

MAARIFA: THE PLAY

"A Plan to Overcome a Difficulty"

Story by Jessica Steyn and Stella Ndiho

Adapted for the stage by Christina Nduba-Banja

## ACT ONE

## Armor of Positive Living

PROMISE, a 13-year-old girl, and TRUTH, a 19-year-old boy, are cousins. Promise lives with NANA FLORENCE, her grandmother in the village. Truth has come to visit before going back to college. Promise and Truth sit under a tree, drinking chai and eating chapati, and talking about what has been happening since they last saw one another a year ago.

TRUTH

And then the guy on the motorcycle shouted "TURN THE OTHER WAY" before flying through the air and landing in the mud (laughs) you should have seen it Promise. It was like an action film.

TRUTH

Promise?

Promise recovers and tries to seem interested.

PROMISE

Sorry, what were you saying about the motorcycle falling?

TRUTH

(Jokingly) Stop pretending you were listening. Am I boring you? If I didn't know any better, I would think you weren't happy I was visiting.

PROMISE

No, I'm very happy. I missed you! I'm just thinking about so many things.

TRUTH

School, or what?

PROMISE

No. But let me not spoil the fun. Tell me more stories about your exciting life.

TRUTH

I'm more interested in listening to what's disturbing you. You know you can always talk to me. We are not just cousins; I'm also your friend.

PROMISE

(Tries to speak) It's just...I think...I don't know...Ah, I don't even know where to start. It's too much. I can't...

TRUTH

Maybe you'll feel more comfortable to share if I also share something I've been struggling to tell you. I meant it when I said that we are friends. So I really wanted to tell my friend that nine months ago I found out I was HIV positive.

PROMISE

What? Are you sure?

TRUTH

Positive (laughs) Get it?

PROMISE

I understand, but that is not funny Truth. That's what has killed so many people I love. I do not want to die like my mum and dad. Why is this happening?

As she speaks she gets more hysterical and starts to cry. Nana Florence has finished making tea and carries it to the pair as Promise speaks.

NANA FLORENCE

You told her?

Truth nods

PROMISE

Nana Florence, you knew he was dying and you didn't tell me?

TRUTH

Honestly Promise, it's not that bad. I feel really good. I take my medication and eat healthy food. I am not sick and I plan to stay healthy for a long time.

PROMISE

But I thought everyone with HIV dies just like mum and dad...The same way I'm going to die one day soon.

NANA FLORENCE

Promise, I loved your parents dearly, and I really wish they had followed doctor's orders because they might have still been here with us today. But your father refused to take medication and your mother only took medicine for a short time and then decided to see a witch doctor. That does not mean you must go through the same thing they did. You can make different choices.

TRUTH

Exactly Nana Florence, you know when I first found out, I felt very bad. I was afraid of dying. I could not tell anybody how I was feeling. I didn't know what to do.

PROMISE

What changed?

TRUTH

One day I went to the clinic to pick my medicine and there was a counselor there. I decided to talk to him about how I was feeling. He told me I was special and I just could not believe him. But he insisted that I'm special because God only made one Truth and He knew me, and the plan for my life, even before I was born. The counselor told me that God knows that I have HIV and He knows how to take care of me.

PROMISE

And you believed him? Do you really think God takes care of us even if we have HIV?

TRUTH

One hundred percent! But he needs you to do your part too and that's the hard part but you can do it. Here's what you have to do, it's called putting on the armor of positive living.

1. Accept your HIV status.
2. Adhere to medication.
3. Make good choices.
4. Ask God for help.
5. Get the correct information.
6. Be abstinent before marriage and faithful after marriage.
7. Identify people you can trust.
8. C.A.R.E. for yourself (That stands for condoms, abstinence, responsibility and excuses.)
9. Be empowered to be responsible.

PROMISE

I've never heard that before. Please, Tell me more!

## ACT TWO

## Breastplate = Self-acceptance

Nana Florence, Promise and Truth are eating a meal together

PROMISE

Sometimes I feel so alone Truth. I'm scared that no one will want to be my friend if they know I'm sick. I don't know why I'm alive. I hear my friends talk about their dreams for the future and I don't even know if I have a future.

