addition to the above dramatic pieces, Kadoma Chakari, a town in Zimbabwe was very effective in illegal gold mining; however, the use of mercury during the mining process threatened the lives of the people, especially the children. In spite of the numerous conferences held in the town to manage the risk involved in the usage of mercury, the situation worsened. They therefore resorted to the use of drama for a solution (Metcalf 2008, p.1). The play was titled Nakai and it sought to entertain and educate the community on the adverse effect of mercury on children. The enactment of the theatrical piece yielded results as people never forgot the story and the people that played it. Metcalf (2008, p.1) concluded after Nakai was staged that “Drama can be used as a means to ensure horizontal communication between donors and project beneficiaries if it is used to stimulate discussions that give communities a real voice in developmental programs”

2.10 Conclusion

The issue of child work in the illegal mines continues to be a social problem. In spite of the laws and policies put in place to check this menace, the problem persists. The roles of TdD and playwriting in solving such social problems have been tremendous. Playwriting is intensive and requires an unusual skill. For a writer to avoid a block during the process of writing or a poorly written play, adopting a model will help bring the imagination, intuition and ideas to a successful completion of a play. Sadly, in Ghana even though projects and plays have been done on children in hazardous forms of work, little information is available
on plays relating to children in illegal mining. Gachago (2014, p. 17) addresses that a number of the dramatic pieces are centred on children in the cocoa growing areas. It is important that playwrights address social issues as delicate as children working in dangerous illegal mining sites in their dramatic works. Dramatizing such works will reach out to the masses.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

A research design helps to “span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis” (Creswell, 2008, p.3). This chapter spells out the methodological processes adopted as a playwright to help in the writing of the play, Money Stone. It also gives the plot summary and discusses the contributions that took place during its play reading, as well as some research challenges encountered during the data gathering.

3.2. Choosing a Methodological Approach

Methods are procedures used by a researcher to find information on a topic. The playwright or researcher needs to gather information on a subject matter to be able to come out with facts in his or her writing. Smiley (2005, p. 20) states that, “every playwright needs a working process, a method of developing a play from the first impulse to a completed manuscript”. The collection of data in playwriting, Smiley further explains, “contains all the ideas and pieces of information a writer gathers as possible materials for the play” (2005, p. 29).

In order to get the appropriate information, the qualitative approach is used. The qualitative method is advantageous as it gives room to be closer to the individuals within the research and to further observe and actively take part in their activities. Using the qualitative research also helps to ask more questions about what is not understood. When a researcher adopts the qualitative method, it helps to gather enough information on the subject and better understand the different facades of human nature, particularly of the several influences that lead a person to do what he or she does. All these helped to write the play Money Stone. As Dawson (2002) clarifies, the qualitative method of research “explores attitudes, behaviour and experiences
through such methods as interviews or focus groups. It attempts to get an in-depth opinion from participants”. (p. 14).

### 3.3. Sampling Technique

Choosing a particular sampling technique largely depends on the methodology the researcher uses. Dawson (2007, p. 47) defines sampling as the researcher’s ability to choose “a smaller, more manageable number of people to take part in [the] research”. For the purpose of this research, the non-random sampling technique is adopted. Purposive sampling becomes more instrumental when the researcher is able to select “information-rich cases for study in depth” (Patton, 1990, p. 169). Patton explains that the information-rich cases for study “are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research (1990, p. 169). My focus is to highlight through the play the predicament of children in the illegal mining sites as realistic as possible; there was need therefore to carefully select individuals from whom one could gather information to enrich the work.

Some children at the illegal mines were interviewed to share with the researcher their experiences and their plight. In addition to these children, other key people interviewed were adults who worked as illegal miners where children worked and those that children did not; parents whose children worked in the illegal mines and those whose children did not. Workers in the legal mining sites, anti-galamsey advocates and a traditional queen-mother were included in the sample. Some doctors in Prestea were also spoken to, and the chairman of the small-scale miners in Prestea was not left out in the sample.

These individuals were my selected focus because they had knowledge about the nature of work in the illegal mines, and the different kinds of life-threatening experiences these children go through each day at the mines. In an interview with a health practitioner in Prestea for example, I was able to find out the major kinds of health risks children are
exposed to in the mines each day. The various tales received from individuals in the sample helped with ideas to write the play.

3.4. Primary Data Collection Methods

Primary data refers to the original information the researcher receives during his or her investigation into a particular topic. Dawson (2002, p. 40) defines primary data as one which “involves the study of a subject through first hand observation and investigation”. There are several ways by which primary data can be acquired; however, for the purpose of the research, unstructured interviews and participant-observation methods were employed to solicit for information.

3.4.1. Unstructured Interviews

To have a successful research, interviews are conducted with individuals who had information about the topic of study. The unstructured interview method is appropriate because it is less formal and more interactive. This method gives room to have a deeper understanding of the plight of children in the illegal mines. Although questions are asked with the aid of an interview guide, the unstructured interview gives room for a more comfortable environment where interviewees are able to express themselves without so many inhibitions; at the same time, the interviewer is able to ask follow-up questions based on the kind of response the interviewee gives. The interview guide captures issues like the causes, effects and perceptions of child work in the illegal mines; and the answers give more insight to the problem.
3.4.2 Participant-Observation

Participant observation occurs “when the researcher becomes much more involved in the lives of the people” (Dawson, 2002, p. 32). In trying to understand the opinions of the sample interviewees concerning child work in the illegal mines, there is the need to get closer to them. The participant observation method demands that while the researcher is actively involved in the activities of his or her study population, he or she is also required to critically observe happenings. Miners were followed to tunnels to chisel rocks, crack stones, wash sand and pan for gold. These activities were done to get information and observe some occurrences at the site. Particular attention was paid to the processes involved in obtaining gold, the kind of jobs children engaged in, the number of hours these children did and their days of work. Consequently, field notes were taken about the daily events at the site and my own experiences added. There were records of a number of my interactions with them both on audio and video and pictures were also taken at the sites. However, taking into consideration the ethics of the research, anybody involved in the interview process was made to understand the purpose for the research. Permission was granted me to record happenings and take pictures.

3.5. Secondary Data

Secondary data is when the researcher makes reference to relevant already existing literature or information on a particular subject. It helps the researcher to further understand issues on the subject so that he or she is able to draw the similarities and differences in other research findings on that particular topic. Secondary data is made available in libraries in the form of books, journals, articles, reports, theses, dissertations and newspapers. Relevant information can also be accessed on the internet. Although there is much information on the internet, it is important for the researcher to look out for the reliability and credibility of the source. For
example, articles, journals and books which cannot be found in the libraries may be easily accessed on the internet.

Information was gathered from published books, journals, articles and reports from authorities in the field of study, both on the internet and from the library.

3.6. Data Analysis

Analysing data means examining it in such a manner that the researcher is able to establish the patterns and connections between information gathered and this makes it easier to draw conclusions on certain issues. As stated earlier, what was adopted was the qualitative method in gathering information on the plight of children in illegal mining. Paying particular attention to their facial expressions, their way of doing things and the answers given by individuals to a particular question enables the researcher to categorise and analyse answers from respondents to help draw conclusions.

Repeatedly listening to audio recordings of interviews conducted and watching the videos helps in the analysis process as well. Like Green et al (2007, p. 547) explains, the listening of recordings is usually the “first step in analysis” which “stimulates a process where one begins to ‘incubate’ ideas”.

3.7. Play Creation and Play Reading

The playwright has the equal task of thinking through his or her ideas before creating the play. Thinking through ideas for writing can be useful in three ways; “it saves revision time and deepens the quality of the play” (Smiley, 2005, p. 34). Thinking through the play also helps the playwright to stay focused.
3.7.1 Germinal Idea
During the playwriting lecture sessions, we were encouraged as playwrights to write on issues pertaining to society; subjects that are of concern to us. It was during one of such classes that a germinal idea was discovered- illegal mining. During readings on the area of research, I came across an article by Ernest Gyamfi (2014, pp.523-545), “The Effect of Illegal Mining on School Attendance and Academic Performance of Junior High School Students in Upper Denkyira West District of Ghana”. In the article, Gyamfi wrote that, teenagers in the Upper Denkyira West District of Ghana were missing classes because of illegal mining. As a person who has a strong liking for children, I became curious and wanted to find out why a child would prefer working in illegal mines to going to school. At this point, the germinal idea was developed. The interest lay in wanting to know why children engaged in mining activities and to what extent it negatively affected them.

3.7.2 Collection of Data
Data was collected from communities like Tarkwa, Bogoso and Prestea, illegal mining activity is a major source of employment. For close to a month, children who worked in such places were interviewed. For ethical reasons, an “overt research” is conducted where the interviewees know the purpose of the research (Dawson, 2002, p. 33). Therefore, when an interviewee is reluctant to speak, he or she is not compelled to do so. Particular attention is paid to the stories children tell during the interview sessions. Short notes are written in a journal which is included in the play.

3.7.3 Title
Giving the play a title is necessary because as stated in Chapter two (p. 35), it gives the play a focus. After listening to their stories and observing the kind of work they do, the working title
for the play is developed as *Money Stone*. The word money is associated with riches, wealth or greatness. The title is to suggest that attaining affluence is not an easy task. It projects the kind of suffering children have to go through because of material comfort.

### 3.7.4 Setting

Setting is important in a dramatic piece as it serves as a backdrop for the play. The actions of characters always take place in a particular place; not a vacuum. During the thinking through process, it was realised that setting the play in an illegal mining camp will be appropriate. This is because; the various activities performed by these illegal miners are done in their mining camps. Their lives are built in and around the various mining camps.

### 3.7.5 Character building

Character building is another step taken during the play creation process. Every creative piece tells a story about people. In view of this, characters in the play were given names related to individuals in real life. Since children came from across the country to work in the illegal mining sites, it was decided that names that were to be given to these characters should be a reflection of people with different ethnic groups. Naming characters made each person distinct. In addition to the names; the ages, educational and social backgrounds of the characters are also established thereby creating a clash between individuals fighting fighting for a common goal. The play is centred round four male children who worked under strict supervision- Abu, Ebo, Asante and Lawal.

### 3.7.6 Scenario Building

Building scenarios was another way of having the structure of the play. Scenario building is typically the first stage in shaping a story. The scenario includes a working title which is
Money Stone, the names of the characters in the play, the setting and sequence of events. The actions in each scene were described together with the characters involved. This is usually a method a playwright adopts to prevent a writer’s block. During the writing process, new ideas evolved and the outline was tempered with but it did not affect the central message of the play. The entrances and exits of characters in the play were also indicated in the scenario.

After a month and a half of writing, the first draft of the play was ready and it was forwarded to the supervisors for constructive criticisms. Some colleagues also made suggestions after reading. After the changes were effected, the play was ready on the 13th of April, 2015 for reading three days later. The close auditioning method of casting was used. People present at the reading took up roles.

3.7.7 Plot Summary of the play Money Stone

Money stone is set in an illegal mining (galamsey) site belonging to a Baron, somewhere in Himan, a suburb of Prestea. In the site are four boys, Ebo (seventeen years), Abu (fifteen years), Asante (fifteen years) and Lawal (twelve years). In addition to these boys is Kwame B (a young man in his early thirties). These workers are all supervised by Atta K. who in turn accounts to the Baron. These children are exposed to life-threatening incidents at the mine like injuries and sicknesses but refuse to quit working because their lives depend on it. The children work for various reasons; Ebo was a student in a Senior High School but he drops out of school to work in the mine in a bid to satisfy his girlfriend (Pencil) financially. He leaves home when his father disapproves of his decision. His girlfriend occasionally comes to the mine for money. Lawal, on the other hand, is a new boy in the mine. He comes from a polygamous home and he is the tenth of twelve children. He decides to make some money for himself at the mine when his parents could no longer cater for him. Similar to that of Lawal, Abu is a complete illiterate who comes from a broken home. With no support from parents,
he ends up in the mine to earn a living. Asante is a boy who never finds the mine an interesting place to live and work. Daily, he expresses his fear and insecurity of working in the mine. However, he finds himself in the mine as a result of the debt his late father owed the Baron. Circumstances leave him with no choice but to work to pay for the debt. These children go through the hardship of being in the mine, spending so many hours engaging in the various processes while the Baron gets a major percentage of the money they make. This irresponsible behaviour of the Baron leads him to rape Muni (a food vendor). As a result, he ends up in the grip of the police together with Atta K. As the children express their joy of leaving the mine, Ebo stays alone at the site. He sits by the Chang fen (a machine used for crushing stones) and expresses hope of becoming successful in the illegal mining site.

3.7.8 Play Reading Discussion

Having a play read after the first draft is important in several ways. The playwright is able to envisage how the play would look on stage. Also, the playwright can also identify the loopholes or loose ends in the play during play reading session. It is during the play reading session that the playwright examines how well he or she has been able to effectively use dramatic elements in the story. In this light, the play, *Money Stone*, was read.

*Money stone* was read on 16th April, 2015 at the Efua Sutherland Drama Studio, Legon. The time was 3:17pm. Present were two supervisors and a lecturer from the University of Cape Coast; the cast and some colleagues. The play reading lasted for an hour and twenty two minutes after which discussions followed.

During the discussion of the play, I was commended for use of dialogue. I was also praised for the effective portrayal of the plight of children in *Money Stone* especially bringing to light
my concerns. There were however some few comments that were meant to help me shape the play.

One suggestion was to change the title of the play from *The Money Stone* to *Money Stone*. Another suggestion was to develop the idea of the children stealing gold. Further developing the idea would portray the hardship of the children which leaves them no option than to steal. It will further throw light on some of the bad habits they learn when faced with challenges in the site. Also, I was advised to intensify the awareness of chiefs being involved in the illegal mining business. The last comment was to limit the plights of the children to one or two instead of discussing them all.

All the suggestions were useful except the last. I was concerned with projecting the many plights of children in the illegal mining and so my concerns were based on their health, education, working conditions and the social vices they tended to learn from the adults. The issues concerning their plight could not be limited.

3.8. Research Challenges

During the process of data gathering, a major challenge encountered at the site was getting children to interview. Some fled when permission was sought to interview them while others were simply unwelcoming. This was because they felt the researcher was either a secret detective or a worker of a television station. Some miners spoke about their unpleasant experience of giving out information to people who turned to be police officers and journalists. That greatly affected their work as some miners were arrested and other properties destroyed. This made me spend more time in the mines than planned.
Finding parents to accept to be interviewed, especially those whose children worked in the illegal mines was another challenge. A number of these parents were defensive as they thought the research was geared towards condemning their actions. As a result, they were often miles away from the site.

Lastly, the indigenes in the three communities- Tarkwa, Bogoso and Prestea, spoke the *Fante* language. I on the other hand spoke *Akwapim*. Even though these two languages are basically Akan, most miners would not open up because they did not consider me a part of them.

### 3.9. Conclusion

In spite of the challenges encountered during the data collection process, adopting the qualitative method helped in finding the answers needed. Using the participant-observation method, for example, helped to actively participate in several activities in the site. It was quite advantageous to get closer to the interviewees. It also helped to make observations and to find what the plight of these children were in order to craft the play. Again, adopting Smiley’s model of writing a play provided a systematic approach to writing. The thinking through exercise which Smiley suggests was very helpful as it made the writing of the dialogue easier.
CHAPTER FOUR

DATA AND PLAY ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of how unstructured interviews and participant observation have been used to gather data on the field. The qualitative method was adopted in assessing the data gathered. Therefore, information gathered in the descriptive form helped in the writing of the play, *Money Stone*. Analysis was done on the play to explain how its title, setting and characters helped in achieving the objectives of the study. Most importantly, I discussed how my concerns regarding children in the illegal mines were portrayed in my play. The form and style of *Money Stone* was also discussed.

4.2 Information Gathered (Findings)

Before the writing of *Money Stone*, data was gathered from people who had information on children working in the illegal mines. My sample comprised parents, illegal miners, legal miners, anti-galamsey advocates, health practitioners, a traditional ruler and illegal child miners. The instruments used to acquire information were unstructured interviews and participant observation.

4.2.1 Unstructured Interviews

The use of unstructured interviews helped me acquire knowledge on children in illegal mines. On the field, various views about children who worked in the artisanal mines were received. During a visit to one of the illegal mining camps in Tarkwa, it was discovered that only adults worked there. In an interview with Solomon, I found out that children did not work in his
camp because he and his colleagues were particularly concerned with child education, and their greatest wish was to see children becoming prominent people in society. They therefore encouraged children to focus on their education instead of opting to work in illegal mines. He further explained that usually children indulged in that activity because of the support they gained from their relatives to keep earning money and be independent. In the beginning, they either worked with a boss or a family member. They later gained much experience and became independent. It was at their independent stage that their problems began. When children began to fend for themselves and their families, they tend to lack parental control. Solomon held the view that he would never allow any of his children to get involved in that activity because of the risk involved, but instead would like to see them gain steady jobs (November 2014, personal interview).

Unfortunately, not every parent or guardian shared Solomon’s view. Barnie (December, 2014, personal interview) was responsible for the active involvement of his three nephews in an illegal mine in Himan. According to him, children should learn to be responsible at a very tender age to enable them to be strong enough to weather any challenge that came their way in future. He was also of the view that having your child trained in school was a waste of time because after education, the child would still be working for money. Barnie believed children could make enough money working in the illegal mines rather than going to school. However, if any of his nephews chose to go to school, he was so certain he would not be the benefactor. After the interview with Barnie, I thought of him as ignorant rather than mean. It was perceived that he probably was so naive about the long-term advantage of having formal education in society. Sadly, he would not change his opinion on the matter. Fortunately, one of Barnie’s nephews by name Kwame was interviewed and this was what he had to say:

I started working here when I was nine years and I am now fourteen years old. I was introduced into this job
by my uncle. I am here to raise money for school expenses. The work is difficult and I am always sick. My back aches most of the time and my head aches as well. Every evening after work, I take soda water to energize me and cleanse my system. My uncle says soda water is medicine that can cure malaria and cough. I am the last born of my parents but I am responsible for their upkeep. In a day, I can earn fifty cedis for washing sand and carrying load. I do not go to the tunnels to chisel rocks (December, 2014, personal interview).

Following Kwame’s interview, a few children were consulted to share their experiences. This was to help know their daily challenges, their fears and their concerns. That way, *Money Stone* would be a true reflection of the daily predicament of the child.

