

written by **RUWANTHIE DE CHICKERA**

(devised with the cast)

stages theatre group

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Thought Curfew

First public performance 2018 An Empathy & Risk performance In collaboration with Stages Theatre Group

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a lyrical play

written by

Ruwanthie de Chickera

An Empathy & Risk Presentation In collaboration with Stages Theatre Group

First Performed at Ubumuntu Festival of Humanity Kigali Genocide Memorial Amphitheatre Rwanda July 2018

An Introduction to Thought Curfew

Thought Curfew is a lyrical performance which explores the manner in which entire communities of people can be rendered unthinking in a moment. It is based on a short story, written by Ruwanthie de Chickera, in which a father chases his daughter who is running away from a spreading thought curfew. The term Thought Curfew was originally coined by Sri Lankan playwright Tara Kumarasinghe.

Thought Curfew addresses the outbreak of sudden and widespread violence and examines the individuals' negotiation with fast spreading senselessness.

The play was co-directed by Ruwanthie de Chickera and British visual artist David Cotterrell. This mixed media performance was created under the 'Empathy & Risk' project initiated by the two directors.

Thought Curfew was devised over a period of twenty days with a cast of Sri Lankan actors and developed for production with a team of designers, composers and animators from the UK. The play was staged at the 4th Ubumuntu Arts Festival held at the Kigali Genocide Memorial Amphitheatre in July 2018.

Thought Curfew, which follows the journey of a little girl who is fleeing the 'unthinkable', explores the psychology of group descent into a state of 'unthinkingness'.

For more detailed insights on this play, including the back story about how it was made, an analysis of all its design elements, its production video, soundtrack, publicity campaign, all press reviews and audience comments, and more, please visit its production page on the Stages Theatre Group website www.stages.lk

Characters in order of appearance

NARRATOR

LITTLE GIRL a thinking child among unthinking people

GRANDFATHER the girl's blind grandfather

he sees the unthinkable approaching

FATHER the girl's father,

his sole thought is to provide for his family

BROTHER the girl's brother

an unthingkingly compliant young man

SISTER the girl's sister

thinks that she cares for the planet

BROTHER-IN-LAW the girl's brother-in-law

thinks quite highly of his wife

REFUGEES a group of people in a hopeless place

thinking can drive them insane

NGO AGENT (INTERNATIONAL) an international expert on human need

voices all her thoughts

NGO AGENT (LOCAL) a local expert on locals

has learnt to hide his thoughts

SOLDIER looking in the wrong direction

he is not trained to think

DEVOTEES devoted to their faith

think they know the truth

The main characters in the family – father, brother, sister, brother-in-law and grandfather - appear in each new world (Refugee, Development Aid, Military, and Religion).

Scene Breakdown

Scene 1 The World of the Family	Scene	1	The	World	of the	Family
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Transition 1

Scene 2 The World of the Refugee Camp

Transition 2

Scene 3 The World of Development Aid

Transition 3

Scene 4 The World of the Military

Transition 4

Scene 5 The World of Religion

Prologue

Narration happens offstage.

Narrator Everyone in the world is looking for a child

Everyone in the world is looking for one, small, child

Who is running away from the unthinkable

Now when the unthinkable happens

No one is left who can tell the story

So before it happens

Before this one small child is found by everyone in the world

Before she is caught and before she has to face the unthinkable

Here is how it happened

Here is how the unthinkable came into our lives

In fact, it's now impossible for any of us to imagine or even to remember

But

The unthinkable began not so long ago

Family enters. They position themselves in front of the frame that is the TV.

Narrator The unthinkable began not so far away

The unthinkable as no one here will remember

First went unnoticed

It first began in our Family.

Scene 1

The World of the Family

Narrator Like most households that had more than one of everything they ever

needed, the girl's family always gathered to watch the rest of the world

through a box on the table.

GrandFather still preferred to watch the rest of the world through a window.

And the Little Girl? Well, she just loved to watch people's faces.

The whole family is staring at the frame that is the TV. Grandfather is looking out the window. The Little Girl watches the TV, but turns round to look at her family's faces from time to time.