TRUTH

I understand how you feel. When I found out I had HIV, I felt very scared of dying and was afraid of telling anyone. But the doctor taught me the difference between HIV and AIDS. HIV is a virus, which you can get through blood, sex or can be transmitted from mother-to-child; while AIDS is the final stage of HIV and happens when your immune system is not working properly and you get another disease that your body can't fight. Do you understand?

PROMISE

Yes

TRUTH

The doctor told me that if I take my medication correctly at the same time every day, and I eat healthy, balanced meals, I can live for many years without having AIDS even if I'm HIV positive.

PROMISE

But it's not fair that we have to live like this for the rest of our lives. Why did God give us HIV?

TRUTH

Oh Promise, God did not give me HIV. God created me, just like He created you. He loves me and will protect and care for me always even though I have HIV.

NANA FLORENCE

Truth is right. Promise, God loves you very much and He does not give us diseases. He allows us to struggle and suffer and go through hard times so that we will remember that we need Him.

PROMISE

But I feel like God has forgotten me. He took my parents away and now even Truth and I have it.

NANA FLORENCE

Oh baby, don't cry. I love you. God loves you and will never forget you. Whenever you feel scared or alone, pray to God to give you courage. He will hear and answer your prayers.

*Truth comforts Promise as well*

TRUTH

Promise, God has a plan for our lives. We are young and strong and smart. HIV is not who we are, it is just a virus that we have and we can fight it. Do you know what a breastplate is?

*Promise shakes her head to show that she does not.*

TRUTH

Well like soldiers used to wear to war in Rome to protect themselves. They also had a sword or a spear but they covered themselves in armor to protect themselves from attack and injury. An important part of that armor was the breastplate, which covered their chest to protect their heart among other parts.

PROMISE

Are you saying I have to wear a breastplate to protect myself from HIV?

TRUTH

Yes, but not physically. In the Bible we read about putting on the armor of God, but it does not mean you walk around every day dressed in heavy metal.

PROMISE

*(Laughs)* That would be funny.

TRUTH

*(Laughs)* Yes, it would and people would think you had gone crazy. But in the same way, you have to have armor to fight HIV. To live positively Promise, you need to learn to accept and love yourself the way you are now, even with HIV. Self-Acceptance is the breastplate of positive living. Accepting your HIV status is like putting God's protective armor over your heart. No one can make you feel bad about yourself, if you know you are a child of God and He is protecting and guiding you.

PROMISE

So you are saying I need to accept my status, just accept that I am going to die?

NANA FLORENCE

No. I think Truth is saying you need to start being kind to yourself and stop using your HIV status to beat yourself up. When I look at you I see my lovely granddaughter who has so much to live for and that is why I work hard to take care of you. You also need to start seeing yourself positively and loving yourself so that you can take proper care of you.

TRUTH

Exactly, Promise. Self-acceptance is the first step you need to take to live a healthy life with HIV.

NANA FLORENCE

Now you two need to go to bed. I think Promise has enough to think about for tonight.

Promise and Truth exit as Nana Florence clears the table and exits as well.

ACT THREE  
Shield = Adherence

Promise and Truth are walking together carrying buckets to fetch water. They stop at the river and start collecting water as they talk.

TRUTH

Why were you angry today when Nana reminded you to take your medication?

PROMISE

Ah, I'm tired of this medicine. I don't want to take medicine every day and what about next year when I'm in boarding school? All the students will know that I'm sick if I take medicine everyday! They will ask me questions. What am I going to tell them?

TRUTH

Promise calm down. First, you must take your medicine everyday because it protects you from getting sick. Would you rather be sick and unable to go to school?

PROMISE

*(Looks down/away upset)* No.

TRUTH

Look, I didn't say that to upset you. I'm sorry Promise; I understand what you feel...do you remember the armor I told you about yesterday?

PROMISE

Yes.