In Bondai, another small town in Prestea, little Abeiku was spotted in an illegal mining camp. He was thirteen years of age and a school-going child. He disclosed the following:

I close from school around two thirty and go straight to the mines to work. I also work during weekends. Although I try to combine school with illegal mining, I am always tired. I am working because I need money for my mother. The job is lucrative as I can earn about twenty Ghana cedis after a day’s work. I hope to stop working here and become a doctor one day (December 2014, personal interview).
After the conversations with Abeiku, Kwame and other children of the same predicament, it was realised that these children constantly battled with the emotional trauma of shouldering responsibilities bigger than they could carry. A few of the children knew that working in the illegal mines was not safe but they were left with no other choice. As a result, they assumed elderly roles very quickly to be able to adjust to the situation. This affected them in aspects of their education and health. Also, they were exposed to all sorts of social vices. Sadly, they did not have any financial support from anywhere while working in the mines; neither were they fairly paid after working hard.

Some health practitioners in the Prestea hospital were interviewed to know some of the health issues related to working in the illegal mines. These doctors expressed worry about the rate at which these miners fell sick, especially after the use of mercury but were not willing to learn from the mistakes of others. Although a number of these miners died and others were educated on how to keep themselves safe in the mines, mortal cases increased by the minute. During the interview, the primary concern of the doctor was the miner’s use of mercury with bare hands. He further explained that mercury was made of poisonous metals which could eat into the body. The miners unconsciously took in poison when they ate and when they fell sick, they attributed their sickness to malaria. Instead of going for prescribed medical treatments at the hospital, they (the miners) resorted to taking pain killers which killed them eventually.

After interviewing various people, it was concluded that the issues of child work in the illegal mining sites were real in society and, if nothing was done about it, a lot of potential future leaders would be lost to illiteracy. Although a number of them expressed their desire to be educated, they would not want to forgo working on the sites either. Combining work in the illegal mines and school was a stressful venture which eventually would lead an individual to prefer one to the other.
4.2.2 Participant Observation

Direct participation in activities in the mines was very instrumental in getting information from my sample population. In the beginning, I followed some miners to the tunnel and helped chisel rocks. Getting involved enlightened me on the risks illegal miners, especially children faced. There was total darkness in spite of the availability of the head and torch lights in the tunnel. It was observed that the tunnel could also serve as an abode for very harmful reptiles like snakes to hide and cause harm to miners. Also, miners used small tools like hammers and chisels to create holes in the tunnel. The tools helped them take out rocks easily. However, miners usually spent the whole of the night in trying to create these holes. That was the reason they injured themselves and were daily exposed to accidents which, in severe cases led to death. Nevertheless, only a small percentage of children were found working in the tunnels compared to the other types of work in the mines.

Furthermore, it was noticed that in some illegal mining sites, children were not allowed to work. In places where children were found working, however dangerous that place looked, their guardians were partially responsible for that. Some guardians did not care so much about the future of their children. For various reasons, parents sat at home while they waited for their wards to return home with some money to feed on. On an occasion while helping a child with washing sand on the sluice box, he opened up and said his mother did not really care about how illegal mining was affecting him but how much he brought home. The active participation in illegal mines really brought miners close and a number of them were not shy to tell their stories. I witnessed on a number of occasions how parents were given payments by bosses for work done by their wards during the day.

During the participatory observation period, the responses given during interviews were compared and analysed with that of the practical issues on the ground. For example, during
an interview with some adults in a particular mine in Bondai, the impression given was that children were not allowed to work except on weekdays. While continuing to observe, it was noticed that the information given earlier was not entirely true. I engaged one child during a working day on that particular mining site while assisting with carrying water and cracking stones. This boy revealed how he worked every day with his friends in the mines to make a living. He also stated that they went to school only when they had the means. Whenever he did not go to school, he worked with some adults in the mines. The decision to choose which of the stories was the truth was quite challenging. Later, the story of the boy was believed because he was seen working more than once on a school going day. It was realised that perhaps these adults could not tell the truth because they did not want to appear irresponsible.

Lastly, I observed from their way of doing things that illegal miners were not ignorant of the fact that their activities were illegal. Anytime I visited a new illegal mining site, miners were always defensive and verbally abusive and no matter how well things were explained to them, there would still be one or two people who maintained their stand of not giving out any kind of information. Their defensive attitude was basically because they nursed the suspicion that I was either a police inspector who wanted to arrest them for their illegal acts or that I was trying to capture their activities for a documentary. After speaking to one miner, he confessed that various illegal mining sites had experienced traumatic issues with the police and other security agents because of their activities. Even though miners were aware of their illegal activities, they found it extremely difficult to stop because it served as their major source of income.
4.3 Play Analysis

Analysing a play is a necessary step towards getting a deeper understanding of the text. This helps the reader to understand the message the playwright is driving home. Pritner (2005, p. 1) stresses that, to analyse “is the process of identifying separate elements of the play”. He further states that analysing “guides in the exploration of a play’s complexities” (2005, p. 1). To be able to make effective analysis of a play text, Pritner posits that the process is “purposeful, systematic [and] interpretative” (2002; p. 2). Analysis of the play will be closely connected with the objectives of study and the model adopted in writing the play. Analysis will be made on the title, setting and characterisation. Similarly, my concerns as a playwright for the plight of children in illegal mining will be examined in addition to the form and style of Money Stone.

4.3.1 Synopsis of the play Money Stone

Money Stone hinges on the kind of horrifying experiences children go through in illegal mines. It also touches on some social vices they learn from the mines. There are four major characters: Ebo, Abu, Lawal and Asante. Despite the fact that working in the mines provides a source of income for them, the working conditions affect their health and education. It also corruptions good morals. They continue to nurse the hope that things would get better even when it does not. Lawal becomes sick from the constant inhalation of dust and usage of mercury and Ebo aspires to be a flirt at such tender age. Abu wishes to be in school but equally needs to work to get money. However, working in the illegal mines demands much time as schooling and he is unable to combine. The fourth boy, Asante works to pay a debt incurred by his late father. He is never happy in the mines. Whenever there are fearful stories of accidents in the mines, he is the first to express fear.
4.3.2 Choosing a title for the play

Choosing a title for any dramatic piece is an important decision the writer takes in that the title “is the first word or set of words the reader reads …and it has to be true to the essence, to the soul of the book” (Goodman 2008, pp. 77-81). Titles catch the interest of the reader and they are usually powerful tools that serve as publicity to attract audience to the theatre.

The title of the play, Money Stone, was conceived while data gathering in the field was on going. Illegal miners could spend the week digging, crushing and washing but eventually be disappointed at how hard they had worked for the little quantity of gold they had obtained. In the field, some illegal miners admitted that the work was purely manual and very difficult. After taking part in all the processes of working, I thought that the work was too stressful for the amount of gold they obtained. I therefore came out with the title Money Stone. Money stone in the local Akan dialect means Sika boɔ. Money stone is associated with gold, wealth and prosperity. Therefore using Money Stone as my title was about wealth and gold; at the same time discussing the challenges and the extent to which individuals would go to acquire it.

4.3.3 Setting

Setting is very essential in every piece of drama in that apart from the fact that it establishes the place and time, setting “may [also] serve … as the physical background of a story or it may be used to establish a particular atmosphere, which in turn contributes to the plot and theme of the story” (Sam 2002, p. 63).

The larger setting of the play, Money Stone, is Prestea, a town in the Western Region of Ghana. The immediate setting, where all actions in the play take place, is in an illegal mining site belonging to a baron in Himan, a suburb of Prestea. Choosing to set the play in an illegal
mining site is because it is in that place that children spend the most of their time working. The play gives a vivid description of the kind of things that are peculiar to illegal mining sites. The opening scene of the play (Sc. 1, p. 120) reveals the following:

The action takes place in the galamsey site of the BARON. There are three doors on the site- upstage right; upstage centre and upstage left. There is a table and a chair downstage left. A Chang fen machine is downstage right. A sluice box and a water hole used for washing are beside the Chang fen. There is a small heap of sand by the sluice box. On the centre stage are rocks of all sizes. Beside these rocks are tools such as hammers, shovels and chisels. A folded mat leans at a corner upstage right.

Establishing the setting also creates the mood in the play. Whenever these children wake to find themselves in the mines, it creates some form of panic as they are always reminded of the fact that they are in the mines, a place they are forced to put up their best. In Scene 9 (pp. 215-216), although the children are working on the site, there is tension as seen in the following excerpt:

EBO

Atta K told him about it that very day. KB death does not bother him at all. By tomorrow, he will have somebody else working for him.

ATTA K raises his head to see the boys talking.

ATTA K

Hey Ebo, keep quiet before I get there!

ASANTE

(Whispering) We are in trouble today.

ABU

We die finished.

EBO

75
Sorry boss. We are not talking sir!

ATTA K

I won’t spare any of your nonsense today. Do you understand? (Notices LAWAL lying on ABU’s lap) Why are you crying LAWAL?

EBO

Nothing sir. He is still sick.

ATTA K

You have been sick a very long time. If you cannot do the job, I can find somebody to replace you while you leave.

EBO

Sorry boss. He will work. He –

ATTA K

Can this boy no longer answer questions for himself? Do not make me talk unnecessarily. I am mourning my friend.

EBO

Yes sir! Sorry sir.

ATTA K

If I ever see you stupid boys not working, you will eventually know that you are in the mines.

ASANTE

Sorry sir!.

ATTA K

And you Lawal, decide now. Would you work or you would quit?

LAWAL

I will work sir.

ATTA K

Good. Let me see you do it now?
From the above excerpt, it is evident that the children become unhappy once they are on the site with their supervisor who gives them little or no room to have some rest. Consequently, they become timid and are unable to express their own views.

### 4.3.4 Characterisation

When analysing plays, it is very important for the reader or audience to “understand the world in which the characters live: the information they share, the time and place in which they live, the social systems that affect them, and other cultural factors that influence their world” (Pritner 2005, p. 12). Characterisation, according to Sam (2002, p. 14), is “the personality a character displays” to which Seger adds; “characters like people, have a kind of core personality that defines who they are and gives us expectations about how they will act” (1990, p. 29).

Building characters is very essential in every dramatic piece, because these characters will aid in conveying the thematic message of the playwright. In *Money Stone*, creating characters with “specific set of attitudes and experiences” (Seger 1990, p. 48) helped bring out the concern of the playwright regarding the troubles children encounter in the illegal mines. Twelve characters move the plot of the play. These characters are the Baron, Atta K, Kwame B (KB), Ebo, Abu, Asante, Lawal, Pencil and Muni, Mallam Musah, Inspector and Sergeant.

**Baron**

The Baron is a man in his early forties. He is also the owner of the illegal mines in which Ebo and his friends work. Baron is noted to be serious minded, especially on issues relating to his business and money. All his actions and statements gear towards his making of more money. For example, when he meets Lawal for the first time on the site, he (Baron) tells Lawal; “…in the mines, you must work hard. I always need money so I do not entertain lazy boys here”
The presence of the Baron in the mines intimidates the children. Whenever they are playing around and they hear the sound of his car horn, they quickly rush to their duty post. An excerpt from the play explains it all:

**LAWAL**

I thought this man was going to lift my weak body and throw me into the air. I was so afraid.

**ABU**

Herh, me too. Im face dey look fear fear and my heart dey jump pum pum pum pum.

**EBO**

Thank God he was in a good mood today. We were shaking so much but he did not even notice we had not been working much today.

**ABU**

He no see things because of girl enjoyment for im side. I remember say he dey talk say he do somtin

(Sc 4, pp. 147)

In spite of the strict nature of the Baron, he is addicted to certain bad habits among which are smoking, drinking and especially womanizing. Usually, he enters the mine with a cigarette in his mouth and keeps an unkempt hair. Additionally, he drinks alcohol to the extent of storing them in his room in the site. He orders Ebo to get the drink for him when he visits the site one day in the company of a lady. The attitude of the Baron which bothers everybody around him, especially the children in the site, is the rate at which he changes ladies. Even though none of the children knows the truth about his back story, there is a rumour in the community that his wife separated from him as a result of poverty. This makes him bitter and that probably explains why he treats women in such awful manner. The Baron goes to bed with
almost every lady he sees, and the conversations these children engage in tell the extent to which the Baron takes women:

LAWAL
How many girlfriends does the Baron have?

ASANTE
Shhh! Let your voices go down I beg! I do not want to get into trouble today.

ABU
Make you no worry, He no go hear fii.

LAWAL
How can a man treat a girl this way?

EBO
This is not the first time he is treating a girl like this. He will do the same thing even if the girl was your sister.

(Sc 6, pp. 174-175)

Not only does the Baron flirt with the girls he chases, he disrespects each one of them. He sacks Pencil from the mine after having an affair with her and giving her money to solve her problems. As if that is not enough, his insatiable desire for women leads him to rape Muni, a food vendor. He comes out from his room zipping his trousers and buttoning his shirts and storms outside leaving her uncared for. When Atta K. confronts him about the situation, he tells him:
ATTA K

But sir, the girl said you raped her.

BARON

Is that any news at all? What is so special about her anyway? I even regret taking her to my bed. She is not even a beautiful girl. Three days ago, she came to my house with her uncle who said that I had to pay a sum of seven hundred Ghana cedis for raping her. I was willing to cooperate so I decided to pay a hundred Ghana cedis.

(Sc. 9, p. 218)

When Muni’s uncle confronts him with the same rape issue, the Baron get pretty much upset and warns him “… Old man, if you don’t want me to beat you, you will run as fast as your legs would carry you. I gave you an offer, and if you do not want it, there is nothing I can do” (Sc. 9, p. 224).

The above examples show the extent to which the Baron disregards others, especially women. Despite the bad attitudes displayed by the Baron, he portrays some good behaviour. He welcomes Lawal into the mines and explains to him thus, “… if you do not have money for food before your pay comes, I can give you money which will be deducted from your salary” (Sc. 4, p. 146-147). Also, despite the fact that Asante works in his mine to pay for a debt, the Baron gives him money sometimes to fend for himself.
Atta K

Atta K. is popularly referred to as RM (Right Man) because he supervises most of the work in the mines and accounts to the Baron. He is a man in his early thirties. Although not much is said about his past, he is believed to be a very strict person, ensuring that the workers are always on their toes. Just as the Baron expects money to be accounted to him, Atta K. will do anything to make sure that he gets gold by the end of each day in order not to disappoint the Baron. There are a number of occasions when he becomes angry, such as finding the boys idle and he finds ways to discipline them. Below is an excerpt (Sc. 6, pp. 188-191) from the play showing Atta K’s disciplinary attitude:

ATTA K enters from downstage left. He notices ABU sleeping and moves to his direction.

ATTA K

Wake up lazy boy. (ABU shouts when ATTA K hits his wounded hand). I have told you boys to stop being lazy and work. If you cannot do the job, just tell me and I will hire somebody who is ready to work.

EBO

Atta K, he just had an accident. His right hand is deeply affected.

ATTA K

Is that the reason he has chosen not to make any money today? Listen, you better get busy before I change my mood. (He pats ABU on the wounded hand which makes him cry)

ATTA K

I will beat you some more if you do not wake up and find something profitable to do.
(Still in pain, ABU manages to sit on the bed and ATTA K looks around) How come there are only three of you? Where is the fourth boy?

EBO

He went to look for ointment for ABU.

ATTA K

He left the site to look for medicine?

LAWAL

Yes sir, from any of the sites around. Abu is very sick. All his blood came out today.

ATTA K

(He sits on the BARON’s chair). Ebo, how much gold have you made?

EBO

Hmm. Nothing boss.

ATTA K

Have you been playing with my business?

EBO

I have been working boss.

ATTA K

Show me what you have for your hard work.

EBO

Atta K, we do not have any gold yet but we have not been playing with the work at all. We were working and working and working until ABU had the accident and
he was bleeding and bleeding and bleeding.

ATTA K
What will I tell the Baron today?

LAWAL
We will work sir. You will get gold today.

ATTA K
Ebo come and kneel beside me. You will only get up if you explain to me why you did not work today.

EBO
I am very sorry boss. It was because of ABU’s accident o.

LAWAL
Oh boss, we-

ATTA K
You, come and kneel beside Ebo.

LAWAL
Sir-

ATTA K
Get on your knees before I change my mood! (Slowly, they get on their knees). I always tell you boys that there is no time to play in galamsey sites. When the Baron comes this evening, I have to see him with some gold ready for the market; not empty hands. Do you know what he will say? I cannot take care of children like you and that is an insult to me.

EBO
Forgive us boss. Please release us so that -
ATTA K

If I were you, I will shut up. Are you the one to teach me wisdom? (Just then, ASANTE walks in). Now, here comes the hero of the day.

ASANTE

Good afternoon boss.

ATTA K

Were you able to get the ointment for his wound?

ASANTE

Yes sir. It is in this rubber bag.

ATTA K

Good boy. So, apart from saving people from trouble, what have you been doing since morning?

ASANTE

(ASANTE stares at the others) I was working on the field until ABU had an accident.

ATTA K

ABU, thank God you fell sick. At least, it has saved your friends from trouble. Now, before I change my mood, get to work.

ALL

Yes boss.

They hurriedly get to work. ABU is still sitting on the mat while LAWAL and ASANTE crack the stones. EBO starts the Chang fen. As the noise of the machine is heard, LIGHTS FADE.

Apart from his disciplinarian attitude, Atta K. is very loyal to the Baron even to the extent of lying to the police about his presence at the site. He is not ignorant of the fact that operating a
mine without a license and keeping the children in hazardous work are against the law. This is evident when after the inspector demands for his license, he begins to stammer while finding a suitable lie to give the Inspector; “Well... errh... our license is not here... it is with the Baron” (Sc. 9, p. 223). He also denies that the children work with him in the illegal mine. This was all in a bid to prevent the Baron and himself from landing in trouble with the police.

Kwame Bonsu (KB)
He is a worker at the Baron’s illegal mining site. He is in his mid-thirties and popularly known as KB. Kwame Bonsu lives in Accra with his wife and children until he lost his job and ended up in the mines. He serves as an elder brother to the children who work with him and diligently carries out his duties in the mines as expected of him. Even after he had been kept in custody by the police and tortured, he decided to press on in order to survive and cater for his family. KB represents those adults in the illegal mines who care for the children they work with, but have no alternative means of helping them with their dreams and aspirations. As a result, these adults will do anything to protect them at work. In the mines, KB is very patient with the boys, especially Lawal who is new on the site and constantly tells Ebo to be patient with him. Anytime Muni comes in to sell, he will pay for those children who do not have money for the food.

KB earned the respect of the children because of the way he treats them and they listen very carefully to him whenever he gives them pieces of advice. KB is the kind of man who usually works outside the mining site. It is his habit to help Atta K with work in the tunnel. It is during one of his working days in the tunnel that a rock falls on his head; killing him instantly. His death comes as a shock to the boys who love him very much. It is therefore not surprising when Asante laments over his death. “Oh! Why do bad things happen to good
people? This is bad news. I cannot believe it too. It all happened like a dream. Oh KB! Who will listen to us when we are sad? (Sc. 8, p. 206).