Sister : If only recycling were taken just a little more seriously by everyone ... (Looks at

husband) what do you say? Incredible that more than half the world just does not

recycle. Do your bit no? Why not no? Doesn't take much to fix the world.

Narrator : Everything was as it had always been. Safe. Orderly. Clean.

And then...

Brother : 'Pass me that'.

Narrator : The Little Girl almost doesn't notice.

Brother : Pass me that, please.

Little Girl : What? (Looks around confused)

Brother : (Staring blankly ahead). That.

Narrator : She reaches for the butter.

Brother : No, not that.

Narrator : She reaches for the bread.

Brother : Not that. THAT.

Narrator : She reaches for the soup, the salt, pepper, the chair, the table, the cat ...

Brother : No, not that! No, not that! NO, NOT THAT!!

Narrator : and then because there was nothing in the room left to search, the Little

Girl searches her Brother's eyes. (The Little Girl holds Brother's expressionless face for a moment).

And in the corner of her Brother's eyes she sees just a hint of the unthinkable.

Then, it's gone.

The Little Girl could not think what it meant.

And then...

Sister : (Repeating in the exact same tone as earlier, with a blank expression) If only

recycling were taken just a little more seriously by everyone ... What do you say? Incredible that more than half the world just does not see this. Do your bit no?

Why not no? Doesn't take much to fix the world.

The Little Girl is uneasy again

Little Girl : Grandpa...?

BIL : Change it to the other channel.

Little Girl : What channel?

BIL : The other one. No not that one. The other one.

Litte girl points at the TV with the TV remote and changes the channels.

Father : No not that one. The other one.

Little Girl : Which one?

Brother : That other one. The one with that story.

Little Girl : (confused) Which story?

Sister : That story about those people.

Little Girl : What people?

Father : Those people from that country.

Little Girl : What people? What country?

Sister : Those people who the other people did those things to.

Little Girl : What did they do?

BIL : Those people who were taken there in that thing and then that happened to them.

Brother : That story about those people from that country

Father : (growing impatient) Not that country, the other country.

Sister : What's that you put? Put the other one.

BIL : That country with those people. Put that. Tell her to put that.

Sister : Put that.

Father : Put that.

Brother : Put that.

Little Girl : (shaken up) Grandpa!

A babble of voices. Everyone is shouting instructions to the Little Girl.

Brother : On that day ...

Little Girl : Grandpa!!

Sister : At that place ...

Little Girl : Grandpa please!

The Little Girl is distraught by the strangeness in her family.

Little Girl : What has happened to you? What has happened to you?

Her family turns to look at her.

Father : (slowly) That story about those people from that country who did that thing to

the other people from that other country that day that that thing happened in that place next to that other place where the person went with another person and did

that terribly terrible thing.

Pause

Put that.

Brother : (Firmly) Put that.

Narrator : The people the Little Girl knew best in the world look at her with eyes

emptier than she had ever seen.

The Girl runs to her Grand Father and stands close to him.

Little Girl : Grandpa...

Grand Father : Child, it is time to leave.

Little Girl : What??

Grand Father : My little girl, it is time to run.

Little Girl : Grandpa... I can't leave Grandpa...

Grand Father: It's unthinkable. I know. And this is why you must go. Because the

unthinkable is coming. I promise you.

Little Girl : The unthinkable Grandpa... Have you seen it?

Grand Father: Haven't you seen it? (pause) You must go.

Little Girl : But...

Grand Father: Now leave...

She starts to cry in fear.

Little Girl : Grandpa... I don't understand...

Grand Father: Run child.... (He suddenly slaps her. She is in shock.)

Little Girl : Grandpa?

Grand Father pulls her to him.

Grand Father : Remember me like this. But also remember, anyone can change when the

unthinkable happens. Even me.

Now go.

He pushes her away again.

Little Girl : But what am I running from?

Grand Father: From what you know best. From what you cannot imagine giving up... you are

running away from the unthinkable.

Little Girl : You will come with me? Surely?

Grand Father: Run!