TRUTH

Well another important part of the armor is the shield. The shield represents adherence. Did your doctor tell you what adherence means?

PROMISE

*(Sheepishly)* Maybe, I didn't understand everything he said. I didn't understand but Nana Florence understood so I stopped paying attention.

TRUTH

Adherence is like obedience. At home you have to obey Nana Florence. In school you have to obey your teachers. Because we are children of God, we obey God. When you live with HIV, you have to obey the rules of the treatment, or you will get sick. So adherence is just following the rules.

PROMISE

What are the rules? Does everybody with HIV have to follow them?

TRUTH

The rules are simple, take your medicine every day at the same time, eat healthy food and exercise. And yes, everyone with HIV has to follow these rules.

PROMISE

What kind of medicine do I have to take? I take some now. Nana gives me medicine every morning after breakfast but I really don't know what I'm taking. Are they important?

TRUTH

The medication is called ARVs, which is short for anti-retroviral medicine. The name is not important. You can just remember ARV but yes, they are important.

PROMISE

Sometimes when I take ARVs, I don't feel good.

TRUTH

That only happens at the beginning when you start taking them, it usually goes away when your body gets used to the medicine. But sometimes, when you don't eat balanced, nutritious meals while taking ARVs you also don't feel well.

PROMISE

What is a balanced, nutritious meal?

TRUTH

You have to make sure you eat plenty of fruits and vegetables and eat enough food every day. So, if you take your medicine correctly and eat nutritious food then you will stay healthy and won't get opportunistic infections.

PROMISE

Say what? Opportun...those are big words.

TRUTH

Oh sorry, I keep forgetting you're still a baby!

PROMISE

(Playfully punches him) I'm not a baby! I just hadn't heard that before, so please explain and stop calling me a baby!

TRUTH

Okay, you're not a baby! So let me explain. Opportunistic infections are illnesses that other people can also get but people with HIV whose immune systems don't work as well are not able to fight them off easily.

PROMISE

Like what? A cold?

TRUTH

(Nods) TB, pneumonia, really any illness can harm you when your immune system is low.

PROMISE

I understand. Fruits, vegetables and medicine are my shield. But what do I tell the kids in boarding school about why I take medicine every day?

TRUTH

(Pauses to think) I know that's a hard one. You know what, I promise I'll tell you but I think we should talk about the full armor piece by piece and I think the next piece we'll talk about is the helmet. Now how about we head back before Nana Florence thinks crocodiles have eaten us.

ACT FOUR  
Helmet = Choices

Truth and Promise arrive in the compound and Nana Florence greets them. She looks like she is about to leave.

NANA FLORENCE

You've come back. Put the water there. Promise, will you please wash your red dress. You will wear it to the wedding. Truth, after it dries please see that she gets dressed.

TRUTH

Okay.

NANA FLORENCE

Thank you. I'm going to the market, I'll be back this evening.

*Promise has been silent but works up the courage to speak before Nana Florence walks out.*

PROMISE

Nana Florence.

NANA FLORENCE

Mmmm?

PROMISE

You said I could get a new dress to wear to the wedding.

NANA FLORENCE

Sorry Sweetie, but this month I just don't have the money. But you look very pretty in your red dress. You'll be stylish wearing the red dress.

*Nana Florence exits. Truth notices Promise looks sad.*

TRUTH

You look disappointed Promise. What's wrong?

PROMISE

I just really wanted a new dress for the wedding. All the other girls have been talking about their new dresses and I'll be going with an

old one. There is someone else who wants to buy me clothes but...No, it's okay.

TRUTH

What's wrong? Please tell me.

PROMISE

Well...one of the men who hang out at the kiosks said he would buy one for me, but I had to do something for him.

TRUTH

What does he want you to do?

PROMISE

You know, be nice to him, kiss him and stuff like that.

TRUTH

Promise, did he ask you to have sex with him?

PROMISE

*(Shyly)* Yes.

TRUTH

Promise, that kind of favor is not a good choice and when living with HIV it's very important to make good choices. I think we need to talk about the helmet now.