Ebo

Ebo is a seventeen year old Fante boy. Even though he comes from a responsible home, his decision to work in the mines is because he does not want to lose the love of his life, Pencil. Ebo is one of the boys who see working in the mines as an attractive way of making money. It is therefore his aspiration to establish a big illegal mining site in his community one day. In the play, he usually tells his friends, “The only thing that matters to me is how I am going to be a boss very soon; that is when I will do things just the way I want them” (Sc. 1, p. 124). Ebo’s dream of becoming a boss in the near future leads him to developing a domineering attitude which irritates his colleagues sometimes. In addition to his overbearing attitude, he is impatient with his colleagues in decision-making; especially with Lawal whom he (Ebo) believes is a block head.

The only thing that makes Ebo friendly and relaxed is his love life. Anytime he sees his girlfriend, Pencil, in the mining site, he becomes a loveable person no matter how angry he may have been earlier. An example of this is seen when Ebo is busily working with his colleagues and Pencil comes in. Immediately, he stops whatever he is doing and begins to shower her with praise names such as, “My darling Aba, my don lili lali, my lily sal. You should have told me you were coming. Oh how I missed you. Come here darling”(Sc. 6, p. 168). Ebo’s attitude towards his girlfriend marvels his friends and Abu teases him a lot, comparing his relationship to that of the cat and mouse. In (Sc. 6, p. 177-178), Ebo finally opens up to his friends about his love life which exposes another soft spot of his. Ebo tells his friends how love blindfolded him even to the extent of dropping out of school to work and
support his girlfriend against the wishes of his father. He regrets the decision he took years ago as the girl he helped jilted him for other men. Despite the fact that Ebo admires being recognised and respected, his love for women is what brings him a gradual destruction.

Abu

Abu is a young, fifteen-year old boy from the North. He comes from a broken home but it is his desire to gain money to look after his mother and sister that brings him to the mines. Although a complete illiterate, he has such self-confidence that he is the only person who can stand up to Ebo’s bossy attitude. In spite of the threats, Abu does not succumb to Ebo, instead he encourages him to go ahead to report the incidence to Atta K. He tells Ebo, “I no afraid kraaa. I dey tell Masita my part. Why? You’s got brain pass me?” (Sc. 1, p. 127). Abu is one of the hardworking boys in the mine. Unlike Ebo who would love to work hard to impress Atta K, Abu works with or without the presence of Atta K. When his supervisor was away from work one day, he wakes his friends up and tells them, “Today we no work plenty, so we no go rest” (Sc. 5, p. 150). When his friends accuse him of being an illiterate, he continues to make his point “I no regret what I do. Walahi! This have make you get up from the bed inside. When boss come, he tell us say we go sleep? You be bad small boss paaa” (Sc. 5, p. 151).

He is determined to go to school. Although circumstances have not allowed him the opportunity, he constantly talks about his ambition to go to school.

Asante

Asante is a very quiet boy in Baron’s illegal mining site. He is about the same age as Abu. As his name suggests, he comes from Ashanti Region but lives in the Western part of Ghana.
Asante is a reflection of children who work in the mines to pay someone else’s debt. Daily, he expresses his disinterest in working in the mines. Asante minds his own business in the mines and contributes little to the happenings at the site probably because he always considers himself a slave. However, he cares so much about his friends. For instance, when Abu had an accident, he is the one who ran from the mines to get him ointment for the wound. Whenever he hears unfortunate incidents that happen to other people who work in the mines, they frighten him and make him want to leave but the unfortunate thing is that he does not know how long he will be working for the Baron. When the Baron is finally arrested with Atta K, he cannot help but scream, “I am freeeee! so free! free at last!” (Sc 9, p. 225).

Lawal

Lawal is the youngest of the boys in the mines. He is a twelve-year old boy from the Northern Region of Ghana and comes from a polygamous family. He loves to sing and dance. Lawal is the tenth of twelve children, and he represents children who are driven to the mines because of poverty.

When Atta K. brings him initially to the mines, he has no idea about illegal mining and the kinds of processes involved in it. When he is first given the task of cracking stones which according to the Baron “is just a little of what is expected of [him]” (Sc. 4, p. 145). However, when after some days Lawal gets acquainted to the site, he becomes smarter and proposes that they steal gold. He tells Asante, “… one needs to be very smart in the mines, if not, you get cheated in everything” (Sc. 5, p. 160). His persistent attitude is what makes his friends decide to steal gold for the first time.
Pencil

Pencil is a sixteen-year old senior high school student. She is a typical example of girls in society who would do anything to get money from the workers in the illegal mines. In the play, she is the girl friend to Ebo. Whenever Pencil comes to see Ebo, it is because she needs money from him. Ebo cautions her as she was becoming a spendthrift, but she defends herself by saying “Ebo, I am tired of requesting for money before I get it. Besides, fifty Ghana cedis is not the kind of money I am looking for. Ebo, take a good look at me, look at me very well, do you think I can survive with that chicken feed you have been giving me?” (Sc. 6, p. 169-170). She even goes further to tell him in Scene Six (p. 170) that “Now that you know we don’t belong to the same class, kindly excuse me. I have to see Baron. He has the money”.

Pencil is a girl who depends on her friends to make decisions. Through Ebo’s back story, it is clear that she started demanding money because of what her friends were telling her. She cautions him to make more money because she cannot live with a poor man. She is not able to say exactly what she needs money for, instead she says, “I need money for so many things”. Due to peer pressure, she changes her name from Aba to Pencil. As a result, she gets offended whenever Ebo refers to her as Aba. One day on her visit to the site, Pencil asks Ebo after his calling her Aba; “[…] why do you call me by that native, underdeveloped name? My name is Pencil. That’s what every modern girl or boy calls me so you had better stick to that” (Sc. 6, p. 168).

Eventually, Pencil rejects Ebo for Baron with the excuse that he (Ebo) is poor. Confidently, she tells Ebo, “Well, I am not here because of your money so you do not have to act anymore. I need to see the Baron. That is where the money is” (Sc. 6, p. 169). Nothing Ebo says or does changes her mind until the Baron, her so-called sweetheart, abandons her.
Muni

As her name suggests, Muni is a young Northern food vendor. Each day, she moves from one illegal mining site to another to sell her tasty boiled yam and garden egg stew. Although she is only fifteen years of age, Muni has a positive attitude in serving her customers. She is always cheerful and has the right words to attract others to buy her food.

Muni always smiles at the Baron whenever he smiles at her but she does not realise that he (Baron) has something up his sleeves. Later in the play, the Baron takes advantage of her innocent looks and rapes her when they are left alone at the illegal mining site. Her naivety is further exposed during her conversation with the boys after she had been raped;

ASANTE
Not this time. You have to report this MUNI.

EBO
That’s right. MUNI, you cannot keep quiet about it. The Baron must be punished for his wicked act.

MUNI
Nobody will listen to me. He said I will die if I told anybody and I don’t want to die.

EBO
Nothing will happen to you. Go home and tell somebody about it.

MUNI
No! Something will happen to me. The man said I will die.

ASANTE
Listen to me MUNI, you do not have to keep quiet.

(Sc. 8, pp. 212-213)
Finally, she gathers courage to report the incident to her uncle who persists until the Baron is finally arrested.

Mallam Musah

Mallam Musah is an old man in his sixties and an uncle to Muni. He is Muni’s guardian who daily sees to her moving from one illegal mine to the other to sell food. After hearing of his niece’s rape case, he confronts the Baron and convinces him to pay an amount of seven hundred Ghana cedis to seal the matter. He however gets offended when the Baron refuses to pay the said sum because he feels it is rather on the high side. Out of displeasure, Mallam Musah reports the matter to the police and he becomes restless until the police take action and arrest the Baron and his accomplice Atta K.

Inspector

He is very meticulous in the execution of his job. He comes to the illegal mine to arrest the culprit and while there, he is quick to notice the perilous conditions of the children in the mines. He beckons Ebo to come closer and he queries him. It then dawns on him that Ebo and his friends had been employed by the Baron to work despite Atta K’s assertion that they are relatives who came over to visit. The Inspector represents police men in society who enforce the law and establishes the need to do the right thing irrespective of how influential the individual might be in society. In the play, the inspector arrests Baron for “for rape, galamsey operations and the use of children for hazardous work” (Sc. 9, p. 225). He does not take into consideration the fact that the Baron is revered in society.
Sergeant

The Sergeant takes instructions from the Inspector. The Sergeant can be described as a loyal person both to his immediate boss and the nation. Like his boss, the Sergeant ensures that people abide by the law. As a result, he does not compromise with Baron and his right hand man when he is told to arrest them. While on duty, the Sergeant ensures that nobody speaks rudely to his boss or interrupts his speech. Whoever goes contrary to this is either given a stern warning by the Sergeant to keep quiet or is threatened to be arrested.

4.3.5 The Form of the play, Money Stone

Form is another word for describing the genre of a play. In the Greek period, two major forms of drama emerged, namely tragedy and comedy. As years went by, various evolutions led to other forms like farce, melodrama, satire and social drama under which my play, Money Stone falls. Social drama is a genre that developed during the nineteenth century, during the time of Ibsen. It is a kind of genre that moves and inspires people to change policy, practice and individual behaviour. A dramatic sensitive but authentic treatment of social issues which powerfully connects the audience to the real emotions and real people that lie behind our assumptions, stereotypes and prejudices” (Social film drama).

Basically, social drama exposes the ills in society. Money Stone is a play that portrays children’s predicament on illegal mining sites. Daily, they struggle in obscure places in order to make a living for themselves. The situation is so bad that children in particular are unable
to get enough rest. The boys wake early each day and routinely work to produce gold while their supervisor watches over them. Their situation affects them in diverse ways, some of which are their health and education.

4.3.6 The Style of the play, *Money Stone*

The style of a dramatic piece “results from the manner in which the playwright manipulates his means of expression” (Brockett 1964, p. 59). Dramatists have unique ways of expressing their thematic messages in their works for their target audience to understand. *Money Stone* is a realistic play. Realism is a movement that started in the middle of the nineteenth century with Henrik Ibsen as the father of this movement. The realist believes that “… the playwright should strive for a true depiction of the real world; since he may know the real world only through direct observation, he should write about the society around him; and he should be as objective as possible” (Brockett 1964, p. 333).

*Money Stone* is realistic in the sense that the deplorable state of children in illegal mines in Ghana is not fictitious; rather a subject discussed on a frequent basis on different platforms of the media. Children in the play represent the different kinds of children working in the illegal mines in the country. For example, Ebo represents children who enter the mines because they find them attractive. Lawal and Abu are a reflection of those who come from poverty-stricken families but are determined to be successful in life. The Baron symbolizes irresponsible adults in society who do not portray good examples for children to follow. Again, issues discussed in the play on the various risks children face in the illegal mines are a replica of what one experiences at the various mine sites in the country. The setting of the play, the characters involved, the action and the dialogue are important elements readers or audience can relate to and discern that the story is more than being a mere source of
entertainment. Just as Brockett (1964, p. 336) avers, Ibsen’s plays addressed social issues like marriage and relations because he (Ibsen) believed that “Drama should be a source of insight, a creator of discussion, a conveyor of ideas, something more than mere entertainment”.

4.4. The Playwright’s Concerns as portrayed in the play Money Stone

Every playwright explores issues through his or her plays. These thematic messages are emphasised to create awareness on happenings in society. As stated in Chapter Two (p. 25), my concerns about child work in illegal mining sites are their working conditions, health problems, educational disadvantage, as well as the social vices they learn from adults at the mine sites. This section explains how my concerns were incorporated in my play, Money Stone.

4.4.1 Working conditions

Children who work in the mines in the play are between the ages of eleven (11) and eighteen (18) years. However, they are expected to work long hours each day in order to earn some amount of money. In Money Stone, Atta K constantly asks the boys to work and he misinterprets their moments of rest as cultivating lazy attitudes. When Abu politely asks Atta K, “I beg masita, Sleep still full my eyes because we sleep late yesterday. Make I sleep am small add?” (Sc. 1, p. 121). Atta K replies, “Good boy! No problem at all. Now I have to cancel your name from my book so that you stop working here and continue to sleep” (Sc 1, p. 121). Frustrated, Abu then tells Atta K, “Wuie! Sorry masita boss sar! I beg make u no cancel my name. I no mean am like that. I wan the money very bad. I mean say we no get sleep plenty because we sleep late. Sorry sar!” (Sc. 1, p. 121).
Following their line of conversation, it is evident that these children do not have enough rest, yet they cannot change the situation for fear of being sacked. The Baron also tells Lawal when he sees him for the first time, “… You will spend every day working for me” (Sc 4, p. 145). The statement indirectly means Lawal no more has a life of his own once he is with the Baron in the site.

With the exception of KB, no one else cares about the welfare of these children. Asante adds to Abu’s concern by saying, “Yes KB, the only thing they want from us is to work all day and give them gold… It is true that we came here to work, but can we not have a little rest?” (Sc. 7, p.194). Their statements are as a result of how they are treated in the illegal mining site. For example, because Atta K is only interested in getting money, he does anything to make sure that gold is ready for the market irrespective of the condition of his workers. This can be seen from the excerpt below:

*ATTA K enters from downstage left. He notices ABU sleeping and moves to his direction.*

**ATTA K**

Wake up lazy boy. *(ABU shouts when ATTA K hits his wounded hand).* I have told you boys to stop being lazy and work. If you cannot do the job, just tell me and I will hire somebody who is ready to work.

**EBO**

Atta K, he just had an accident. His right hand is deeply affected.

**ATTA K**

Is that the reason he has chosen not to make any money today? Listen, you better get busy before I change my mood. *(He pats ABU on the wounded hand which makes him cry)*
ATTA K

I will beat you some more if you do not wake up and find something profitable to do. (Still in pain, ABU manages to sit on the bed and ATTA K looks around) (Sc. 6, p. 188-189).

Instead of Atta K looking for a solution to Lawal’s ailment, he tells Lawal “You have been sick a very long time. If you cannot do the job, I can find somebody to replace you while you leave” (Sc 9, p. 216).

Miners are prone to injury at the site which, in worse cases, leads to death. Miners do not use protective clothing like hand gloves, boots and helmets. For example, Abu’s accident would not have had a serious impact on him, if he had the right hand gloves on. Only a piece of cloth was used to wrap his wounded hand with the belief that the wound would heal with time. No first aid box was on the site to help in treatment, not to talk of visiting hospitals for proper medical care (Scene 6, pp. 186-187).

Additionally, if KB had put a helmet on, he would probably have sustained an injury instead of the rock hitting and killing him. Ebo recounts in the play, “They said he was in a tunnel with some other miners for rocks. Unfortunately, there was a particular rock which did not fit into its hole. That rock rowed from its position and fell on his head” (Sc. 9, p. 214).

In spite of their hard work, children are cheated by adults. They earn less and remain poor. This makes it difficult for them to realise their dreams. In the camp of the Baron, the mode of payment is not anything to write home about. Ebo tells Lawal that whatever winnings they make; fifty per cent goes to the Baron, the R.M and KB share thirty per cent The remaining twenty per cent is shared among the rest of them but not equally. Abu is unhappy about how
he and his friends are treated in the mines and he tells KB that the salary they receive is quite small.

4.4.2 Health Challenges

The working conditions in the illegal mines expose workers to various forms of diseases. Long hours of sitting down and cracking stones can lead to various joint pains. Lawal discloses (Sc. 5, p. 150), “I have been cracking stones since early morning. I need some rest. My back aches and I am feeling pains in my head. My hands are also becoming sore”. Unfortunately, these pains persist and develop into chronic spinal and other joint pains. Asante tells Lawal not to worry about these pains as it is common in the site.

Stagnant water in the mines breeds mosquitoes. Therefore, children are prone to diseases like malaria. Also, constant inhalation of the dust from crushing stones cause respiratory diseases. In Scene (7, p. 197), Ebo explains that “He could be sick in the chest. He has been coughing too. The dust from the cracking stones has gone to his chest. It always gives us cold”. For this reason, illegal miners take soda water to cleanse the system and keep them strong and healthy. Despite Lawal’s plea to visit the hospital, Ebo insists there is no money for such things. Lawal is rather encouraged to continue taking soda water till he is back on his feet. In (Sc 7, pp. 198-199), KB educates the boys on the importance of washing the hand thoroughly after using mercury. He tells them a story of how a boy died immediately drops of mercury got into the food he was eating.

Most dangerous to the health of these children is their use of mercury. As stated earlier, mercury is a highly toxic substance which can destroy the human digestive system and easily kill people. A passage from Money Stone (Sc. 7, pp. 199-201) educates us on the extent of
damage mercury can cause when Lawal after its usage falls ill. The story frightens the boys as they pledge to be extra careful with the toxic substance.

### 4.4.3 Educational Disadvantage

Ebo recounts his story on the reason he found it very difficult combining illegal mines with school. According to him, working in the illegal mines is attractive enough to pay for some expenses but it has not helped further his education. Regrettably, Ebo narrates to his friends;

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**EBO**

I knew that *galamsey* was the only work that will help me take care of Aba but I couldn’t ask my father to help me. After several weeks, I got a job in a site which was so far from where my father worked. That was how I started working in the mines. The pay was enough to look after Aba, or so I thought.

**ABU**

Girls, girls and money!

**EBO**

I always kept a dress in my school bag. When it was about 1:30 pm, I will run from school and go to the mines. I will change my school uniform and work till about eight in the evening. After two weeks of working late, my mother started asking questions. I told her that it was group discussions that kept me in school. Poor woman! She was so happy that her son was learning hard. I could not combine work with school. After several weeks, I saw school as a waste of time; little by little, I stopped
attending classes. I was making money until something bad happened (Sc 6, pp. 181-182).

When Abu asks him to be cheerful; Ebo opens up and tells his friends what his fears are concerning his education. In Scene (6, p. 183), he says,

Now, I am a school dropout. I could not focus on my education. I chose illegal mining instead. How do I get a job in a big bank or be that doctor I had always wanted to be without education? That is the reason I am working very hard in this mine with all my strength. My only fear is that this is not a permanent kind of job. We could lose it at any time. What then becomes of us?

At this point of the conversation, Ebo recognises the reason his father does not want him to engage in illegal mining, and realises the importance of being educated. He accepts that he has made a terrible mistake because of love.