Little Girl : (*Distressed. Pleading*) come with me.

Grand Father: Now Run! Leave now!

Little Girl : I can't Grandpa!!

All : If only recycling were taken just a little more seriously by everyone ... What do

you say? Incredible that more than half the world just does not see this. Do your

no? Why not no? Doesn't take much to fix the world.

Grand Father: Run child. Go and tell the world that the Thought Curfew is coming. The

unthinkable is coming.

Now stop crying and run!

The Little Girl backs out of the room, crying.

Transition 1

The Little Girl's home disappears behind her as she runs. She runs through the city, cutting across buildings as tall as the sky.

Does anyone remember this Little Girl running?

Narrator

Clutching a promise
Carrying the message

The Thought Curfew is coming
The Thought Curfew is on its way
The Unthinkable will be amongst us soon

Do any of you remember how she
Ran from the known and how she ran from the noise?
Behind her the thought curfew
Before her, her grand father's face
Behind her the thought curfew
Before her...
.... a fence....?

The buildings disintegrate suddenly and before her is a barren landscape marked by a tall fence.

The fence so, so high and the fence so, so wide

It cut the whole world into equal bits of sky.

Scene 2

The World of the Refugee camp

The Little girl, surrounded by the fence is also suddenly in the midst of thousands of hopeless looking, immobile people.

Narrator The child had never seen so many people

So many people

Standing so close but not talking

Standing so close but not talking

Looking so tired and not sleeping

Looking so tired and not sleeping

Facing one direction but not moving

Facing one direction but not moving

Thousands of people appearing in twos and threes

Carrying memories not bags

With shadows that stretched first backwards then forwards

Then died at their feet

Shadows that stretched first backwards then forwards

Then died at their feet

Nothing. Else. Moved.

Little Girl : (Approaching the refugees) Why aren't you moving?

Pause.

Refugee : Someone must have told us to stop.

Little Girl : Who?

Refugee : We never know who.

Little Girl : Why don't you start?

Refugee : No one has told us we can.

Little Girl : What are you all waiting for?

All refugees : Bread. Lunch. My daughter. Medicine. My interview. Rain. Water. Dinner.

Shoes. Morning. Justice. Kindness. Boats. Visas. Clothes. Soup. Soap.

Quiet. A place to pray. My documents. Milk. Home. A letter. A shower. A hat.

A scarf. A smile. A chance. A future. A way out. A pen.

The voices fade out as they keep adding to the list of things they are waiting for, in different languages.

Narrator The Little Girl did what she always does when

She cannot understand the words of people

She searched their faces for answers

But... Where is the boy who stood like her brother?

Where is the man who looked like her Father?

Wherever she looked, wherever she looked

Everyone looked the same

In this terribly moving mass of unmoving people

Everyone had the same face

Is this the Thought Curfew?

Is this the unthinkable?

Is it truly upon us?

The girl backs away and starts running again.

The barren landscape with fences as high as the sky collapses behind her as she runs.

Transition 2

Narrator The Little Girl runs

She runs from the unthinkable

The Little Girl is chased

She is chased by her thoughts

As the Little Girl runs, her Grand Father appears onstage.

Little Girl : What was that place Grandpa?

That place with all those people with that face?

Has the unthinkable happened to me Grandpa?

Have I stopped seeing? Have I stopped thinking?

Grnd Fthr/Narrator: If you can see that you cannot see

You can still see my child

If you are scared by your thoughts

You are still thinking my child

Now, my little one

Keep running

The Little Girl sits down exhausted.

Narrator : But the Little Girl cannot forget the unthinkable sadness in the people

that she just saw

She finds she cannot move

Some of you would have seen her – waiting for the unthinkable to

engulf her

You don't remember now, how you passed on

Two of you, whose job it was to stop, finally did stop

Scene 3

NGO

Two people walk onto stage. A confident looking woman and a less confident looking man.

The woman sees the Little Girl seated exhausted on the ground and stops short.

NGO INT : Is that a child? Does she belong here? Pramila what is an unaccompanied minor

doing on our premises?