PROMISE

Let me guess, helmet has to do with protecting your mind, right?

TRUTH

Very good. Now your making me feel like a teacher. Anyway, we make choices with our minds. The helmet of positive living is God's way of protecting our thoughts. In order to make good choices we need the right information.

PROMISE

But where do I get the right information?

TRUTH

You can always ask questions about HIV to your doctor or nurse at the clinic or to a counselor. Nana Florence and I can also help you. There are lots of people who don't really understand about HIV and might give you the wrong information. So it's important to always make sure that what you're being told is the truth.

PROMISE

But what does this have to do with the Mr. Kiosk?

TRUTH

Who?

PROMISE

The guy who wants to buy me the dress.

TRUTH

When you know the correct information about HIV, then you can make good choices based on that information, like how to choose your friends and what are good and bad favors. Some kids will do things that are not good like drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes and getting sugar daddies. Those things are harmful to your body and your mind, especially if you have HIV.

PROMISE

But how do I tell Mr. Kiosk no? He is always asking me.

TRUTH

When someone asks you to do something you don't want to do, you say two positive things and sandwich them the no between them. You say NO in a sandwich.

PROMISE

*(Laughs)* A sandwich? What does that mean?

TRUTH

Let me give you an example. Your friend offers you a beer. You first say, "I'm glad we've been friends for so long." (This is a positive statement - a yes.) Then you say, "I don't drink alcohol." (The no.) Then you say, "But maybe we can have a mango juice at the kiosk instead." (Another positive statement - a yes.) So it's like the positive stuff is the bread and the no is the butter, but because it is covered in bread it still looks delicious. So what would you say to Mr. Kiosk?

PROMISE

I would say that it's nice of him to offer. Then I would say that I'll wait until my grandmother can buy me a dress. Then I would invite him to church, which is a positive activity because asking for sex from a young girl is not behaving the way God wants him to!

TRUTH

That's good Promise.

PROMISE

So now I know about the breastplate, the shield and the helmet, so what else do I need?

TRUTH

I will tell you tomorrow. It's the perfect day for it.

ACT FIVE

Foundation = Relationship with God

Promise, Nana Florence and Truth are eating breakfast.  
Promise breaks the silence.

PROMISE

I've decided I'm not going to church.

NANA FLORENCE

Why not?

PROMISE

There's no point in going to church to worship a God who doesn't care about me. Who is God really? And why did He make me? I'm now accepting myself and learning to love myself with HIV like you taught me Truth, but that doesn't mean I have to accept a God who ignores me.

NANA FLORENCE

But we told you sweetie, God is the creator of the whole world. He made us. We are created in His image. You are a child of God.

PROMISE

If I am His daughter, how can he allow me to have HIV?

TRUTH

God created us to worship and praise Him. You are here because He specifically wanted to make you the way you are. You are special to Him. He will provide and care for you as long as you believe in Him and pray for his support and care. This relationship between you and God is the foundation of your life and your identity. Your identity is who you are. HIV is only a virus that you have, it is not who you are.

PROMISE

But I can't see God. How can I have a relationship with Him?

TRUTH

Open your soul. Allow the Holy Spirit to rule over you. You choose to love Him and pray to Him. He is not only your heavenly Father, He is your friend. Treat Him like you would treat your best friend, even better because he is always there for you!

PROMISE

God is my friend?

NANA FLORENCE

Yes, and he will never leave you. Now let's get ready to go to church and talk to our Friend.

ACT SIX

Sword = Information

Promise and Truth are playing football. Promise runs after the ball and falls. She hurts her knee. Truth rushes to help her but Promise's first reaction is to pull away. She then relaxes and allows him to help her up.

TRUTH

Are you all right?

PROMISE

Eh, Yes, I'm okay. I was just remembering something I wanted to ask you.

TRUTH

What? About football?

PROMISE

No. I heard my friends talking about how you get HIV. They said you can get it from sharing food, playing with or living with someone with HIV.