While Ebo drops from school, his friend Abu, a stark illiterate, expresses his desire to go to school some day. “I no wan open galamsey business. I wan go school, completes, so that I get work take look my mother”, says Abu (Sc. 5, p. 158). Abu does not find life in the mines so smooth as to accomplish his dreams of becoming a literate. However, it is impossible to quit the job for school. This is because working in illegal mine does not pay enough to see him through school, yet it takes all his time. His option is to merge the two which is a very difficult task. Consequently, Abu continues to nurture his aspiration in his mind.

Whereas money is a necessary factor in education, the conditions of schools should be improved to make learning comfortable for students. Psychologically, the child’s interest in school partly depends on how well it is structured. Lawal (Sc 5, p. 154) explains the reason
he decides to quit school as follows: “Apart from the fact that there was no money, only one uncompleted primary school was in the whole community and it was so far from where I lived. Whenever it rained, it beat us because its roof leaked badly. So many teachers stopped teaching because they were not paid. Because of these many problems, I stopped going to school too”.

4.4.4 Social Vices

Adults are expected to be responsible people in society for the simple reason that children learn from them, irrespective of the habits they portray. Ebo is only seventeen years and he already has a girlfriend before going to work in the mines. After years of working with the Baron, Ebo sees Baron bring in different ladies and it makes him think that having so many ladies is normal. In fantasising, he speaks about his dreams as his friends listen to him in the following words:

EBO

... I will be the one telling people what to do and what not to do. (He pauses to laugh) And as for the girls, they will be coming to me the same way they come to the Baron. While one girl is cooking for me, eei; the other is cleaning my house.

KB

Why do you want so many girls at your age?

ABU

You die finish! You wan take Baron im bad behaviour add to your own wahala? See, no man wey im balls full his left hand go go take small girl like im pikin
type even if girls short for this well inside.

EBO

The only thing that matters to me is how I am going to be a boss very soon and have women; that is when I will do things just the way I want them, and I would be as happy as the Baron. (Sc. 1, p. 123-124).

It is not surprising that he develops a soft spot for Muni and makes advances at her whenever she comes around.

EBO

But Muni, you be nice girl o.
(EBO pats her on the buttocks)

MUNI

Arrh, what is that? Be careful Ebo!

EBO takes MUNI’s hand but she pulls herself from him. She takes her bowls and exits.

EBO

Wait Muni, won’t say anything?

LAWAL

She is gone.

EBO

But she be fine girl o. She is nice, just like my Aba. Whenever I look at her, I see love, real sensation. Then when-

ABU

EBO!

EBO

Mmmm (Sc. 4, p. 148-149).
Likewise, Lawal admits he has learnt to be very smart in the mines to prevent others from cheating on him. Although he is the youngest and newest among them, he is the one who comes up with the idea to steal gold but he becomes more comfortable with the idea, especially after learning that his boss equally steals lands to operate his business.

Last but not least, female prostitution especially among the youth in illegal mining is on the rise. In *Money Stone*; Pencil represents such females in society. Pencil is young, unmarried and so she does not support her family financially, yet she cannot make do with the money her father gives her. Due to peer pressure and the desire to fit into a certain status in society, she has a tall list of needs which some other persons must provide. When the money Ebo gives is no longer enough for her, she turns to Baron whom she believes can give her more than enough. Apparently, there are other women the Baron keeps for similar reasons. When Pencil visits the site, her statement to Ebo (Sc 6. p. 169) reveals who she really is. She bluntly states, “I am not here because of your money so you do not have to act anymore. I need to see the Baron. That is where the money is.” Also, it is with her conversation with the Baron that we understand the kind of relationship she had with him. When the Baron finally dismisses her from the site, her hopes of making more money is crushed. This leaves Pencil heartbroken (Sc. 6, pp. 172-173). Since this has become a habitual activity, she is forced to jump from one man to another if care is not taken. All her actions are geared towards wanting to be very “classy”.

4.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the gathering of data on the field with the unstructured interviews and participant observations helped in the data gathering process. Observing activities also helped in knowing the dangerous habits children are likely to pick in the mines. *Money Stone* is a
play that aims at establishing and creating awareness of disadvantages associated with child work in the illegal mines. In view of this, the form, style, title, setting and characters are elements that are employed to provide the central message of the play.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises and concludes issues discussed in the previous chapters regarding the plight of children in illegal mining. The research investigated the working conditions and the causes and effects of child work in illegal mining. It also examined the role of the media and traditional leaders in curbing the problem and argues how drama can be used to help solve the problem.

Playwrights are very significant people in society. Dating from the Greek period, they have written plays based on myth, history, folktale and philosophy. The playwright views the theatre as representing society; therefore, his works serve as powerful tools to instigate change in society. In Ghana and other African societies, children are a very important group in society for the reason that they serve as future leaders of a nation. Unfortunately, a number of children in the nation and across Africa are deprived of their rights. They are made to suffer and work in very difficult conditions such as in the illegal mining sector. In this light, several measures have been taken by the government of Ghana to help children who work in the illegal mining sites. Regrettably, the problem persists.

Theatre has over the years been a platform where societal issues are discussed and the playwright serves as a catalyst for such change. It is with this motivation that a research is undertaken regarding the plight of such children. This is to create a play which can communicate to a larger extent, the pain and struggles of children and more importantly, the risk of not becoming better adults in future. The play establishes the need for stakeholders to consider other methods of dealing with the problem other than the existing approaches.
5.2 Summary

In spite of the existence of the electronic media such as radio, television and the internet, theatre still serves as an important medium where societal issues are discussed. In the first chapter, the objectives and research questions are pointed out. In addition, the problem statement, scope of the study and the expected outcome of the research are established.

Chapter two of the thesis provides extensive literature on the child, illegal mining and causes of child work in the illegal mining sites. Books, articles in published journals and daily reports on the media by scholars are reviewed. Also, the different views concerning the roles traditional leaders play in illegal mining are captured in this chapter. Most importantly, this chapter sheds light on how drama is used as an educational tool to educate people about child work in the illegal mining sites. It also discusses some techniques in playwriting and various theories of dramatic writing.

In the third chapter, a methodological approach is adopted. The use of unstructured interviews and participant observation aids in gathering information from key people who had knowledge in the area of study. Smiley’s model or concept of writing a play was adopted during the play creation process. Findings from the research informed the writing of Money Stone. Additionally, the chapter presents the plot summary of the play and describes the happenings during the play reading session.

Analysis of data and the play is done in the fourth chapter. The researcher explains how the instruments selected in gathering data helped to achieve the aim of the research. Money Stone is examined in relation to its title, setting, characterisation, form and style. The play again reveals my worry about children in illegal mining.

The final chapter presents the summary and conclusion of the entire thesis.
5.3 Recommendations

The developmental stages in a child vary from one child to the other. Not every child is intelligent enough to excel in school. Others excel in school but need to engage in some kind of job to provide their needs in school. When children are discouraged to engage in illegal mining, they could be provided with alternative means of earning money. Parents should take up the responsibility of fending for their children, however, in situations where the child has to fend for himself, Social institutions and governmental organisations could be of immense help.

I recommend that policy makers, organisations and Non-governmental institutions train people, especially children in such communities in vocational skills. Children should engage in vocations like bead making, hairdressing, pottery, sculpturing and carpentry. Such an initiative has been tested under the STEP programme in the Obuasi Municipal Assembly and proven to be effective. Under the initiative, “over two hundred children and youth were trained in tie and dye productions, basketry, cosmetology, shoe making” within a period of three to six months (Sarfo-Mensah, Adjaloo and Donkor, 2009, p. 11). This gave children some entrepreneurial skills with which they could earn a living. Such ideas on how to improve the lives of children can be communicated through drama.

I would also recommend that the system of education especially in basic schools be improved. The school building should not always be deplorable states to the extent where some school children would have to sit under trees or unroofed buildings for lessons. The classrooms should be far from being overpopulated and teachers ought to have enough time for the children. Incentives should be provided to needy children such as free books, pencil, pens and other basic needs to help the child’s active participation in school.
Lastly, policy makers and law enforcers should adopt new approaches to ensure that their rules and regulations are strictly adhered to. One of such ways is to adopt drama. Social plays draw attention to problems which might have been overlooked by authorities. The playwright aims at changing the immediate society and the world at large; therefore, dramatists are encouraged to explore such delicate social issues.

5.4 Conclusion

Although it appears normal for children to work in illegal mines, it has long term adverse effects on the child. Numerous scholars across and out of Africa have critically looked into the problem. Several laws and policies have been employed by institutions such as the CRC, ACRWC and the Children’s Act of Ghana to protect the rights and welfare of children. However, the problem persists doubting the efficacy of the laid down rules and regulations. Children who work in the illegal mines are difficult to reach because they move from one place to the other to avoid being in the grip of law enforcers. It is difficult, almost impossible for offenders to be caught and punished by law. For laws to be effectively implemented in rural communities especially, drama can be used as such effective tool. Drama can be used to enlighten indigenes about what the law states about child work in hazardous conditions. People in society, especially guardians can additionally be educated on reasons they should discourage their wards from engaging in such precarious occupation and taking up the responsibility of catering for their wards.

Data gathering was very relevant in the writing of the play, Money Stone. The play provided genuine reasons why children worked in illegal mining sites and the consequences it had not only on their social lives but on their health and education as well. It again highlights the risks children face in the mines.
The major challenge encountered during the process of gathering data was the refusal by children to grant interviews. Parents and guardians also found it offensive whenever their wards were interviewed. In most cases, interviews were done in the presence of their guardians. This gave parents the right to interrupt whenever they became uncomfortable with sensitive questions.

In the creative piece, fictional characters were created to help establish the theme of the play through their dialogue and actions. Some interventional efforts that had been implemented were established in the play to show how ineffective those measures were, and the need to enforce other programmes to help the situation.
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INTERVIEWS


APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide for Set ‘A’ (Guardians and Stakeholders in the community)

QUESTION: What accounts for child work in illegal mining?

QUESTION: How does the age and gender of the child influence the kind of work they do in illegal mining sites?

QUESTION: Who would you say are the key initiators of child work in the mines and why?

QUESTION: What are your perceptions of the involvement of child work in illegal mining?

QUESTION: To what extent would you say illegal mining affects the development of the child in respect to their education, health and moral upbringing?

QUESTION: What are some of the controlling measures put in place both at the local and international level to curb child work in illegal mines?
Interview Guide for Set ‘B’ (Children who work in illegal mines)

NAME:

AGE:

QUESTION: How did you get involved in illegal mining?

QUESTION: What are the working processes involved in illegal mining, which of them do you usually indulge in and why?

QUESTION: How often are you expected to report to work in a week? How many hours do you spend working in the illegal mines, how much money do you earn and in which manner do you account for the money earned?

QUESTION: To what extent has working in the illegal mines affected your health, education and social upbringing?
APPENDIX B

MONEY STONE

(The play)

BY

OFORIWAH ADU-KUMI

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

BARON— A man in his early forties, also the owner in the galamsey site

ATTA K. — Also known as the R.M - Baron’s right hand man; a supervisor at the mines

KWAME B. (KB) — A worker at the mines; he is in his middle thirties

EBO — A young boy of about seventeen years

PENCIL— A girl from Ebo’s past

ABU— A young boy of about fifteen years

ASANTE— A boy about the same age as ABU

MUNI— A young food vendor; fifteen years of age

LAWAL— About twelve years of age

MALLAM MUSAH — Muni’s uncle. About sixty years of age.

INSPECTOR

SEARGEANT

The action of the play takes place in a galamsey mine in Himan, a suburb of Prestea. The time is the present.
SCENE ONE

The action takes place in the galamsey site of the BARON. There are three doors on the site—upstage right; upstage centre and upstage left. There is a table and a chair downstage left. A Chang fen machine is downstage right. A sluice box and a water hole used for washing are beside the Chang fen. There is a small heap of sand by the sluice box. On the centre stage are rocks of all sizes. Beside these rocks are tools such as hammers, shovels and chisels. A folded mat leans at a corner upstage right.

ATTA K

It is morning. Atta K enters the mine. He is furious that the boys are still not up for work. He screams EBO’s name but nobody seems to be responding yet. He moves to the room upstage right and knocks heavily on the boys’ door.

Wake up you lazy boys. Do I always have to be the one to wake you all up?

ABU and ASANTE appear on stage from their room upstage right still feeling sleepy. ATTA K angrily pulls them to the centre stage. At the same time, the boys go for their tools and loads and get ready to work.

Where is Ebo, didn’t you wake him up?

ABU

Small masita, e no dey here.

ATTA K

Where did he go?

ABU

Masita, he and KB go chisel rocks. e no come back.

ATTA K

Your friend went to collect rocks from the tunnel while you boys are still sleeping at this time of the day?
ABU

I beg masita, Sleep still full my eyes because we sleep late yesterday. Make I sleep am small add?

ATTA K

Good boy! No problem at all. Now I have to cancel your name from my book so that you stop working here and continue to sleep.

He goes to the table and picks up a book and a pen

ABU

Wuie! Sorry masita boss sar! I beg make u no cancel my name. I no mean am like that. I wan the money very bad. I mean say we no get sleep plenty because we sleep late. Sorry sar!

ATTA K

I will not encourage any lazy worker here. Start work before I change my mood.

LAWAL appears from the door upstage right to meet the other boys, He obviously is not bothered about being late.

Hey little boy. Come this way.

LAWAL moves in ATTA K’s direction

Why are you now coming out after my calling so many times?

LAWAL

Boss, I couldn’t wake up. I am very tired.

ATTA K

How long have you been here; is it not two days?

LAWAL

Yes sir.
ATTA K

Is that not enough time for you to get used to this job? Hurry up and get the tools over there. (Referring to ABU and ASANTE) One of them will teach you what to do with it.

LAWAL

Can I please have a tooth paste to brush my teeth? I had only a little left but it got finished.

The other boys giggle but a firm stare from ATTA K makes them stop.

ATTA K

You need a tooth paste? Well, we do not have money for things like that. You can buy some when you get your pay; in the meantime, chewing sticks are in abundance. You can help yourself.

LAWAL stands still, staring at ATTA

Little boy, don’t waste my time!
Get those tools and get to work before I change my mood.

LAWAL goes to sit behind the rocks. He does not know how to crack them. ABU sits behind the Chang fen whilst ASANTE washes the sand on the sluice box. KB enters with EBO from downstage left. They are carrying a sack of stone each. LAWAL helps EBO with his load; EBO in turn helps KB with his.

ATTA K

It is good you are here Ebo. Take care of this place. I am going back to the field. There are still some boys I need to supervise.

EBO

I will sir.

ATTA K

KB will help you for a while before he comes back to the tunnel.
Make sure these boys work Ebo! If there is no money by the time I come back, I’ll kill you first before I kill the others. (He exits downstage left)

**EBO**

Now listen to me; as your new supervisor, I will make sure you work. Asante, hurry with the washing of the sand. Abu, you will crash the stones.

Notices LAWAL standing there, helpless with a hammer in hand.

Why are you looking so confused? Come, let me show you what to do with the hammer. You are to crack the rocks into smaller bits. Any more questions?

**ABU**

No, questions no dey. Make we do our job, we beg.

**KB**

You should be more careful with the new boy. He is not used to his new environment yet; and I am sure your friends already know their work in this site.

**ABU**

I make happy say u dey here KB. You say what dey my mind inside. Ebo never dey gives us peace of mind to do work. He disturb we people with command; do this!, do that!, come here!. I make tired with his face, wallahi!

**EBO**

You need to remind yourself daily that I am the one in charge. This is exactly what I’ll be doing in about two years, when the Baron has given me enough money to start work with. I will be the one telling
people what to do and what not to do. (He pauses to laugh) And as for the girls, they will be coming to me the same way they come to the Baron. While one girl is cooking for me, eei; the other is cleaning my house.

KB

Why do you want so many girls at your age?

ABU

You die finish! You wan take Baron im bad behaviour add to your own wahala? See, no man wey im balls full, his left hand go go take small girl like im pikin type even if girls short for this well inside.

EBO

The only thing that matters to me is how I am going to be a boss very soon and have women; that is when I will do things just the way I want them, and I would be as happy as the Baron. What you should be thinking about Abu is how you will be able to go through your many years of stay in this mining camp under somebody. How I pity you! Don’t you just stare at me; Work hard and you will soon be in my shoes.

ABU

Your long talk no go solve any problem give all of us. Me self I giv myself only four years. Wallahi I go be my own boss, and I go go school sef. In Shaa Allahu.

KB

You two should stop fighting. No matter what each one says, you are still working under the Baron and
Atta K. Be patient until you are finally ready to leave the site.

ABU

Forget am mak he stand there dey do im mouth mouth. If Baron show im face here and begin shout, we go know who be the boss for this place. (ALL laugh except EBO)

EBO

You envy me. When the time comes, you will wish you had my kind of money. And as for you Lawal, don’t start laughing at me. You do not even know how to crack stones yet.

ASANTE

Won’t you leave this boy alone? He still needs time to settle.

EBO

There is no time at all. When I started working as a miner, I was not looking as weak as he looks. I obeyed everybody and was even chiselling rocks in the tunnels. Why do you think Atta K likes me?

ABU

You Ebo, you don’t get any skillis. You work only for R.M face. If R.M. no dey, you go talk aaaaaaaaaaaaa like that.

EBO

That’s still hard work. I even work harder when Atta K is not around. I talk and talk until my throat demands for water. You boys are so stubborn. (Pointing to LAWAL) This is an example; he is still sitting after I have told him to break the rocks.

LAWAL

These rocks are too hard. It is difficult breaking them.
EBO

You have to learn to do that. That is what you were brought here to do.

Without a word, LAWAL sits and begins to break the stones as instructed. He hits himself with the hammer and shouts.

EBO

Be careful Lawal. Breaking these rocks demand lots of skills and experience. Hitting the rocks like you are doing will lead to several other injuries. Let me show you how to handle it. (He takes the hammer and demonstrates)

KB

I have told you to be gentle on the boy. You will learn with time Lawal, then you will become a boss one day.

With about two or three hits with the hammer, LAWAL learns to crack the stones. KB picks another hammer to help crack the stones too.

EBO

He is still not doing it right.

ASANTE

We are not competing for a cup Ebo. What have you even gained so far in the mines? You do not even have money.

ABU

Ebo, I no understand you lai lai. I no understand you at all at all. I remember you paaaaaa, the time you dey work for the galamsey place when we come here first first. You no change kraaaa from that time.

EBO

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If you talk to me this way again, I will teach you the importance of respecting your supervisor.

ABU

Wuie! You say you be small masita? I know say you no mean am like that or I go stop work.

EBO

Are you disrespecting me? I will report you to the R.M.