NGO local : Um...

NGO INT bends over the Little Girl. She is careful not to get too close or to touch her.

NGO INT : Hello little one! Hello.... Where are you from? What's your name? What's

your name? (A little tersely). Pramila.... (then back to the girl.) We are here to protect you... that is our job. Don't worry, you are in a safe space. Where are you from? (Looking at the girl, but with a slight patronizing edge to her voice)

Pramila I could do with some help here...

NGO local : (In Sinhala to the child) – Look child, you can hear right? This Miss can help

you. But you need to open your mouth and talk properly. This Miss can give you

a lot of things. But if you don't talk there's nothing we can do.

NGO INT : Are you translating what I said?

NGO local : Yes... (In Sinhala to the Little Girl). Now tell me now, where are you from?

Which group do you belong to?

NGO INT : What's she saying Pramila?

NGO local : um...

NGO INT : (Taking NGO Local aside) – Now we really need to sort this out. It's a complete

violation of office protocol. Is she with some adult? (Back to the Little Girl).

Where are you parents little one?

NGO local : (in Sinhala) Are you alone?

Little Girl : (In Sinhala) Yes.

NGO INT : (Frantic) She said something! What did she say? Is she here with someone?

NGO local : (to NGO INT) ... No... um.... Often...

NGO INT : Often?? ... Oh... Orphan?

NGO local : yes...

NGO INT : You mean like an IDP Orphan?

NGO local : Yes. Yes. IDP Orphan.

NGO INT : OK – good then that's category D. Fabulous. Now here's what I want you to do

Pramila. First, all the initial paperwork – both languages please and CC me on everything. Then call all camp managers within a 5 mile radius. Call our camps first. Next, read through the SOPs carefully. This is a good capacity-building opportunity for you. Get our communications team on this. It's a solid human-

interest story for our child friendly spaces project. Chop chop ok?

NGO local : (very confused) Yes.

NGO INT : (back to the Little Girl) Now don't worry little one. You are safe with us.

Pramila did you call the camp managers?

NGO local : (on phone in Sinhala) - Hullo. I just whatsapped you a photo of a child. It's a

nice photo. I took it. We can use it in future. We need to find a camp for her.

One of ours is better. Look into it ok? Call me back?

NGO INT : You called? Is there room in the camp?

NGO local : Er... yes.

NGO INT : How many children are there there?

NGO local : er....

NGO INT : In the camp? How many? 100? Or 50? Didn't you ask?

NGO local : Yes. Fifty.

NGO INT : But we still don't know where she's from....

NGO local :(In Sinhala to the Little Girl) - Now please talk. Or you are wasting this Madam's time.

They are both asking her questions. The Little Girl looks from one to another... then she says something inaudible

NGO INT : Shhhhhhhhh!! She said something.

NGO local : (in Sinhala to the girl) – What did you say?

Little Girl : (In English to the NGO INT) - My Grand Father told me to run- to run away

from the Thought Curfew.

NGO INT : (asking NGO LOCAL) What did she say?

NGO local : (In Sinhala) – What did you say?

Little Girl : (In Sinhala) - My Grand Father told me to run away from the Thought Curfew.

NGO INT : What did she say? What Curfew?

NGO local : (In Sinhala to the Girl) – Come on now, say it clearly....

Little Girl : (In Sinhala) - ... thought curfew.

NGO local : (Unsure, in English) Miss, she's running away...from...from...

NGO INT : What?

NGO local : She saying that ... Thought Curfew is coming.

NGO INT : Who is that? Is that some kind of local group?

NGO local : (Fumbling)... it's like... vehicle? ...

NGO INT : Vehicle? Like an abduction vehicle?

NGO local : Yes.... duction vehicle!

NGO INT : Oh really? Massive protection implications. Ok, good, good.

Suddenly, there is the sound of a massive blast.

The International NGO Agent and the Local NGO agent pile themselves into a rescue vehicle that appears almost instantly, and drive off, leaving the Little Girl all by herself again.

The Little Girl, terrified by the blast and the ensuing chaos, calls out after the NGO reps.