TRUTH

Wow. Your friends are wrong! You can't get HIV from doing any of those things. The only way to get HIV is through blood, sex or from mother to child during childbirth. So you can get HIV from tears, saliva, feces, urine or vomit. You must have all the facts about HIV to be able to live positively and educate others.

PROMISE

So where do I start?

TRUTH

You must find out the truth. If you know the truth about HIV there is nothing and no one to be afraid of. The truth is your sword. You use it to cut through the lies and clear the path for truth.

PROMISE

How do I do that?

TRUTH

You teach others. Educating others about HIV is a matter of telling people the truth. Sometimes you will hear people saying that it is a judgment from God. This is not true. God doesn't give people HIV. HIV is a natural consequence of someone's sin, whether yours or someone else's.

PROMISE

So what truth is this?

TRUTH

I've told you how you get HIV and how you don't get it. When you hear someone saying something about HIV that is not true you can tell them the truth. If they say ask you how you know, just tell them you asked a doctor because you wanted to know the truth. If people spread rumors about you saying you have HIV, you can respond by asking them how they would feel if someone spread rumors about them. Tell them it is not their place to talk about other people's medical status. Basically, if you do not have something good to say about someone, it's best not to say anything at all.

PROMISE

I'm feeling stronger already! I have a breastplate, a shield, a helmet, a firm foundation and now a sword. I feel ready for whatever comes my way.

TRUTH

Yes you do, but there is more to the armor. Let's go get a drink of water.

## ACT SEVEN A

Heart = Faithfulness

Wait Until Marriage (Part 1)

Promise and Truth are sitting next to each other reading. Promise keeps looking up to see what Truth is doing. Truth stops reading to gaze at the sky. He notices Promise peeping at him from the corner of his eye.

TRUTH

Hmm...I can see you have a story for me.

PROMISE

Not a story...a question.

TRUTH

Ah...ask me.

PROMISE

Well...there is a boy in class 7 who said he likes me. He asked me to be his friend.

TRUTH

Well there's nothing wrong with having friends. Have as many friends as you like.

PROMISE

Truth! Stop pretending! You know I don't mean just a friend. You know what I mean.

TRUTH

*(Smiling)* I'm not sure. Tell me again.

PROMISE

He wants me to be his *(whispers)* girlfriend.

TRUTH

Oh! And what do you think about this?

PROMISE

I don't know. Nana Florence says I'm too young to have a boyfriend.

TRUTH

Well Nana Florence is very wise and you should listen to her. Trust me, there will be plenty of time for a boyfriend when you are old enough. Don't be in a hurry.

*Promise looks disappointed.*

TRUTH

That's not the answer you wanted?

PROMISE

Well...I know other girls my age who have boyfriends. Some of them are also...having sex.

TRUTH

Well as I said, having a boyfriend is not a bad thing but it's good when you are older and more mature. Do you understand? Also, having a boyfriend does not mean you must have sex. There is a verse in the Bible that talks about your body being a temple of God.

PROMISE

What does that mean?

*Nana Florence walks in but stands still when she hears what the pair is talking about. She listens carefully without them noticing she has arrived.*

TRUTH

It means that God made you in his image, God designed sex for marriage, so if you have sex before you get married, you are sinning against God and damaging your temple, your body. Being faithful and being pure of heart, mind and body is the best gift you can give each other on your wedding day.

PROMISE

That sounds like a nice gift.

TRUTH

It is. But being faithful is also a good way to avoid the consequences of sex before marriage. Consequences are the results of doing something, and you can have good or bad results. Have you learned about reproductive systems in school?

PROMISE

We have learnt a bit but I still have so many questions. We have not been taught about the conse...(Truth assists her to pronounce the word) consequences of having sex before you get married.

TRUTH

You can get pregnant, or get an STD, that's a sexually transmitted disease, some of which are very painful and never go away or you can get HIV and for someone like you or me, we can give some one HIV.

PROMISE

Yuck, I would never want to get anyone sick or to get other sicknesses. What can I do for those bad things not to happen to me?

TRUTH

You can decide not to have sex before you get married.

PROMISE

That's it? That's all I have to do? That doesn't sound too hard.