ABU

I no afraid at all, at all. I dey tell masita my part. Why? You’s got brain pass me?

EBO

You will soon know that I am also a small boss in this site. (ABU laughs uncontrollably)

ABU

No ploblem. I be worker for here. If e respecting yourself, I respecting too.

EBO

You better be careful with me. I don’t have such time with people like you.

ABU

You insulted me? You noe who I became? If I throw you blow -

EBO

You want to fight? Come and let’s fight.
Mind your business Abu. Why do you both fight all the time?

ABU

Ebo never dey gives me peace. He think e be small masita. I make tired sef.

EBO

Is it my fault that I am the boss? You either listen to me or leave this place.

ABU

You lucky sey -

KB

Shut up you all! What is your problem?

EBO

KB, he-

KB

Shut up I say! Now Ebo, get something doing.

Frustrated, EBO sits by LAWAL and picks a hammer. He begins to crack the rocks while the others look on, not knowing what to say.

LIGHTS FADE.

SCENE TWO
Another day at the mines. Present are EBO, ABU, ASANTE and LAWAL who are idling about. KB comes in some roasted yam and groundnut which he shares with the others. They eat while they talk.

KB

Why do you people look so dull like that?

ASANTE

I am tired of this work o. Every day, I work and work till my bones begin to ache. What at all have I done to deserve this?

LAWAL

Uncle, this place is so boring. There is no television or even a radio to listen to some songs.

EBO

Give me some of the groundnut KB. (To LAWAL) When we are thinking about proper things, you say radio and television. Arrh! Where you come from, have you seen a television before? Don’t disturb us w’ati.

LAWAL

Oh but what did I say? It can help us. Where I come from, my father had an old small radio which we carried with us to the farm. The way we listened to songs! It gives you energy to work well well. You will enjoy it.

EBO

As for small radio, we have. The one that you will have to slap several times before it begins to speak. There is one in the room. Asante get it for me.

ASANTE
I don’t where it is. I have never seen it.

EBO

When i ask you to do something, you want to –

KB

Even when you are eating, you want to fight? Ebo, get the radio yourself.

EBO

You are lucky KB is here. Otherwise you will see what I will do to you. After all, am I the one who wants to listen to songs? When there is –

KB

Ebo, I said you should go and get the radio.

EBO

Reluctantly

Ok.

Ebo moves directly to the room to get the radio.

ABU

You get point. The job we do, walahi, we get radio a, we go be happy pass.

LAWAL

That’s all I am saying. Me, I like radio.

EBO

Returning from the room with an old radio.

Here is your radio.

He gives the radio to LAWAL who tries to put it on.

See what I told you? This radio doesn’t like gentility.
He takes the radio, slaps and shakes it for a while and the radio begins to work. EBO begins to search for a station. It tunes to where news is being broadcast.

ABU

(Excitedly) I am like that one well well.

EBO

(laughs) Abu, you want to listen to news? Will you understand anything at all?

ABU


EBO

In your dreams. Can you even spell your name?

ABU

I know my name long time before I coming here.

Ebo continues to change stations until he found a station where songs were being played.

LAWAL

That’s right. Leave it here. I like this song.

EBO puts the radio down and finds a place to sit.

ASANTE

What kind of song is this?

EBO

I wonder
I don’t like it. Change the station.

LAWAL

Oh no no Ebo, don’t change the station. This is a beautiful song. You see, Uncle KB, where I come from, this is how we dance to songs like this.

He begins to dance so well that the others begin to cheer him. EBO then joins in the dance too. As they continue to enjoy their music and dance section, there is a gunshot and screams are heard a distance away from their site.

ABU

Wuei! Wuei!

ASANTE

What was that?

They pause and try to see if they could know where the noise was coming from.

KB

I heard gunshots.

EBO

Where?

ABU

I bi my mama’s pikin o.

This time the gunshots and the screams of people seeking for help are becoming clearer. Each of them looks frightened, not knowing what to do.

EBO

It’s the police again. They are after us

LAWAL

Eh! Police? Where? What are we going to do?

EBO
What are you going to do? Go and meet them!

ASANTE

Let’s run for our lives.

KB

Let’s get out of here

ASANTE runs away from the site with ABU. EBO follows. The Shooting is pretty intense. KB pulls LAWAL by the hand but LAWAL hesitates a little, wanting to go inside and pick some few things but KB gives him a very stern look and forcibly walks him out of the site.

LAWAL

Where did the others go?

KB

Each man for himself, God for us all. You better be fast or I leave you alone.

Just when KB and LAWAL are about to away site; a policeman meets them at the entrance of the door. He holds LAWAL by the hand and hooks KB on the waist. The policeman looks at them with disgust, and begins to call out for his colleagues who seem to far from him. LAWAL bites the policeman so hard on the wrist that he screams and leaves LAWAL’s hand, making it easier for LAWAL to run for his life. After some few seconds, some other policemen come in and begin to scatter the place. While beating KB, they move away from the site with KB.

LIGHTS FADE
SCENE THREE

It has been some few weeks after the sweep. Somehow, the boys have managed to escape from the police and found their way back into the site although the place is still a little disorganised. Unfortunately, ASANTE and EBO have sustained minor injuries from the sweep. The boys seem not to have recovered from the attack.

EBO

Charlie you guys, no work today o. I am tired. Besides, we cannot even find KB.

LAWAL

Uncle KB, I wonder where he is now.

ASANTE

This work is bigger than us. I feel pains all over my body. I’m even lucky I did not die.

LAWAL

It’s not easy. I don’t even know how I managed to ran away from the police.

EBO

For over two hours, stones were flying in the air. It was a terrible fight. I have never seen something like this in a long while.

ABU

And police! Police people plenty for there! They chase and beat beat everybody. Our people use chisels and hammers and police use gun to fight. Dey take our crashing machines, steal our monies and spoil our tings basabasa. Our place, we lucky. ibi one peoples who did not come back.
EBO

Yes o, a lot of the bosses ran away, and the small boys who did not know what to do got injured.

LAWAL

We can look for another job so that the police will stop chasing us.

EBO

Speak for yourself. If there were jobs to do, do you think we will be here? Finding a job is not so easy Lawal. Many people come from different places to work here because there is no money and there are no jobs.

ABU

I go go school wey I can’t go first first all wen I get plenty money, then stop this work.

Enter ATTA K, followed by KB who looks so unkempt and weary. It was EBO who first saw them and screams. This draws the attention of the others.

EBO

KB! What happened to you?

ASANTE

Where did you find him?

ABU

Wetin happen? The police people beat you?

LAWAL

Uncle KB!

LAWAL rushes to touch him but KB screams in pain.
LAWAL

Does it hurt? Sorry uncle.

EBO

How did you escape?

ATTA K

Why so many talks? Can’t you allow him to rest and ask him questions later?

LAWAL

Pushing things aside and creating space on the floor for KB to sit.

But what happened to you? Are the people wicked? They locked you till now?

ATTA K

Did I not tell you people to be silent? Now get back to your work

LAWAL

But we were not working when you came in.

ATTA K

You were not working? What have you been doing today? Lazing about?

EBO

No boss...in fact...hmmmm...

ATTA K

You boys had better be careful with me.

EBO

Actually, we were planning to –

ATTA K

Lawal, take KB inside and join the boys to work. If I come in the evening and you have no gold to
produce, you would not like what will happen to you.

ATTA K exits and LAWAL takes KB inside while the others look on.
SCENE FOUR

It is morning. Present in the mines are EBO, LAWAL, ABU and ASANTE. They are busily working. KB comes in from the room. This time, he looks clean and healthier.

LAWAL

How are you doing today Uncle KB?

KB

I am much better today Lawal.

EBO

What really happened to you KB?

ASANTE

Yes, how did you escape?

KB

It is luck. The way the policemen beat me!

KB finds himself a seat and the others get closer to him.

EBO

All this while, you have been with the police?

KB

I have. They refused to let me go. They even threatened to take me to court for engaging in an illegal business.

ASANTE

How did you manage to escape?

KB

The Baron

EBO and ABU

(In Unison)
The Baron?

EBO

Then you must be lucky. He doesn’t have time for such things.

KB

He said if he allowed things to go the way they were going, then we will all be in trouble. It took a while but he managed to have his way.

EBO

The Baron always has his way.

KB

He paid his way through to get what he wants.

LAWAL

Meaning?

EBO

If you don’t understand, we cannot help you.

KB

That is how I managed to survive.

ASANTE

You are lucky indeed.

MUNI, the food vendor, enters. She is carrying a medium size cooking pot on her head. Together with the pot are plates and bowls used for eating.

MUNI

Morning morning customers.

EBO

MUNI, thank God you are here. I am so hungry.

MUNI
Don’t worry customer. I am here now and you will eat well.

ABU

What abinchi you get today?

MUNI

As usual, hot yam and garden egg stew.

ABU

You no get banku?

MUNI

Ahba Abu, but you know I don’t sell banku. Anyway, you will enjoy this my homemade food.

EBO

MUNI, forget about these people and give me food to eat. You know how I like it.

MUNI

Customer, don’t worry; I know how you like it. (MUNI serves EBO his food and he begins to eat) Today’s food be special, you will like it well well.

MUNI

KB, no food today? You have to eat o so that you grow fine fine. Hot yam and tasty stew.

KB

In this heat, you are talking about food? Thank you, I am not hungry yet. By the way, where were you when we were in the heat?

MUNI

What heat?
KB

Eei Muni! Are you in this town at all? I mean, where were you when the police came in?

MUNI

I travelled. I only heard about it. I even heard you were all badly affected.

ASANTE

That explains why you are here this morning with enough strength to sell. If you had experienced what we experienced, I am sure you will not even be alive to tell your story.

EBO

Are you cursing her?

ASANTE

I am only telling her the truth.

MUNI

I am sorry for all that happened to you. Thank heavens you survived. Now you can’t allow my food to go waste ok? Buy some.

KB

You must be hungry Lawal. Let Muni give you some food to eat.

LAWAL

No uncle. I have no money.

KB

You should not worry about that. My girl, please give him some of the food.

MUNI

How much?
KWAME BONSU

Just serve him like you did Ebo. I am sure that will be enough for him.

MUNI

(She takes a bowl and begins to serve LAWAL’s food) If you do not eat now, there is no other time to eat. (She gives his food to him) After eating my food, you will have extra energy to work well well.

ABU

Muni can raps paaaaa.

LAWAL

Thank you so much KB.

KB

Don’t worry. I have children too you know.

ABU

Muni, give me yam. Two cedis.

MUNI

How much meat will you buy?

ABU

I no get money to buy meat. We just begin work. You no get jaara meat for there?

MUNI

There is no free meat today.

ABU

Ploblem no dey, make you give me the yam.
EBO

What about you Asante?

ASANTE

I don’t eat in the mornings.

ABU

You be lie lie person paaaaa, Asante. You no get kobo!

KB

Muni, give him some food too and come for your money.

ASANTE

KB, I am not hungry.

KB

You have to eat something. It is not a good practice to work the whole day on an empty stomach.

MUNI

Here is your food.

KB

Now Muni, you will have to come back for your money this evening. I don’t have any of me now. I just returned from hell.

MUNI

You don’t have problem. You are my customer. I will come for the money later.

KWAME BONSU goes to back to the room leaving the boys and MUNI. Just then, a screeching of a car is heard.

ASANTE

That must be the Baron.

ABU

Yes. Im car dey cry like that.
Everybody rushes to do his work. All except MUNI and LAWAL look tense.

LAWAL

I don’t like the look on your faces. Is the Baron a very scary person?

Before anyone could answer, the BARON comes in with a young lady. Immediately, EBO, ABU and ASANTE rush to greet him before he takes a seat at his desk. BARON gives LAWAL a stern look and in confusion, LAWAL takes his eyes off him.

BARON

(With a cigar in his mouth and the lady running her hands through his unkempt hair) HEY, come over here! (LAWAL gets closer to him). Who are you?

LAWAL

LAWAL sir.

BARON

That sounds like a Northern name.

LAWAL

I come from the North sir.

BARON

Why are you here?

LAWAL

I am a new worker here sir. RM employed me.

BARON

I see. (After looking at LAWAL for some time). Oh okay, I remember now. He said something about bringing in a new boy. But he did not tell me you were this small. (He takes a closer look at LAWAL). How old are you?
LAWAL

I am twelve years old sir.

BARON

(Lifts LAWAL’s right arm, in a bid to weigh him). You are so little for this job. Your shoulders are light and soft. I do not think you can work here. Find yourself another kind-

LAWAL

No sir. There is no other job. I can sir... I can do anything you ask me to. I have even started cracking the stones.

BARON

Ebo, get me my drink from the room. (EBO hurriedly gets to the BARON’s room upstage centre) Cracking stones is just a little of what is expected of you. Looking at your size, all you may have to do is to wash sand and that will deeply affect me because I am going to pay you for doing that little work.

LAWAL

Boss, forget about my body size. I am ready for the job. I can do any kind of work. Any kind at all!

BARON

You will be carrying loads and going with some of my workers to the holes for rocks. You will spend every day working for me (EBO comes in with the drink and he takes a sip). Why do you look so confused? Did my supervisor not tell you that?

LAWAL

I am not confused sir. In fact, I am very happy to be working here. The RM told me everything and I am
prepared to work hard. I learn fast. I can do everything properly.

BARON

That will be good for yourself. In the mines, you must work hard. I always need money so I do not entertain lazy boys here.

LAWAL

Yes sir.

BARON

You will be paid well when you work hard; when you don’t sleep at all and all your time is devoted to this job. Get back to work. Meanwhile, I have to take care of something. (He gets up to leave). I am sure you are perfectly aware of the arrangement of payment.

LAWAL

No sir.

BARON

(Referring to EBO) He doesn’t know?

EBO

Whatever winnings we make, fifty per cent goes to the Baron, the R.M and KB share thirty per cent. The remaining twenty per cent is shared amongst the rest of us but not equally. Sleeping here is free but we pay for electricity bill and other things.

BARON

Good. So you see, you need to work hard. But remember, if you do not have money for food before your pay comes, I can give you money which will be deducted from your salary.
EBO

Yes sir. I forgot about that.

The BARON exits upstage centre in the company of the young lady. Before leaving to his room, his eyes meet that of MUNI’s. He gives her a wink which makes MUNI smile. LAWAL makes the sign of the cross and heaves a sign of relief.

LAWAL

I thought this man was going to lift my weak body and throw me into the air. I was so afraid.

ABU

Herr, me too. Im face dey look fear fear and my heart dey jump pum pum pum pum.

EBO

Thank God he was in a good mood today. We were shaking so much but he did not even notice we had not been working much today.

ABU

He no see things because of girl enjoyment for im side. I remember say he dey talk say he do somtin?

MUNI

You people should stop gossiping about your boss.

EBO

Why? Do you like him?

MUNI

Your boss? As for me, I am leaving o. Give me my bowls. Quickly quickly!
What bowls? I have not finished eating.

ABU

Make you no swerve the question we ask you sef. You have lovey lovey feeling for our boss?

MUNI

I don’t like your boss. He is too old.

ABU

Who tell you my boss old? Go ask im small small girls he brings here if he be papa? Buh you for speak truth so we make connection giv you.

MUNI

Ebo, please give me my bowl so that I go. Were you not the first person to finish eating? My other customers are waiting for me. Sharp.

EBO

Which customers? See, so many people haven’t recovered from the attack yet. We are very tough people and that’s why we are here. See how messed up this place looks. But Muni, you be nice girl o. (EBO pats her on the buttocks)

MUNI

Arrh, what is that? Be careful Ebo!

EBO takes MUNI’s hand but she pulls herself from him. She takes her bowls and exits.

EBO

Wait Muni, won’t say anything?

LAWAL
She is gone.

EBO

But she be fine girl o. She is nice, just like my Aba. Whenever I look at her, I see love, real sensation. Then when-

ABU

EBO!

EBO

Mmmn.
It is afternoon. EBO, ABU, LAWAL and ASANTE are asleep at different positions on a mat. ABU is the first to wake. He tries to wake the others but they all are reluctant to get up.

ABU

(Tapping LAWAL to wake) Lawal, Lawal!

LAWAL

(Responding in his sleep) Mmmm. What is it?

ABU

You be lazy lie lie. Get up.

LAWAL

Abu, you like disturbing people too much. I have not finished sleeping.

ABU

Today we no work plenty, so we no go rest.

LAWAL

I have been cracking stones since early morning. I need some rest. My back aches and I am feeling pains in my head. My hands are also becoming sore.

ABU

You tell Baron for the last time sey you go fit do any work at all. So make you no get tired now.

EBO

Why are you people disturbing my sleep?

ASANTE

I also cannot sleep.
Don’t mind Abu. He is waking all of us up just because he cannot sleep.

EBO

What do you want Abu?

ABU

Why you dey ask me wat dey worry my head inside? Hardworking small boss! You no go tell us to works?

EBO

There is time for everything.

ABU

This time be job time. Ok, if nobody go mind me, I go show you sey hard work good.

ABU takes a bucket from inside the room and goes out. He returns with dirty water which he pours on them. They all exclaim. ABU takes the bucket inside while they get up gradually from the mat. EBO reacts upon seeing ABU return from the room.

EBO

What is the meaning of this Abu?

ABU

I pour you water for your body inside. Get up.

EBO

We agreed to sleep for some time, if you did not want to sleep anymore, you could have started work. Don’t forget that I am in charge.

ABU

I no regret what I do. Walahi! This have make you get up from the bed inside. When boss come, he tell us say we go sleep? You be bad small boss paaa.

ASANTE
What do you want us to do now?

ABU

I wan Lawal crack stones give me.

EBO

Ok, then start work.

ABU

Ebo, I no wan you tell me tings to do lai lai. You no fit do your job sef.

LAWAL

(As he begins to crack stones). I came here some few months ago to find work because it was not easy finding work in the North. But this work is so hard. I have been feeling pains all over my body.

ASANTE

That is common in the site. You will soon get used to it.

EBO

Do you want to go back to the North?

LAWAL

How can I go back to the North? I need money to help my family survive. My people are depending on me. My father cannot take good care of his twelve children but we need to survive.

ASANTE

Eei!
Your papa born twelve pikins?

LAWAL

Yes, and I am the tenth born. It is a big family. My father has three wives. My mother is the last of them. We all live in a small house.

ABU

I salute your papa. He good pass.

ASANTE

Are they all in the North?

LAWAL

Yes. My father works on a little piece of land which belongs to my grandfather. All of his wives help him on his farm.

ABU

Oh, that be why he don’t have money plenty inside his pocket. How pikins for go school?