Little Girl : Aunty!!

The dark windows roll up and the heavy white vehicle races off, leaving massive tire culverts in the ground and whipping up huge storms of sand around the child.

The Little Girl is left alone. She looks around. Then she gets up and begins to walk.

Narrator The Little Girl realized that she had been foolish to

Cling to the lady

And foolish to cling to the lady's kindness

She knew now that there were many, many places

To which this kind of kindness would never travel

And she realized that she was in one such place

Once more facing the unthinkable

Once more all by herself

....Or not all by herself.

Or all by herself and with someone who was all by himself

Scene 4

The World of the Military

The Little Girl realizes that she stands close to a lone soldier. He is intently guarding against enemies.

She watches him for a while, the way he never takes his eyes off that one place on the horizon.

She goes up to the soldier. She points to the direction that she arrived, which is opposite to the direction that he is watching.

Little Girl : That direction.

The Thought Curfew is coming from that direction

Pause. The solider does not even acknowledge her presence. She tries to get his attention and focus it on the real threat.

Please look there.

It's coming from there, not there.

Please, the Thought Curfew is coming from there.

Please...

The soldier ignores her. She sits down exhausted.

Suddenly, her Grand Father appears from a distance.

Little Girl : Grandfather! How did you find me?

Grand Father: I know how you think. I followed your thoughts.

The Little Girl embraces him, thankfully.

Little Girl : You won't leave me now, will you?

Grand Father : (*smiles*) That would be unthinkable.

Now let's keep moving.

Little Girl : Do we have far to go?

Grand Father: How far will you go to escape a thought curfew?

Little Girl : I will run my whole life.

Grand Father : Good.

They pass by a range of soldiers.

Little Girl : What are they guarding against GrandFather?

Grand Father : Against enemies.

Little Girl : But the real enemy is the thought curfew, right?

Grand Father : It's funny, but people always see other people as enemies. And armies and

soldiers are in place to fight people – not to fight thoughts.

Pause

There is a distant noise of bells, chimes and chanting.

Little Girl : What's that? That sounds nice...

Her Grand Father is suddenly hesitant. He pauses in his tracks.

Grand Father : Maybe we should go back.

Little Girl : But Grandpa – Behind us is full of unthinking people. We have to move

forward. (Looking in the direction of the sound) What is that place?

Grand Father : (not moving forward) I am not sure we should go.

Little Girl : I can't walk any further. Please grandpa. Please take me there.

The sounds of the chanting and music become louder.

Little Girl : Please grandpa.

The Grand Father hesitates, still.

Scene 5

The World of Religion

The Little Girl and her Grand Father are suddenly surrounded by a crowd of devotees, chanting and praying.

Narrator The Little Girl heard them before she saw them

And when she saw them, she could not believe them

Pillars of prayers – proclaiming hope

Walls of faith - blocking out all doubt

A marketplace of miracles

Trading only in the absolute truth

This place of belief was beyond belief.

The Devotees are caught up in their rituals and their chanting. The Little Girl is caught up in the crowd. She suddenly realizes she cannot find her Grand Father. She looks for him, amongst the chanting crowds.

Little Girl : What is this place?

Devotee : Everything comes from God.

Little Girl : I have lost my grandFather.

Devotee : God is good.

Little Girl : There is a Thought Curfew coming.

Devotee : God is coming. He will soon be amongst us.

Little Girl : No, God is not coming, the Thought Curfew is coming.

Devotee : Let nothing but good befall this child.

Narrator : The people danced around her questions and prayed for her deliverance.

Little Girl : (Suddenly spotting her grandfather among the devotees) Grandpa!

She rushes to him, relieved.

Little Girl : Grandpa! We have to leave. We have to warn the rest of the people that the

Thought Curfew is ...

The Little Girl pauses, suddenly caught by a strangeness in her Grand Father.

Little Girl : (in a tiny little voice) Come with me Grandpa...

Narrator : But his eyes are set on the heavens.

Little Girl : Come with me Grandpa... please ... please Grandpa....