TRUTH

Its not hard if you ask God for His help.

NANA FLORENCE

Not having sex before you get married also protects your heart. It's all part of the armor. Being faithful is one way you can show your love for God.

*Both Truth and Promise are startled, as they hadn't noticed Nana Florence was in the room.*

PROMISE

*(Smiling)* I feel so much better knowing I have you and Truth to talk to. I don't know what I do without you!

TRUTH

Actually, I was about to tell you about building your army.

PROMISE

*(Laughs)* Why? Am I going to war?

TRUTH

No, your army is the people who support you. Who will stay by your side, but before we do that I want to share my story about how I got HIV.

NANA FLORENCE

Truth, she is still a child. You will tell her later.

TRUTH

But she has begun to ask these questions. She should know so she knows the things we tell her are the truth. She shouldn't make the same mistakes I did.

NANA FLORENCE

That is true. That is why we tell our stories.

ACT SEVEN B  
The Flashback

Wait Until Marriage (Part 2)

Truth narrates the story of how he got HIV while also taking part in the action. The role of the Sugar Daddy is played by Nana Florence in a jacket and hat with her back to the audience most of the time. The part of Lily is played by Grace, in a wig and high heels, back also to the audience.

TRUTH

It was the first day of new student orientation at college when I first saw her. Her name was Lily. She was a second year, and was assigned to show our group around campus. She was so smart and beautiful that I didn't see much of the campus. I was concentrating on Lily.

*Lily walks across the room pointing at different objects while Truth talks.*

LILY

These are the Ladies' rooms. Does any one have a question?

*Truth raises his hand.*

TRUTH

Do you stay here?

LILY

*(Laughs)* You're silly. I think you'll enjoy it here. You need a sense of humor to survive.

*Lily turns her back to the audience.*

TRUTH

At the end of the tour we exchanged numbers. I called her that night and we had lunch the next day. The rest is history. I was a virgin and Lily told me she had only one boyfriend before me. We were in love and

decided to go all the way. We were careful at first to use protection but over the next few months as our relationship progressed we stopped using condoms.

*Enter Br. Boss (Nana Florence in a suit). Lily quickly runs to him and starts to dance for him.*

(Continued..)

TRUTH

Lily never talked about her family and only generally said where she was from. I heard rumors that Lily had a sugar daddy who paid for her college and bought her all the nice clothes that I admired on her. I didn't believe it at first but then I realized that every few weekends she wouldn't be available and refused to tell me where she was.

*As he talks Lily moves toward him. Mr. Boss turns his back to the audience. She then talks.*

LILY

Stop pestering me about this Truth. Where I go over the weekends is my own business.

*Lily turns her back to the audience and freezes.*

TRUTH

Lily finally confessed and we broke up. She was my first love and I was heartbroken. My friend Raymond told me I should get an HIV test and I didn't think it was necessary because I'd only slept with one person. But Raymond kept insisting, so finally I went to a VCT near campus and was tested. I was so shocked when I found out that I was positive. The VCT advised me to call Lily and tell her I was positive so she could get tested too. I was so angry, I knew she had done this to me but I called her anyway.

*Truth picks up the phone and dials. Lily unfreezes and answers her phone.*

TRUTH

We need to talk. Can you meet me for coffee?

LILY

Yes, of course.

*The two meet at the centre of the stage. Lily listens to him talk and starts to cry.*

TRUTH

When I told Lily she cried and cried and then she agreed to get tested if I would go with her. Lily's test was also positive. Somehow all the anger melted away and I was sad to find out my friend was also HIV positive. I told her that even though we weren't dating anymore, I would still like to be friends and support one another. Luckily she agreed and we support each other through this.

ACT EIGHT

Guard = Identify Friends and Family  
 Truth is asleep. Promise bursts into his room and wakes him up

PROMISE

Truth wake up. There's an emergency!

TRUTH

(Startled) What? Where? Who? Promise! What's going on?

PROMISE

It's an emergency! I was outside and I saw my friend Grace walking to her house with her mum. What do I do?