LAWAL

Only two of my elder brothers are in school. I was working on other people’s farms to get money for school. After years of going to school without any support, I finally stopped.

EBO

Why?

ABU

No money now.

LAWAL
Apart from the fact that there was no money, only one partially completed primary school was in the whole community and it was so far from where I lived. Whenever it rained, it beat us because its roof leaked badly. So many teachers stopped teaching because they were not paid. Because of these many problems, I stopped going to school too.

ABU

How you come appear here like that?

LAWAL

When my father told us there was no more money to cater for us, my auntie brought me to this town. She always said that it was very easy to find work here.

ABU

That talk no true lai lai.

ASANTE

Finding a job in this area is not as easy as people think. Everywhere you get to, you meet someone who will always tell you that “there is no work here”.

LAWAL

You don’t have to tell me that. I experienced it myself. When I first came to Himan, I was helping my auntie with her chop bar business. It was also a difficult job. I could not sleep well and my auntie was not paying any money to me.

ASANTE

How were you getting money to buy food?

LAWAL
That was no problem at all. I was always eating from my auntie’s chop bar. My father always called me from the North on my auntie’s phone. He needed money to look after his pregnant wife.

ABU

Im wife get belly?

EBO

Your father is going to have another child he cannot take care of? Giving birth to many children will not bring money. That child will only suffer.

ABU

Ebo, we get the same mind. The well hard now and money getting be hard for these days.

EBO

My problem is why he keeps on having children as if he had so much money.

LAWAL

My father says that it is good for a man to give birth to plenty children.

EBO

You have to tell your father to stop giving birth. It would only affect his children.

ABU

E bi only when your mother, father and brothers no get money wey you dey come work here for the mines?

LAWAL
Yes. Luckily, Atta K is a regular customer to my auntie who promised to get me work at the mines. He said the mine was the only place he knew I would easily find work. I packed some few things and followed him here. I hope to make money to help my family. I also want to go back to school but that would be after I have saved some money.

ABU

I know what you dey talk. Pikins always go suffer like this if im father no look am.

ASANTE

We all know that when a father does not look after his children, they suffer.

ABU

What I dey say be say, if papa look pikins proper proper, pikin will become big peoples tomorrow. Me, my father no look my matter at all.

ASANTE

Why?

ABU

I stay plus my papa, my mama and small pikin sister inside one room. I dey see my papa only in the night. He go drink pasaaaa and beat beat my mama saaaaaa before he go sleep. Hmmmnn.

EBO

Your father beat your mother every night?

ABU
Yes o. The man use my mama do punching bag.

ASANTE

But what did he say your mother did to him?

ABU

What my mama can do am? My papa go out when cock cry. No money for me, my sister and my mama. But if he come back from the drinking plenty, he go say food. If my mama get food, she go give am but if food no dey, then problem come! He go beat am tayyyyyy like that.

LAWAL

What happened after?

ABU

One day, my papa come wey my mama dey sleep for the bed inside plus my pikin sister. Wey me I dey sleep for my mat top for the floor. Herh! Come look my papa face that day wen he come home and no food. He beat my sister basabasa like im man type. When my pikin sister make like cassava sack wey e no full, my papa leave am go out. That be what happened. I no see my papa since.

EBO

Your father is wicked.

ASANTE

Hmmm, but how can a man beat up his wife in such manner?

LAWAL

My father does not have so much money but he doesn’t beat his wives to make their situation worse.

ABU
He drink plenty he no see say dey beat im own pikin. My pikin sister no die but my mama no get money to take look me and my pikin sister. Ibi me wey I become my father take dey look them. That be why my mama im mama come take me come here. My mama im mama say ibi me go work bring money for food. She talk say ibi my duty. I work saaa and make money. That be why I come appear for here. I go im place anytime we get chance come out of site. I no see my mama for long time now. My mama im mama say dey fine. So I dey send money for im mama make he give am. If I get money plenty I go go see my mama first.

EBO
You cannot become rich when you depend only on your salary. Start a big galamsey site after little savings. That is how you can become rich.

ABU
I no wan open galamsey business. I wan go school, completes, so that I get work take look my mama.

LAWAL
If you want to go to school, it will take a very long time for you to complete. As for me, I want to be as rich as the Baron. I will do business.

EBO
You are thinking in my direction LAWAL.

ABU
I no mata the time I dey take go school. What I know be I want to be big somebody one day one day.
I cannot go back to school. I want to build my house and buy lots of cars. When I get settled by the Baron-

ASANTE

Don’t disturb us with your settlement Ebo. Who told you the Baron has any such plans for you?

EBO

Mind your business Asante.

ASANTE

I have always been minding my business. I am only advising you so that you do not get disappointed when you leave this place with nothing in your hand.

EBO

You will also know what a fool you have been if I walk out of here with a settlement fee.

ABU

I beg, close your mouth so we tink for our head how we go take get money.

LAWAL

After washing the sand ABU, can we not hide some of the gold we get? Nobody will know about it, that way, we will get rich quickly.

ASANTE

Working with the Baron is a very dangerous job. Stealing the gold means you want to be killed. That is one of the reasons Atta K supervises all the work we do.
But he is not here now. I have learnt to be very smart in whatever I do. One needs to be very smart in the mines, if not, you get cheated in everything. Nobody will catch us until one of us tells the R.M or the Baron.

ABU

Galamsey person wey he get experience know the plenty gold he go get when he know the rock type he go take crash get. You forget say Atta K. always the follow follow KB and the boys wey dem dey chisel the rocks. He count count all dey give Baron. We no go fit take gold hide, e go hard.

LAWAL

It is not hard. Asante, wash the gold quickly and let us steal some.

ASANTE

I am so afraid. I cannot do this.

EBO

None of us has stolen gold before. If the Baron catches you, you will suffer. But there is always a first time.

ABU

Make we try am. We can becomes rich.

EBO

Asante you can start with the washing. We need to be quick about it.

ASANTE
OK. But what if—

EBO

Have a positive mind for once. Nothing will happen. After all, the Baron keeps a positive mind that nothing will happen to him when he pays money for other people’s lands.

LAWAL

So the Baron himself has been stealing lands? Oh then that makes it very easier for us to steal then. When we are asked; we are learning how to be smart.

EBO

Sshh!. I never said anything. Let me check to see if somebody is around. (EBO moves to the entrance of the mines but he meets nobody. To be sure nobody would be coming soon, he stands there for some time).

LAWAL

Ebo, is somebody coming?

EBO

Not yet. If we are very fast about this, we won’t get caught. Asante, have you finished washing the sand?

ASANTE

I will be done very soon. Is anybody coming?

EBO

Stop asking me questions and concentrate on the work. Why do you think I am standing here?

ASANTE

I only wanted to be sure.
EBO

Do you people have the mercury?

ABU

Med? Oh, im dey the room inside.

EBO

Abu, please go and get it.

ABU hurriedly goes to the room upstage right for the mercury.

EBO

Lawal, help Asante to be fast.

LAWAL

Why, is somebody coming?

EBO

If anybody asks me this question again, I will go and sleep.

ABU returns with a little white bottle containing mercury.

ABU

Here is the med.

EBO

That’s good. Where is the pan?

LAWAL

Pan?

ASANTE

We will put mercury into the pan in addition to the sand.

LAWAL

Ok.

EBO
Have you people not finished washing the sand? Have you started the panning process?

ASANTE

No

EBO

What are you waiting for? Hurry up. I am so tired of standing here.

LAWAL

How are we going to add the mercury to the sand?

ASANTE

I have never done that. People always said it is poisonous. Can you help us Ebo?

EBO

(Running towards the boys) Quickly, RM is coming.

The boys out of fright run helter skelter, leaving the pan centre stage. ASANTE and LAWAL run inside the room upstage right leaving EBO with ABU on stage.

ABU

I tell you say stealing gold be hard for here, but you no want listen. I be bad boy for here for talking truth. (EBO bursts into laughter) Why you laugh?

EBO

(Still laughing). Come out you weak boys. Nobody is running after you yet. (LAWAL and ASANTE enter).

LAWAL

Where is ATTA K.?

ASANTE

Didn’t you say he was coming?
EBO

Didn’t you say you wanted to steal? Weak boys! You now know that I am very important?

LAWAL

So nobody is coming?

EBO

Nobody is coming. Let me go back to my duty post.

ABU

Why you joke with serious matter for here? My heart die finished.

LAWAL

I was very afraid too.

ABU

Why you be afraid, you bring this idea. Don’t make us suffer trouble now now.

ASANTE

Before you go, we need something else to pour the mercury in.

EBO

Just use your hand.

ASANTE

It is not safe. People say mercury kills people.

EBO

Is that the reason you have never touched it? Nothing will happen to you. I always use my hand and then wash after use. I would have died a long time from using mercury if it was that poisonous.
LAWAL

Ebo, please keep watch while I add the mercury to the sand.

ABU

Fast fast o. You for do am quick.

EBO

Let me help you Lawal; after all, you are only new.

LAWAL

But-

EBO

Nobody is coming.

EBO supervises whilst LAWAL pans for gold nuggets with the mercury, the others look on full of fright. After several minutes of panning, LAWAL sees some gold nuggets.

LAWAL

Look, look! Gold. I can see the gold.

EBO

I told you. And what has happened to you?

LAWAL

Nothing.

ASANTE

Can we share the gold now?

ABU

Sharp sharp.

EBO
Look at their faces! Where were you when Lawal and I were struggling to put our heads together?

ABU

Look im face some. We all agree sey we take gold. Give me or I tell RM.

EBO

Nobody will give you anything. Your think you are smart.

ABU

You lie. I forget I go inside bring the med?

EBO

Wait and see. You will have nothing.

ABU

Then no peace for come here. Walahi.

EBO

Lawal, give me the gold. I will share it according to the role the person played. (LAWAL gives EBO the gold nuggets). Asante, this is yours. (He gives ASANTE a portion of the nuggets)

LAWAL

I hear footsteps.

EBO

Wait, let me check who is coming here.

EBO moves to the entrance of the mines and he meet with the R.M. He is shocked and so are the others.
Ebo!

EBO

Atta K!

LIGHTS FADE.

SCENE SIX
The BARON is in his chamber with his girlfriend. The boys as usual are at the mines. PENCIL, comes in. She is in a very short skirt which exposes her thighs and a no hand top. She matches her dress with a high heeled sandals and a little hand bag. She also has heavy make- up. EBO was the first to see her but she walks past him without a word.

**EBO**

My darling Aba, my don lili lali, my lily sal. You should have told me you were coming. Oh how I missed you. Come here darling. *(EBO goes to embrace her but she pushes him away)*

**PENCIL**

Small boy, where do you know me and why do you call me by that native, underdeveloped name? My name is Pencil. That’s what every modern girl or boy calls me so you had better stuck to that. And tell the Baron that I am here. *(She sits comfortably in the BARON’S chair).*

**EBO**

Eei Aba. Are you pretending you don’t know me? Have you forgotten how we used to laugh and play around?

**PENCIL**

Where? In this life or the one to come... because in both, we were not playing around at all!

**EBO**

Aba, why are you -

**PENCIL**

Shut up! Shut up Ebo and let me have some peace of mind. I did not come to look for you. I am only here to see the Baron, the real man. Just let him know that I am here.
EBO

You want to see the Baron?

PENCIL

Is there anything wrong with that?

EBO

Oh my Aba... sorry, my Pencil. Are you angry with me because of that small quarrel, that simple lovers’ quarrel we had?

PENCIL

You call that a simple quarrel? Well, I am not here because of your money so you do not have to act anymore. I need to see the Baron. That is where the money is.

EBO

Pencil see, I was only waiting for you today. I have money for you so you don’t have to worry.

PENCIL

Oh really? Are you going to give me that fifty Ghana cedis you gave me the other time? Darling, I don’t need it. You can use it to buy your yam that you usually eat.

EBO

Aba!... sorry Pencil. Why are you behaving like this? Did -

PENCIL

Ebo, I am tired of requesting for money before I get it. Besides, fifty Ghana cedis is not the kind of money I am looking for. Ebo, take a good look at me, look at me very well, do you think i can survive with that chicken feed you have been giving me?
EBO

Pencil!

PENCIL

Now that you know we don’t belong to the same class, kindly excuse me. I have to see Baron. He has the money.

EBO

Don’t do this to me Pencil. I love you so much

PENCIL

Ebo, call me the Baron and it should be now.

EBO

I am the acting supervisor of this site. I have to know everything that happens here to help me give better reports.

PENCIL

Well, I came to see your boss and he did not ask me to account to children like you.

EBO

Aba, you look at me today and call me a child?

PENCIL

Just call me the Baron and stop disturbing me.

EBO

Ok, the Baron is in a meeting. You will have to wait for a while.
You cannot be serious. He is expecting me.

EBO

How did you meet the Baron anyway?

PENCIL

He met me in town and liked me. I liked him too so. He tells me that I am beautiful and I believe him. Whenever I smile, his world is fine. So you see, I am his new girlfriend. Very soon, I will be his wife.

EBO

Don’t be deceived my darling. There is no way the Baron will marry you. He will only sleep with you and leave you the moment he gets another girl.

ABU

Na true talk be-

PENCIL

Shut up! What do you people know? I will report you if you do not tell the Baron that I am here.

ABU

Cool your heart madam; you go see am now now.

PENCIL

Little boy. . . labourer whatever your name is; do not meddle in my affairs. Concentrate on your galamsey while I concentrate on my love matters. I will see the Baron whenever I want to see him.

ABU

Oh oh, go see am now!
PENCIL goes to knock on all three rooms but nobody answers. She knocks several times but nobody opens any of the doors. She comes back to sit down.

PENCIL

Where did you say the Baron went to? (Nobody responds. She goes to tap EBO) I am asking where the Baron went.

EBO

I do not know.

PENCIL goes back to knock on all the doors. She goes back to speak to Ebo and the Baron angrily storms from the room.

BARON

Which of you boys came knocking in that manner? Did I not tell you I needed no disturbance? Of what use are you boys if you cannot follow simple instructions?

EBO

I am sorry sir. It was not our fault.

BARON

Couldn’t you have prevented this kind of disturbance?

PENCIL

You don’t have to be so angry darling. The person who knocked was me. Haven’t you missed me? (She moves closer to the BARON)

BARON

(He turns in the direction of PENCIL and notices her) YOU!

PENCIL

Yes, me. I have not been sleeping well lately and I know it is because I miss you. (She moves
closer to the BARON in an attempt to give him a kiss on the cheek)

BARON

Don’t come any closer to me. I don’t need your services any longer.

PENCIL

What’s wrong darling? Did you have a bad day?

BARON

Leave my site before my boys throw you out.

PENCIL

How can you treat me this way? You promised you were never going to leave me. You promised to always provide for me.

BARON

I don’t even know why you are still here. Our business terms are over. You wanted money and I wanted sex. You agreed to trade your body for money which I accepted. Transaction ended. What else do you want?

PENCIL

You called me a prostitute? I shouldn’t have believed you when you said I was your taste. God will punish you.

BARON

(To the boys). Make sure she leaves at once! I do not have time to exchange words with her. (The BARON goes back to his room upstage centre leaving PENCIL not knowing what to do. Eventually, she goes away crying)
LAWAL
I feel so sorry for the girl.

ASANTE
This is so shameful but that is what girls go through in the hands of the Baron.

EBO
Aba did not believe me when I told her the Baron won’t marry her.

LAWAL
I wonder what she might be going through right now.

ABU
I no dey feel even small give am. You no see dey way she talk give me last? “Little boy . . . labourer whatever your name is; do not meddle in my affairs. Concentrate on your galamsey”. Chai! She even call me say me abi small boy!

LAWAL
Who is she?

ABU
She be Baron im girls girls. I no know what go happen for them if today end.

LAWAL
How many girlfriends does the Baron have?

ASANTE
Shhh! Let your voices go down I beg! I do not want to get into trouble today.
Make you no worry. He no go hear fii.

LAWAL

How can a man treat a girl this way?

EBO

This is not the first time he is treating a girl like this. He will do the same thing even if the girl was your sister.

LAWAL

I will never bring my sister here; not for all the gold in this site.

EBO

I was only joking.

LAWAL

Such sayings do not sound like jokes at all.

ASANTE

No need to argue over this. The Baron does not have any of your sisters yet. We only pray he would not.

LAWAL

He never will. (He looks round) Is the Baron married at all?

EBO

People in this town always said that the Baron had two wives.

LAWAL

Where are they?
They left with their children when he did not have any more money. It all happened before he got involved with the *galamsey* business.

**ASANTE**

I heard a different story. When the Baron lost his job, his wife slept with all the men in the village for money. He sacked his wife for her behaviour. That is how he remained single.

**LAWAL**

Which of his wives did that?

**ASANTE**

Well, from what I heard, there was only one wife.

**ABU**

I know say he get only one wife but she too dey sleep sleep plus other mans.

**LAWAL**

Is that so?

**ASANTE**

Do you know why she left?

**ABU**

Yes, I know la! Im wife no deliver pikins give am so peoples dey1 talk say im jack no dey work. The thing pain so he take drink dey cool im heart Small small and im work spoil. That be why im wife pack go.

**ASANTE**

Interesting story! I have never heard of it.

**EBO**

Neither have I.
ASANTE

People will always have something to say. Maybe, the Baron never got married or even had children.

ABU

That be true talk paaaaa... but im face no dey look like he no go fit do what peoples dey talk say he do oooo. Just look what he take do im girls girls now now.

LAWAL

The Baron’s girlfriend, what is her name?

ASANTE

Pencil.

EBO

Pencil. (Giggles) Is that what she calls herself? It is really strange how people change in a short period of time.

LAWAL

You called her by another name.

ABU

(Laughingly) This be heart matter oo; cat and mouse living. You see, peoples wey dey no fit talk their heart matter give another people, he dey take am make fight fight matter. Our ears is making itching, Ebo. What happened for the two of you inside?

EBO

Pencil was a very good friend of mine.

ABU

Say one by one what happen for your lovey lovey inside.
EBO

Her name is Aba, at least, that is how everybody called her before she started calling herself Pencil. She was my classmate; very beautiful but not so intelligent. Well, I liked her that way. I was even the one who did her homework for her. After school, she would always want to walk home with me.

ABU

Eeeiii, that be the way your lovey lovey start?

EBO

There was no lovey lovey at that time, but my mother saw her as a good girl. We were in the same Senior High School as day students. There was never a day we did not see each other.

ABU

And you say lovey lovey no dey for you and your girls girls inside?

EBO

There was nothing like that then. After sometime, I did not like seeing her with other boys and that is when I realised I loved her. I told Aba about my feelings and she did not refuse my proposal. Foolishly, we decided to keep it a secret until we were old enough to tell people about it.