But the GrandFather is now one of the devotees. His eyes turned upward to the skies and away from his Grand daughter, he chants and prays just like everyone else around him.

Little Girl : Please Grandpa...

Suddenly she looks defeated.

Little Girl Grandpa, the Thought Curfew is not just behind me is it Grandpa?

Narrator : The Little Girl had so much to remember that she had forgotten that the world was round. She had been running away from the unthinkable but it had been spreading around the globe in all directions and now she knew that

it was not only behind, her, it was also ahead of her and it was surrounding

her.

Little Girl : The Thought Curfew is all around me isnt' it Grandpa?

Pause.

The Grand Father is lost to the Litlte Girl.

The Little Girl is lost.

Little Girl : Tell me what to do Grandpa. I don't know what to do.

Suddenly, the Grand Father she recognizes emerges from the face of the man before her and he looks deep into her eyes.

Grand Father: Remember me as you last saw me my child.

Now stop crying and run.

He then returns to his chanting and to his world and to his thoughts.

The Little Girl backs away from the World of Religion and her Grandfather she no longer recognizes.

Narrator : The Little Girl thought about all the people she had seen

All the people who didn't' see her

She thought about all the people who she could not forget

All the people who will not remember her

She was very scared

The Little Girl tired to think what to do

But she could not think

The Little Girl tried to think where to go

But she could not think

And while she could not think

And she could not think

And she could not think

The Little Girl had a thought.

And that was all she needed

The Little Girl walks towards the light, towards the audience and exits stage.

END

Production Credits

Thought Curfew was first performed at the **Kigali Genocide Memorial Amphitheatre**, **Rwanda**, on 15th July 2018, for the **4th Ubumuntu Arts Festival**, with the following cast and crew:

CAST

Little Girl Indika Lakmal

Grand Father/ Devotee Duminda Sandaruwan

Father/ Refugee/ Devotee Sanjeewa Upendra

Brother/ Refugee/ Soldier/ Devotee Akalanka Prabhashwara

Sister/ Refugee/ NGO Intl Agent/ Devotee Piumi Wijesundara

Brother-in-law/ Refugee/ NGO Local Agent/ Devotee Pramila Samarakoon

DESIGN TEAM

Directors David Cotterrell

Ruwanthie de Chickera

Designer David Cotterrell

Composers John Avery

Ron Wright

Costume Design Dinushika Senevirathne

Make up Indika Lakmal

3D Animator Ian Sanders

PRODUCTION TEAM

Stage Manager Akalanka Prabhashwara

Lights Operator Megan Lang

Sound Operator Amanzi Ndoli Yannik Nicholas

Subtitle Operator Amanzi Ndoli Yannik Nicholas

Set Construction Kubwimana Djuma

Jayampathi Guruge

Cast Care Rohith Peiris

Sri Lankan Community in Rwanda

Casting David Cotterrell

Ruwanthie de Chickera

Publicity Design David Cotterrell

Rehearsal Photography Malith Hegoda

Campaign Photography Malith Hegoda

Prauda Buwaneka

Production Photography Prauda Buwaneka

Ubumuntu Festival Official Photographer

Video Prauda Buwaneka

Video Documentation Malith Hegoda

Digital Documentation Lasantha

Rajitha

Rehearsal Documentation Biyanka Amarasinghe

Production Assistant Sanjaya Ekneligoda

Production Coordinator Innocent Munyeshuri

Producer Piumi Wijesundara

The script of *Thought Curfew* was developed with the assistance and input of the following artists

Akalanka Prabhashwara

Biyanka Amarasinghe

Dilrukshi Fonseka

Dulanja Dilshan

Duminda Sandaruwan

Indika Lakmal

Kanchana Malshani

Nadie Kammallaweera

Pathum Dharmarathna

Piumi Wijesundara

Pramila Samarakoon

Sanjeewa Upendra

For more detailed insights on this play, including the back story about how it was made, an analysis of all its design elements, its production video, soundtrack, publicity campaign, all press reviews and audience comments, and more, please visit its production page on the Stages Theatre Group website www.stages.lk

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