TRUTH

Ahhh...don't go out?

PROMISE

No. Not that! We have been friends for a long time and next year we are going to the same boarding school. I'm so excited to see her, but I'm not sure if I should tell her I have HIV.

TRUTH

Okay, let me wake up, that's a heavy topic. (Stretches) Deciding who to tell about your status is hard. That's what I meant by your army last night - the people who will support you and love you no matter what. Do you think Grace can be part of that army?

PROMISE

I didn't want to tell you at first but you told me you had HIV, it made it easier to tell you. But she might not have HIV so I don't know how she will react.

TRUTH

There are many people who have the wrong information about HIV. They are scared of people living with HIV, and because they are afraid they say bad things about people living with HIV. It's called stigma. When you do things to harm a person with HIV, that's called discrimination.

PROMISE

So you are saying people are unkind because they are scared? That doesn't make a lot of sense.

TRUTH

No, it doesn't, but it's the truth. People often do bad things because they are afraid. They are afraid if they become your friend, then someone will make fun of them for hanging out with you. Or they are just so afraid of HIV because they don't know how to protect themselves from it, so they won't even attempt to be your friend.

PROMISE

What do I do?

TRUTH

You carefully choose your friends. Especially the ones you want to know your status. When you tell someone your status it's called disclosure. You have disclosed your status to me. I'm your cousin and you knew I had HIV and would understand how you feel and what you are going through, but everyone might not react the same way I do. It's good to ask people questions about HIV to find out what they know and if they are likely to stigmatize you or discriminate against you.

*Nana Florence calls out to Promise.*

NANA FLORENCE

Promise! Grace has come to see you.

PROMISE

I'm coming. (*To Truth*) So you are saying I shouldn't tell her?

TRUTH

No that's not what I mean. It's so important to have friends or family who know your status and love and support you. They will be there when you are feeling depressed or scared. It's also important not to tell anyone else about your friends who might also be living with HIV. Remember to "Do No Harm" meaning that you won't do to anyone else what you wouldn't want done to you. If we are made in God's image then we won't gossip or say mean things about other people.

PROMISE

Okay. I think I want to tell her. I think she can be in my army and that she has my back. I only hope it will go all right. So I protect my front with my breastplate, my shield, my helmet and my sword. I stand on a firm foundation and face my struggles with God's love in my heart and my army protects my back. I like that.

*Nana Florence calls out from off stage.*

NANA FLORENCE

PROMISE! Have you forgotten your guest?

PROMISE

No, I'm coming! *(To Truth)* Okay, let me run! Thanks Truth!

Promise runs out and Truth goes back to sleep.

ACT NINE

Gloves = C.A.R.E.

*(Condoms, Abstinence, Responsibility, Excuses)*

Promise and Truth are walking together from the wedding. Promise is wearing her red dress.

PROMISE

Oh Truth wasn't the bride beautiful! She looked like a Hollywood superstar. One day I'll get married and wear a beautiful white dress and people will buy me gifts. *(Stops herself)* Truth, can people like us who have HIV get married? Can we have children?

TRUTH

Yes, you can get married and have children. We just have to do things a bit differently. We have a few more steps that people who are negative don't have to make, but it's not hard.

PROMISE

So not only taking medicine everyday. There is something else?

TRUTH

Taking medicine every day isn't easy, but people with all kinds of illness have to take medicine every day. Remember the armor? Well there's a part I haven't told you about. The gloves. You will need to put on gloves that represent how you will care for yourself.

PROMISE

So what does putting on gloves mean?

TRUTH

There are four letters of the alphabet that will help you remember what to do. The letters are C. A. R. E. They stand for condoms, abstinence, responsibility and excuses.

PROMISE

I'm only 13, Truth, why do I need to know about condoms?

TRUTH

You are right, Promise. You don't need to know about condoms now, but it is good for you to be prepared with information, for when you are grown up. It is best to abstain from sex before marriage but even when you are married you will have to use condoms.

PROMISE

Even if I'm married, why? Even if we will both be faithful?