ASANTE

That is where you went wrong. You shouldn’t have kept it a secret.

EBO

Do you blame me? During that time, I always did what Aba wanted me to do. It felt like I was walking on
the moon. I will always polish my shoes neatly and dress properly so that Aba will feel me. Moments later, my fantasy was short-lived.

ABU

What happen? How lovey lovey do you?

EBO

Aba met me in school one morning and said “Ebo, I need some money”. Immediately, I got confused and asked her “what do you need money for? Is the money your father giving you not enough?” Angrily, she said “what can I do with the money my father gives me? I have other needs and as my boyfriend, you should provide”.

ABU

How much she want?

EBO

Three hundred Ghana cedis.

ASANTE

Eerh, but what was she going to do with such an amount of money?

EBO

I asked the same question and I remember the answer she gave so well. “I need money to do so many things”.

ASANTE

Where did she expect you to get money from?
LAWAL

Why did she not ask her parents for it?

EBO

Just ask me a question at a time. She said I enjoyed calling her my girlfriend but I do not perform the responsibility of a boyfriend. She stood akimbo and told me “Ebo, all my friends are laughing at me because I have a poor boyfriend. I do not care how you get it but if you do not give me that money, I will get a new boy who will properly take care of me”. Then she walked away.

ABU

Eei. this pikin.

LAWAL

Hmmm.

EBO

For a while, I stood there, wondering if this was my own Aba, the same little girl who said she loved me.

ABU

You leave am?

EBO

No. I was holding her tight. Instead of learning, I wanted to prove my love to Aba. I started looking for work in the galamsey sites which was far from where my father worked.

ASANTE

Was your father an illegal miner?

EBO
Yes. That was his source of income, but he was careful not to introduce any of us into the business.

ASANTE

He must have been very responsible.

EBO

He was.

LAWAL

But why the mines when you were still in school?

EBO

I knew that galamsey was the only work that will help me take care of Aba but I couldn’t ask my father to help me. After several weeks, I got a job in a site which was so far from where my father worked. That was how I started working in the mines. The pay was enough to look after Aba, or so I thought.

ABU

Girls girls and money!

EBO

I always kept a dress in my school bag. When it was about 1:30 pm, I will run from school and go to the mines. I will change my school uniform and work till about eight in the evening. After two weeks of working late, my mother started asking questions. I told her that it was extra classes that kept me in school. Poor woman! She was so happy that her son was learning hard. I could not combine work with school. After several weeks, I saw school as a waste of time; little by little, I stopped attending classes. I was making money until something bad happened.
ABU

Pencil leave you?

EBO

One of my father’s friends caught me in the mines and told him about it. That night, my father beat me very well but my mind was made up. I wanted to drop from school and work in the mines. It was during that time a friend told me about the child employment project the Baron had started. I was so afraid but I told my father all the same. He told me to choose between school and work. That evening, I packed some few belongings and went to the mines. Aba clapped for me and embraced me. “That was the best decision you made” she said. Meanwhile, she was still going to school.

LAWAL

You see, the Baron was not so bad after all. At least, he has provided us all with employment and shelter.

EBO

It was my desire to make money that brought me here. I wanted to prove to Aba that I loved her; but she eventually left me. How do I also go back to my family?

ABU

Make you no look like your mother die. We all get problems. I talk you my own. You, you force go school long. Make we think about tomorrow and forget past things.

EBO

Now, I am a school dropout. I could not focus on my education. I
chose illegal mining instead. How do I get a job in a big bank or be that doctor I had always wanted to be without education? That is the reason I am working very hard in this mine with all my strength. My only fear is that this is not a permanent kind of job. We could lose it at any time. What then becomes of us?

ABU

Good point. True talk be that.

The BARON comes from his room upstage centre with the lady.

BARON

I am going out. I will be back soon. Who is in charge?

EBO

I am.

BARON

Good. Do you have anything for me?

EBO

No sir. We do not have any winnings yet.

BARON

You have not had anything since morning? (EBO nods in the negative) What have you been doing all this while?

EBO

Working, Sir.

BARON

If I come back and there is still no money for me, you know what will happen to you.

EBO

Yes sir, I am sorry sir.
The BARON exits downstage left with the lady. The sound of the car is heard which suggests they are on their way to town. ABU sits behind the machine to work. His hand gets stuck in the machine which leads to serious bleeding. He begins to scream for help and the others rush to him.

EBO

Quickly! Put off the machine. (ASANTE switches off the plug)

ABU

Wo yoooyie. Help me o... my hand... my hand... I... I no fit take my hand out ooo.

EBO

Try and pull it out.

ABU

I no dey fit. e remain for the machine inside. I beg, fear God, help me.

ASANTE

(While EBO is trying to pull ABU’s hand from the machine) If you cannot do it, let me try.

LAWAL

Yes Ebo, let him help.

EBO

You should stop talking and allow me to concentrate. This is a very serious case.

ASANTE

We only wanted to help. ABU is in so much pain. That scares me.

LAWAL

Look... blood. Let me run outside and call for help.

EBO
Just get me a cloth from the room. 
(EBO pulls ABU’s hand which makes him shout out loud)

ASANTE

Sorry. You will be fine soon.

LAWAL

There is so much blood on the floor.

EBO

Stop talking LAWAL and get the cloth!

LAWAL

Yes, the cloth. I forgot. Sorry.

LAWAL returns from the room upstage right with a cloth. EBO covers the wounded hand with it to soak the blood. All this while, ABU is still on the floor screaming in pain. In some few minutes, the cloth is soaked with blood.

LAWAL

The bleeding has not stopped. Let us take him to the hospital or clinic.

EBO

He will stop bleeding very soon.

LAWAL

This is an accident Ebo; he needs a doctor to take care of him.

ASANTE

There is no money.

LAWAL

Do we allow him to die? (He draws closer to ABU to take a closer look at the wound)

EBO
He will not die. These things happen at the site. The wound will heal.

LAWAL

It is a deep cut. We need a plaster and cotton.

EBO

There is no first aid box in a galamsey site. We always have a way of doing things. The wound will heal soon.

ASANTE

If ABU was wearing gloves, I don’t think the wound will be this deep.

LAWAL

Let us ask the R.M and the Baron to buy the box for us.

EBO

A first aid box? (LAWAL responds in the affirmative) You are very funny LAWAL. Nobody will even give us a plaster for your sore.

LAWAL

Then let us contribute some money and buy the box.

EBO

My money is usually not enough for me.

ASANTE

What do you use your money for?

EBO

I do not need a first aid box, we will always be fine. (ABU’s scream alerts them. It is obvious he is in great pain)
LAWAL

Is there nothing we can do about the bleeding? It hasn’t stopped yet.

ASANTE

Let us try salt and water. At least, it will stop the bleeding.

EBO

There is salt on the table. I kept it the last time we prepared rice. (ASANTE goes into the room upstage right and returns with a bucket of water. He dips the cloth into the salt solution and puts it on his wound)

LAWAL

I still think we should take him to a clinic.

EBO

There is no money Lawal. Don’t you understand this simple thing?

LAWAL

But he has to go to the clinic.

ASANTE

He will be fine. He needs a little rest.

EBO

Yes. And change that look on your face LAWAL. Nobody is dying yet.

The three help ABU on a mat. ASANTE exits to get ABU some ointment while LAWAL continues to crack stones. EBO is cleaning the blood stains on the floor.

LAWAL

There is blood here. (He points to a place closer to him)

EBO
I will clean that place after here.

LAWAL

ABU is no longer crying.

EBO

He has probably fallen asleep.

LAWAL

(Moves closer to ABU) Yes Ebo, he is sleeping. This will stop him from feeling so much pain.

ATTA K enters from downstage left. He notices ABU sleeping and moves to his direction.

ATTA K

Wake up lazy boy. (ABU shouts when ATTA K hits his wounded hand). I have told you boys to stop being lazy and work. If you cannot do the job, just tell me and I will hire somebody who is ready to work.

EBO

Atta K, he just had an accident. His right hand is deeply affected.

ATTA K

Is that the reason he has chosen not to make any money today? Listen, you better get busy before I change my mood. (He pats ABU on the wounded hand which makes him cry)

ATTA K

I will beat you some more if you do not wake up and find something profitable to do. (Still in pain, ABU manages to sit on the bed and ATTA K looks around) How come there are only three of you? Where is the fourth boy?
EBO

He went to look for ointment for ABU.

ATTA K

He left the site to look for medicine?

LAWAL

Yes sir, from any of the sites around. Abu is very sick. All his blood came out today.

ATTA K

(He sits on the BARON’s chair). Ebo, how much gold have you made?

EBO

Hmm. Nothing boss.

ATTA K

Have you been playing with my business?

EBO

I have been working boss.

ATTA K

Show me what you have for your hard work.

EBO

Atta K, we do not have any gold yet but we have not been playing with the work at all. We were working and working and working until ABU had the accident and he was bleeding and bleeding and bleeding.

ATTA K

What will I tell the Baron today?

LAWAL
We will work sir. You will get gold today.

ATTAK

Ebo come and kneel beside me. You will only get up if you explain to me why you did not work today.

EBO

I am very sorry boss. It was because of ABU’s accident o.

LAWAL

Oh boss, we-

ATTAK

You, come and kneel beside Ebo.

LAWAL

Sir-

ATTAK

Get on your knees before i change my mood! (Slowly, they get on their knees). I always tell you boys that there is no time to play in galamsey sites. When the Baron comes this evening, I have to see him with some gold ready for the market; not empty hands. Do you know what he will say? I cannot take care of children like you and that is an insult to me.

EBO

Forgive us boss. Please release us so that -

ATTAK

If I were you, I will shut up. Are you the one to teach me wisdom? (Just then, ASANTE walks in). Now, here comes the hero of the day.

ASANTE

Good afternoon boss.
ATTA K

Were you able to get the ointment for his wound?

ASANTE

Yes sir. It is in this rubber bag.

ATTA K

Good boy. So, apart from saving people from trouble, what have you been doing since morning?

ASANTE

(ASANTE stares at the others) I was working on the field until ABU had an accident.

ATTA K

ABU, thank God you fell sick. At least, it has saved your friends from trouble. Now, before I change my mood, get to work.

ALL

Yes boss.

They hurriedly get to work. ABU is still sitting on the mat while LAWAL and ASANTE crack the stones. EBO starts the Chang fen. As the noise of the machine is heard, LIGHTS FADE.

SCENE SEVEN

Lights reveal EBO, ABU, ASANTE and KWAME BONSU at the site. ABU has a bandage slung over his neck to his arm and is dancing to music on an old radio set.

EBO

I cannot laugh enough ABU. Your hand is affecting your dance steps.

ASANTE
You need some training. Your dance moves are off beat. Were you listening to the music at all?

ABU

Small boys be young paaaa ooo. You no know I take plenty awards for dance inside?

EBO

If you were winning prizes, it is either you had no competitors or you were simply cheating. Nobody will give you a prize with what you just did here.

KB

I am so glad you are feeling better ABU. At least, your ability to dance shows you are fine now.

ASANTE

Don’t disgrace us again ABU. Miners are usually good dancers.

ABU

I make fine small KB. I thank you say you help me plenty.

ASANTE

Hey, you better stop playing and hurry with the work before I change my mood. (All laugh except KB)

ABU

I dey plenty pain inside i no fit laugh that time. Eei Atta K. He dey stand there wey he say “hey, you better speak fast before I change my mood”.

EBO

(Laughing) Mood changer! Surprisingly, he is never able to change his mood.
ABU

I no forget how Ebo make im face when Atta K tell him say make he kneel down.

EBO

I was so afraid he was going to beat me (EBO quickly goes to kneel down and ASANTE plays the role of ATTA K)

ASANTE

You all are using ABU as an excuse for not working. Hey! Thank God you fell sick. It has saved the lives of these boys. Now, before I change my mood, you all should report at your duty post. (EBO rushes to his previous position and they begin to laugh.)

KB

What did you boys do to Atta K?

ASANTE

Nothing. Atta K was so angry when he came here and there was no gold.

KB

What were you boys doing not to have washed the sand?

EBO

KB, we were preparing to wash the sand when ABU’s hand got locked in the Chang fen. Then we all forgot about the washing.

KB

You should not get into fights with Atta K. If he reports you to the Baron -

ASANTE

We will be sacked.
KB

And do you want to be sacked?

ABU

No, but Atta K plus the Baron no get care give we at all. I no understand why he see my hand dey pain but he still get anger that I no dey work.

ASANTE

Yes KB, the only thing they want from us is to work all day and give them gold.

EBO

Even when I explained to Atta K that ABU was sick, he only got angry and even punished us for being lazy boys.

ASANTE

It is true that we came here to work, but can we not have a little rest?

KB

What you are all saying is true but you came here to work. You therefore have to do exactly what they ask from you. That way, you receive your pay and everybody is happy.

ABU

The pay he dey give we be small, e no reach the work we do. My back, leg and hand dey pain too much. We no dey get rest.

KB

You will have to endure the pain. It is only for a short time.

ABU
We tire now oooo, we no go fit take this type of pain again. Make we do something.

KB

The only thing you can do is to stop working here.

ABU

How we go take survive if we no get pay?

KB

Then all you need is to work hard and focus less on the things that make you sad. That is what I have been doing to take care of my family.

EBO

Does your family live in this town?

KB

They live in Accra, my wife and three children. I came here when I lost my job. I had always thought that if I worked in a galamsey site, I will be so comfortable and that is why I came all the way here. Working here is not as easy as I thought but I am managing.

EBO

Will you go back to Accra?

KB

Once I get enough money to start some business, I will go back to Accra. So you see, life is not always easy, work hard today and enjoy tomorrow.

ASANTE

Thank you so much for your kind words.
LAWAL comes in. He walks as one who is faint.

ASANTE

What is wrong LAWAL, are you still sick?

KB

He looks very sick. I think it is more than an ordinary cold.

EBO

It must be malaria.

ASANTE

It is malaria. Mosquitoes do not spare us at all in this part of town. Look at the way mosquitoes have bitten me in every part of my body; and that was only yesterday.

EBO

I have also had a fair share of these mosquito bites. But I am sure it is malaria. Many miners suffer from that disease and die as well.

KB

I was thinking same. You need to take some medicine.

EBO

He will get better. Malaria is just like these minor headaches. It will heal with time.

ABU

Make we thank God say ibi only mosquitoes that dey worry us. We all dey here the week e pass wey Atta K talk say some small piken girl follow follow im small piken brother to the holes to carry rocks for the head and snake bite am?

KB
I was there when it happened but fortunately, she did not die. That same day, a scorpion bit one of the boys in the hole too.

ASANTE

I become so afraid when I hear these stories.

KB

Sit by me LAWAL. Take a little rest. (LAWAL sits by him)

EBO

He could be sick in the chest. He has been coughing too. The dust from the cracking stones has gone to his chest. It always gives us cold.

KB

In that case, you should take in more of the soda water. It cleanses the system and the cold will go away.

LAWAL

I have taken over eight bottles in three days; nothing has changed. I want to see a doctor.

ASANTE

The soda water heals slowly but you will be fine. We will not have survived without it.

EBO

Lawal, in the mines, we have our own way of solving problems. You do not always have to visit the hospital.

LAWAL

197
I told you already, I have taken so many bottles but I am still coughing and feeling weak.

EBO

What do you do if you are not getting any better? You continue to drink it till you see changes.

LAWAL

But Ebo; this soda water is not medicine. I need proper medicine to make me better.

ABU

Medicine no help you at all. Na strong things only they put inside.

EBO

Don’t mind Lawal; he thinks he is the only wise one amongst us. Do you know how long we have been drinking this soda water? That’s all we have and that’s all you will take. I cannot help you any further.

ASANTE

Or, could it the mercury you have been using? You know that you don’t always wash your hand after touching it. Maybe-

EBO

This has nothing to do with mercury. He only needs to take the soda water and he will be fine.

ASANTE

If the soda water is not working, I think he is very sick. The mercury-
Have you been using mercury without washing your hand Lawal? (no response) If you have, then that is dangerous.

LAWAL

I wash my hand all the time.

ASANTE

He doesn’t wash them properly before eating. It is poisonous.

EBO

Doctor, allow Lawal some peace. He needs it.

ASANTE

But I think he should go to the hospital. He is pale and has lost complete appetite.

EBO

But that is normal, if he gets any blood tonic, he will be fine.

ASANTE

This is not about blood tonic.

KB

Lawal, how often do you use mercury with your hand?

LAWAL

I use it very often but I always wash my hand after that.

KB

You don’t need to only wash your hand but wash it very well.

LAWAL
I have always washed my hand with soap.

KB

My worry is how well you washed those hands. I don’t think you understand me very well. Let me tell you a story.

ASANTE

We want to hear your story

KB

This is a story about a boy; a little boy just about twelve years who worked in a galamsey site where I used to work before coming here. Akoto was his name. Just like me, he came from the Eastern part of the country to work. Regardless of the fact that he was a little boy, he worked very hard. But there was something he did everyday

ASANTE

What was it KB?

KB

Akoto always ate right after using mercury but he always claimed he washed his hands. One day, he put the loosely tied mercury into his breast pocket and got ready to eat. As he bent over to eat his food, little drops of the mercury dropped into his food and he ate unknowingly.

ASANTE

This is fearful. That is the reason I have always been afraid of mercury.

ABU
This story make me fear fear. So KB, where Akoto be now?

KB

AKOTO!. He died moments later after eating.

ASANTE

This is so sad. Lawal, listen to KB –

KB

Don’t put words into my mouth Asante. I am not telling you this story because Lawal is going to die. I want you to know so that you become very careful in your contact with the mercury. Meanwhile, I am going to chisel the rocks. If I come back and you are not well, I will find some medicine for you or take you to a nearby clinic. Ebo, please take care of him.
EBO

Yes KB.

KWAME BONSU exits downstage left. EBO lays the mat for LAWAL to sleep on. He signals LAWAL to come and sleep.

LIGHTS FADE
SCENE EIGHT

In the galamsey site. This time, nobody is around. MUNI enters from downstage left. Just around the same time, the BARON blows his horn to signal his presence.

MUNI

Customers, I am here again o. Hot yam and garden egg stew. (She looks around and sees nobody) O my customers disappoint me sharp sharp. Where did they go?

MUNI takes a step or two, gradually moving out of the mines. The BARON enters from downstage left, he sees MUNI and stares at her. MUNI turns and once again, their eyes meet.

MUNI

Sorry sir, I came to sell my tasty food but nobody is here.

BARON

I see.

MUNI

Sir.