TRUTH

Because you have HIV, there is always a risk that you will infect your husband. If he is negative, he could get HIV; if he is positive, he could get a different type of HIV that is resistant to ARVs. Since you are made in the image of God, and therefore showing His love you will also want to protect them from HIV. So you will always use condoms.

PROMISE

I understand; so that means abstinence before marriage and condoms after marriage.

TRUTH

Yes, That's what we call being in a responsible relationship. That's one where you do no harm to yourself or the person you love. We've already talked about the consequences to having sex before marriage; do you remember what they are?

PROMISE

How could I forget: getting pregnant, getting an STD and getting HIV.

TRUTH

Many people have lots of excuses for not caring for themselves or their partners. Can you think of any that people might use?

PROMISE

I'm not sure but I always hear some of the older girls saying that everyone is having sex so why shouldn't they? I heard on the radio the other day that boys don't like condoms so that's why they don't use them. Those are the excuses I've heard.

TRUTH

We make excuses to avoid making hard choices and decisions. We make excuses to try to cover up our unhealthy behavior. But if we put on the armor of positive living, we can face tough situations and know how to do the right thing and feel good about doing the right thing. One day you are going to make a beautiful bride Promise, I believe that. There is just one more thing you need to complete your armor...the belt.

## ACT TEN

Belt = Empowerment

Grace and Promise have just finished packing Promise's bags to go to boarding school.

GRACE

I have to go now. Mum will be angry if I'm late.

PROMISE

It's okay. Thanks for coming to help me pack. I'm happy we are going to the same school.

GRACE

Yes, so am I.

PROMISE

Grace, before you go, can I ask you a question? What do you know about HIV?

GRACE

Before my aunt got sick, I only knew what they taught us in school and the rumors I heard in the village, my aunt was tested at the VCT and was put on ARVs and now she is doing much better.

PROMISE

And you still love your auntie, even though she has HIV?

GRACE

Of course I do. She has HIV but she is still the same person.

PROMISE

*(Eyes filling up with tears)* I have something to tell you, I'm HIV positive too.

GRACE

Oh Promise, I'm so sorry. How can I help you?

PROMISE

My cousin Truth told me about the armor of positive living. It's how you can take care of yourself when you are positive. I'll tell you all about it tomorrow, but run home before your mum makes noise.

GRACE

Okay, I promise I won't tell anyone.

PROMISE

Thanks Grace!

*After Grace leaves Promise finds Truth and tells him that she disclosed her status to Grace.*

TRUTH

You told her?

PROMISE

Yes, she was very understanding.

TRUTH

How do you feel about telling her?

PROMISE

I'm so happy! I was so angry and scared before. Now I have you and Nana Florence and Grace to talk to. And I know all the facts about HIV and I have the tools to live positively so I can help others do so too.

TRUTH

That's your last piece of armor - the belt. It ties all the pieces together. When we have the correct information and God's love within us we are empowered to help others who cannot yet speak out for themselves.

PROMISE

I'm not afraid any more Truth. I'm ready to live positively. My new life looks like this: I've accepted my status. I'm adhering to

treatment, eating a balanced nutritious diet and exercising and I'm going to do my best to make good choices.

## PROMISE

I'm going to obey God's word and build a strong relationship with Him so I will have a firm foundation for my life. I seek information from reliable people and I don't listen to myths or rumors. I will be faithful to the man I choose to spend my life with and wait to have sex until I am married.

## PROMISE

I have a support network of Truth, Nana Florence and Grace and I will add more friends and family to this group in time. I will use condoms to protect myself and my husband from HIV, I will abstain from sex until I'm married, I will be responsible in all aspects of my life. I won't make excuses for my behavior if I do something wrong. I now know its okay to speak out about HIV to help prevent the virus from spreading. I can help end HIV and I'm only 13.

## TRUTH

You've put on the armor of positive living Promise!

## PROMISE

Anybody can put on the armor and help end HIV.

They look at the audience ...and point to them and say in unison.

## PROMISE AND TRUTH TOGETHER

You can too!