BARON

Yes?

MUNI

Please do you know where they went to?

BARON

They all went to carry loads today. They will be back soon.

MUNI

Then I will come back later sir.

BARON

(looking round to see if anybody is coming) Do not be in a hurry to go. I am so hungry.

MUNI

203
Sir.

BARON

Won’t you sell some of your food to me?

MUNI

I will sir. I will. How much are you buying?

BARON

Why do you look so afraid?

MUNI

I am not afraid sir. How much food are you buying?

BARON

Sit down Muni. Don’t feel so shy. Nobody is going to hurt you.

MUNI

Yes sir. (MUNI sits beside the BARON on the floor) How much food do you want to buy sir?

BARON

How much can I eat? (He moves closer to MUNI and puts his hand around her thighs. She pushes a little further from him)

MUNI

(MUNI takes a bowl to serve the BARON food) One cedi is enough for you sir. You go enjoy am well well.

BARON

(Still spying to see if anybody would enter the mine soon). Come closer Muni. You are a very fine girl.

MUNI

204
Sir?... I cannot o. you be big boss.

BARON

I am not a big boss. I am only a little man. Just get closer to me and I will make you a happy girl.

MUNI

Sir-

BARON

Just call me Baron.

MUNI

Yes boss, sorry, Baron. You need to eat now. Allow me to serve your food.

BARON

I want to buy the whole pot of food.

MUNI

Sir?

BARON

How much is the pot of food you carry around anyway? I want to buy everything. I want to give my boys a treat today.

MUNI

(Excitedly) Sir? You really want to buy everything? Thank you sir, I don’t have to go round the other mines. I get tired sometimes. You have really saved me sir-

BARON

(He gets up). Bring my food to the room. I don’t want to eat here.

MUNI
But sir-

BARON

Just bring my food. I will be in my room.

MUNI carries the whole pot of food and heads for the BARON’S room upstage centre. She knocks on his door and enters. Moments later, MUNI’s voice is heard crying for help while the BARON shouts at her to keep quiet. EBO, LAWAL, ABU and ASANTE enter the mine. They are carrying sacks of stones. LAWAL who is still sick quickly puts his load off his head and drags himself to the room whilst the others take time to off load their loads.

EBO

I am so tired and sad. I will have to rest a little before I continue with my work. (He finds himself a seat on the floor). I am so sad today. Eei! What kind of world is this? Who will listen to my story? Eei! Who will believe that a rock fell on KB and he died.

ASANTE

Oh! Why do bad things happen to good people? This is bad news. I cannot believe it too. It all happened like a dream. Oh KB! Who will listen to us when we are sad?

ABU

Hmmm. What can I say. Things be bad paaa give we. Oh! Oh! I sad o!

EBO

If I knew he was going to die, I wouldn’t have let him follow us at all. KB! What are your children going to eat? What will we tell your wife? And your little boy Lawal, he is going to miss you a lot.

ASANTE

You are right Ebo. Maybe, we shouldn’t have gone to help him
today. I think it brought bad news. I am so sad  

MUNI screams again

ASANTE

I heard a noise.

ABU

E be your ears.

ASANTE

(The voice shouts again, this time, a little harder). That was the noise again.

ABU

For the where?

EBO

This time, MUNI’s voice is clearly heard; crying for help

That is Muni’s voice.

EBO runs to the door to save her but finds it locked. He quickly runs back to find a tool which can help him break the door but ASANTE stops him

Muni! Muni!

ASANTE

Give me the hammer Ebo and calm down. We cannot fight the Baron.

EBO

But how was the Baron able to get Muni to his room? He will pay dearly for this. (EBO knocks severally and tries to open the door but it was locked) Muni! Muni!

ABU

Stop Ebo, we no go fit fight the Baron.

EBO again knocks severally but no one opens the door. ABU goes to him and succeeds in pulling him away from the door.

ABU
What you go fit do if the Baron sack you from this place? Where you go fit go?

EBO

I don’t care what the Baron does. All I want is to save Muni from him. Does her cry do nothing to you at all?

ASANTE

We are only helpless. How many of us have been able to save the plenty girls who have experienced this?

EBO

But this is different.

ABU

This no be same matter sake of you got lovey lovey feelings give am

EBO

Nonsense. (He shouts MUNI’s name again) Muni! Muni!

Suddenly, the BARON opens the door. He is seen zipping his trousers and buttoning his shirt on stage. He notices ABU, ASANTE and EBO looking at him.

BARON

What are you looking at? Foolish boys. (He exits downstage left)

EBO and his friends rush to his room and bring out MUNI. She is half naked and her hair is unkempt. She is so weak and refuses to be consoled. They manage to bring her to sit on a chair.

EBO

Why are you crying Muni? Did the Baron do anything to you? (MUNI continues to cry).
ASANTE

What happened to you?

MUNI

He did it Ebo. The man raped me.

EBO

I knew that man was up to something. Oh Muni, you should have run away.

MUNI

How could I Ebo? He locked the door and kept the key in his pocket. The Baron is stronger than I am. I couldn’t fight him.

EBO

I warned you MUNI.

MUNI

I should have been more careful with the Baron.

ASANTE

That Baron has no respect for people. I only wish I could beat him. All he does is to bring pain to people.

EBO

No Asante, leave that job to me. I want to kill him myself.

ASANTE

You are not the only person the Baron has hurt badly. I was a little younger when I watched him beat my mother.

ABU

Baron be your mother im family member?

ASANTE
Few years ago, my mother owned a piece of land. She agreed with my father to grow vegetables on the land but there was no money to do that. My father said they borrow money from the bank but my mother disagreed. She said the bank people will bring police men to jail us if they can’t pay.

ABU

What you do?

ASANTE

My mother told my father to borrow the money from the Baron. My father refused but my mother would not change her mind. They were always fighting over this until my father decided to go for the money from the Baron.

EBO

I remember people going to borrow money from him to solve their problems, but they were only lucky if the Baron was in a good mood. Did he give your father the money?

ASANTE

My father came home with the money but said it was with a high interest. I don’t know how much the money was but they soon began to work on the farm. It did not rain when my father finished planting the crops. The sun burnt all the crops. There was nothing my father could do.

ABU

Ooh.

ASANTE

The Baron sent big men to warn my father to bring his money. Anytime
those men came to my house, my father will hide in the room. We were eating on our veranda one day when my father saw those men coming. He ran to the room. When I told them my father had travelled, one of the men lifted me from the ground and almost threw me unto the floor. They went into the room and brought out my father whom they beat very well. My father fell sick few days after the beatings and he died.

EBO
Stop crying MUNI. You should console yourself with Asante’s story. His father died because the Baron killed him. There is hope for you.

ASANTE
My mother spoke little and was always at home. One day, that man came to our house.

ABU
Baron?

ASANTE
Yes. That was the first time he came into the house. He came to take my mother home as a wife; he said that he will pay for the money. I didn’t agree to that but I was not strong to say that. I watched mother being pulled to the Baron’s car amidst tears and my sister was too. I had to be a man. “STOP” I said as I began to punch them on their legs. None of the men felt the pain of my punches. I thought of another method to save my mother. “I am so strong sir, I will work for you. I will do anything you ask me to”. That was what changed the Baron’s mind and began to see my mother as an old
woman and me, a little boy who will give him money.

EBO

You have been working all this while to pay for a debt?

ASANTE

There is no other reason I am here. I was never interested in working in the mine to make quick money. I did not want to die in the mine like the stories I heard. I only came here because I had to be a man and save my family.

EBO

Does the Baron pay you any money?

ASANTE

Sometimes, the Baron is kind to give me some money but I cannot complain when he does not. What bothers me is how long I am going to work for him.

ABU

You see Muni, make you no crying like that. "No Woman No cry" Bob Marley sing am. Everything go be fine now now.

ASANTE

Not this time. You have to report this Muni.

EBO

That’s right. Muni, you cannot keep quiet about it. The Baron must be punished for his wicked act.
Nobody will listen to me. He said I will die if I told anybody and I don’t want to die.

EBO

Nothing will happen to you. Go home and tell somebody about it.

ASANTE

Listen to me Muni, you do not have to keep quiet.

MUNI

(Amidst tears) Thank you so much for your help.

EBO

If only KB was alive. I would have told him all about it. He would have done something to protect you. Life can be so hard sometimes. Hmmm! Muni, I can only see you to the road outside this site. If the Baron or Atta K catches me with you, trouble will start.

MUNI

Don’t worry, I will find my way home.

EBO

I am very sorry ok? Remember to tell your mother or father about it. (MUNI gets up to leave. EBO and ABU help her out of the camp downstage left together with her pot of food)

LIGHTS FADE

SCENE NINE
The boys are working under the supervision of ATTA K. It is obvious they are not in a happy mood but that does not bother ATTA K who is going through his account book. LAWAL is not recovered from the illness which makes him cough intermittently.

ASANTE

You can go into the room to rest if you think you are still not strong enough Lawal.

LAWAL

I will work, especially when Atta K is here (LAWAL steals a glance at ATTA K, who is not looking in his direction)

ABU

Make you no worry give am. He go understand when we talk am say you dey sick serious.

LAWAL

That will only make him so angry. Atta K will not listen to anybody now that KB is no more (He bursts into tears)

ABU

I no believe say he die the same day somebody sleep sleep plus MUNI by force. Bad news happen plenty that day paaa.

ASANTE

What exactly happened to him?

EBO

You always ask that question. I am saying it for the last. They said he was in a tunnel with some other miners for rocks. Unfortunately, there was a particular rock which did not fit into its hole. That rock fell from its position and fell on his head. That was what happened.
ASANTE

(LAWAL breaks into tears) Stop crying Lawal. Atta K. will hear us.

ABU

I feel pity give am. I still dey think what go happen to im wife and pikins. Baron knows this information?

EBO

Atta K told him about it that very day. KB death does not bother him at all. By tomorrow, he will have somebody else working for him.

ATTA K raises his head to see the boys talking.

ATTA K

Hey Ebo, keep quiet before i get there!

ASANTE

(Whispering) We are in trouble today.

ABU

We die finished.

EBO

Sorry boss. We are not talking sir!

ATTA K

I won’t spare any of your nonsense today. Do you understand? (Notices LAWAL lying on ABU’s lap)Why are you crying LAWAL?

EBO

Nothing sir. He is still sick.

ATTA K

You have been sick a very long time. If you cannot do the job, I
can find somebody to replace you while you leave.

EBO

Sorry boss. He will work. He –

ATTA K

Can this boy no longer answer questions for himself? Do not make me talk unnecessarily. I am mourning my friend.

EBO

Yes sir! Sorry sir.

ATTA K

If I ever see you stupid boys not working, you will eventually know that you are in the mines.

ASANTE

Sorry sir!

ATTA K

And you Lawal, decide now. Would you work or you would quit?

LAWAL

I will work sir.

ATTA K

Good. Let me see you do it now?

The BARON enters from downstage left, he goes straight to his chamber.

ATTA K

Sir.

BARON

Let us talk later Atta K, I want to relax a little.

ATTA K

There is a letter for you. It has been here some few days sir.
BARON

A letter?

ATTA K

Yes sir. An elderly man brought it.

ATTA K takes the letter from the table in an attempt to give it to the BARON.

BARON

No need to give it to me, I don’t have time to read.

ATTA K

Well sir, the letter is from the police.

BARON

Don’t worry about the police anymore. I will pay them some money and they will stop coming here for inspection.

ATTA K

Errh sir, this is different. This is well . . . errh . . . they call it a summon letter.

BARON

Summon letter? Who is summoning me?

ATTA K

Well, the man who brought it said you are wanted at the police station for something you did to a little girl.

BARON

Who is this girl?

ATTA K

He mentioned the girl’s name as Muni. I think the police will arrest you if they find you. The only solution is to run away.
BARON

(Laughingly) Run away?

ATTA K

Yes sir. The man looked so serious.

BARON

Just continue with your work and forget about the police. Nobody can arrest me.

ATTA K

Sir, I was even told the girl’s family told the chief about it.

BARON

And what has the chief done about it? Listen, I pay the chief good money to protect me and this work. That is how I always have large lands I work on. Do you think I am called the Baron for nothing? The chief and his elders are all in support of what I do. As for that stupid MUNI, I will get her at all cost.

ATTA K

But sir, the girl said you raped her.

BARON

Is that any news at all? What is so special about her anyway? I even regret taking her to my bed. She is not even a beautiful girl. Three days ago, she came to my house with her uncle who said that I had to pay a sum of seven hundred Ghana cedis for raping her. I was willing to cooperate so I decided to pay a hundred Ghana cedis.

EBO

Aah!
BARON

What was that?

EBO

I was not referring to you sir, I was angry at how Lawal was coughing and cracking the stone. (The BARON gives him a stern look) I am sorry sir.

BARON

I do not have time for this little boy. Atta K, throw the letter somewhere. I will be in my chamber. (He exits upstage centre)

MUNI comes in, accompanied by an INSPECTOR and two SERGEANTS and an elderly man.

MUNI

Inspector, this is where the man works.

ATTA K

Good afternoon Inspector.

MALLAM MUSAH

Kai! Hold your good afternoon, Wallahi! Where is the Baron?!

ATTA K

He is not here.

MALLAM MUSAH

Subhanallah! Allah will punish your lying on the Day of Judgment, In Shaa Allah. That is what you said the last time I came here. We will not go anywhere until we see that man.

ATTA K

Please let your voices go down. This is a workplace.

MALLAM MUSAH
Laa ilaha illallah, you cannot tell me what to do. Bring the Baron from wherever he is hiding.

ATTA K

The Baron is not here.

MALLAM MUSAH

Allah does not like liars, young man. I know he is here.

ATTA K

He is not here. Just leave the information, I will tell him when he comes.

MALLAM MUSAH

Ah ah! Inspector, why are you looking around and not saying anything? You are acting very slow Inspector. Can I search this place for you?

SERGEANT

Shut up man. How can you talk to an inspector like this?

INSPECTOR

(POINTING TO ATTA K) Did you say the man we are looking for is not here?

ATTA K

Yes officer, but don’t worry, I will give him any information you ask me to whenever he comes around.

INSPECTOR

Did he receive the summon letter we sent to him?

ATTA K

Yes sir.

MALLAM MUSAH

Lai lai officer.
INSPECTOR

If after the search, we find the Baron is hiding here, you will be arrested for aiding, conspiring and giving wrong information to an officer.

ATTA K

Eei officer.

INSPECTOR

(He notices EBO looking at him occasionally) Come here boy (EBO draws closer to the officer) Do you work here?

EBO

Yes sir.

INSPECTOR

How old are you?

EBO

(He looks at ATTA K who could not utter a word) Seventeen years.

INSPECTOR

Do all the other boys work here too?

MALLAM MUSAH

Inspector, all these are not necessary, Allah kuuwa. Let us look for the Baron and arrest him for raping my niece.

SERGEANT

If you say another word, I will arrest you for gross disrespect.

ATTA K

Be patient with us officer.

INSPECTOR
(Still looking round) The boy sitting over there, he looks much younger.

EBO

Which of the boys sir?

INSPECTOR

The boy cracking the stones; he looks sick.

EBO

That boy is called Lawal. He is a new boy here. He came from the North and he is twelve years old. A few days ago, he got a cold, but he

ATTA K

Officer, he did not understand you properly. The boy is not sick at all... in fact, nobody is sick over here. No need to worry. I will tell the Baron you were here.

SERGEANT

One last interruption from you will lead to your arrest.

ATTA K

I am sorry officer. Don’t be angry yet.

Why do you have these young children working here?

ATTA K

They are not actually working sir. Yes they came to visit us. They are relatives... they are only here because of the holidays. (EBO looks at him and he in turn gives him a stern look; as if to say he should shut up)
INSPECTOR

I am sure you are aware that it is against the law for galamsey operators to operate on these lands and to employ young children such as these.

ATTA K

No officer, this is a small-scale mining company, not galamsey.

INSPECTOR

Let me have your license then.

ATTA K

Well. Errh. Our license is not here. It is with the Baron.

INSPECTOR

Search the site Sergeant, and bring the Baron here if you find him.

MALLAM MUSAH

Alhamdulillah, you are now doing your job, inspector. I know the man is here.

ATTA K

Wait sergeant! Uncle, how many times do I have to tell you that the man you are looking for is not here?

INSPECTOR

Sergeant, carry on with your duty.

The BARON stomps from his room, he is irritated at the noise on the site.

BARON

Atta K, I have been trying to sleep but you won’t let me. What is the noise all about?
MUNI

Inspector look; that is the man we are looking for!

INSPECTOR

This is the man who raped you?

BARON

Why did you allow these people into my camp site? Old man, if you don’t want me to beat you, you will run as fast as your legs would carry you. I gave you an offer and if you do not want it, there is nothing I can do.

MALLAM MUSAH

Ahba officer, the man is right before you, please arrest him.

BARON

You even have enough money to bring a police man to arrest me. I am going to sleep; you all should go when you are ready.

INSPECTOR

You are under arrest.

BARON

For what offence?

INSPECTOR

For operating without a license!

BARON

That is really no problem. The lands were given to me by the chief, you can ask him about it. Once you have the money, he can provide you with plenty lands.

INSPECTOR

Sergeant, arrest this man. (The sergeant attempts to put the hand cuff on the Baron’s hand)
BARON

No officer. You cannot arrest me.

INSPECTOR

I am arresting you for rape, galamsey operations and the use of children for hazardous work

ATTA K

Eei! They came here on their own o.

INSPECTOR

And you, didn’t you know you are not supposed to employ such workers here? You are also arrested for aiding and abetting.

ATTA K

Sorry officer, I didn’t rape the girl o!

INSPECTOR

Sergeant, take them away.

The sergeant Arrests the BARON and the ATTA K and they exit together with MUNI, MALLAM MUSAH and the INSPECTOR

ASANTE

I am freeee! so free! free at last!

LAWAL

Well, I am going to get ready to go home. I need a cure for my sickness. I have seen enough in such a short time. (He exits into the room upstage right)

ABU

What we go do next Asante?

ASANTE

I am freeee. I can go home now.
ABU

Hmmmn, as for me, I dey go search for new job again. Maybe I go get new job for new galamsey site near here. I dey go pack my things.

ASANTE

I have to pack my things too. (ABU and ASANTE exit upstage right)

EBO

At last, I am all alone in here. I cannot go home; no; a real man has to work. I will remain here and take care of this place. I will hire people and will soon be like the Baron, and when the police comes here again, I will find a solution to their problems. For now, I need to get some money stone.

EBO goes to sit behind the Chang fen. He starts the machine and begins to crash stones.

BLACK OUT