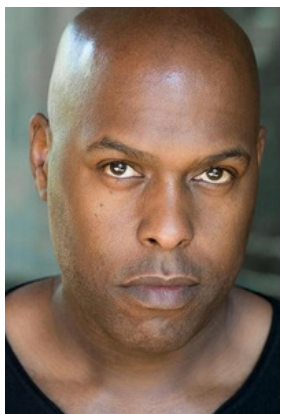


# THE WIFE OF WILLESDEN VISUAL STORYBOARD

# The cast



MARCUS ADOLPHY  
plays  
Winston/Mandela  
/Black Jesus

GEORGE EGGAY  
plays  
Pastor/Elridge

ANDREW FRAME  
plays  
Ian/Socrates/  
Bartosz

TROY GLASGOW  
plays  
Darren/  
Young Maroon

CLAUDIA GRANT  
plays  
Polly/Sophie

NIKITA JOHAL  
plays  
Asma/Kelly



SCOTT MILLER  
plays  
Ryan/Colin

JESSICA MURAIN  
plays  
Author/Zaire/  
Queen Nanny

CLARE PERKINS  
plays  
Alvita, The Wife of  
Willesden

ELLEN THOMAS  
plays  
Auntie P/  
Old Wife

SOPHIE CARTMAN  
understudies  
Alvita or  
Auntie P/Old Wife

# The characters

There are many references and characters who appear for only a line or two. We have detailed these further in our Other Characters and References annex, from page 15 of this guide.

## The General Lock in & Prologue

**Alvita, the Wife of Willesden** – A Jamaican-born, Black British woman, in her mid-fifties, who speaks with a Cockney London accent

**Author** – A brown woman in a headwrap, who speaks with a General Southern English accent

**Polly** – The woman who runs the Colin Campbell, who speaks with a Cockney London accent

**Asma** – A Pakistani woman who is a local rebel wife, who speaks with a London Indian accent

**Auntie P** – Alvita's church going aunt, who speaks with a Jamaican accent

**Pastor Jegede** – A Nigerian minister at a North London megachurch, who speaks with an Anglicised Yoruban Nigerian accent

**Kelly** – Alvita's very shy niece, who speaks with a London accent

**Zaire** – Alvita's best friend, speaks with a Multicultural London English accent

**Colin** – A charity chugger in his early 20s, speaks with a London accent

**Bartosz** – A local polish Bailiff, speaks with a Polish accent

## **The General Lock in & Prologue Characters cont.**

### **Alvita's Husbands:**

**Husband No.1, Ian** – An older white Englishman, who speaks with a General Southern English accent

**Husband No.2, Winston** – A Rastafarian man who speaks with a Jamaican accent

**Husband No.3, Darren** – A Black man, who is a young good-looking boy, who speaks with a Multicultural London English accent

**Husband No.4, Elridge** – A well-to-do gentleman in his fifties, of Caribbean heritage, who speaks with a Contemporary Standard English

**Husband No.5, Ryan** – A Scottish student doing his Masters, who speaks with a Glaswegian accent

## **The Wife of Willesden's Tale Characters**

**Queen Nanny** – Maroon Queen of old Jamaica, who speaks with a Jamaican accent

**Young Maroon** – A Soldier in Queen Nanny's Army, who speaks with a Jamaican accent

**Akan girl** – A girl from an ethnic group primarily based in Ghana

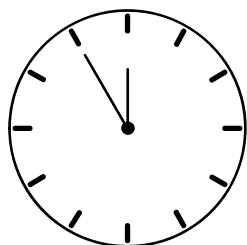
**Old Wife** – An Obeah woman of advanced years, who speaks with a Jamaican accent

**Windward ladies** – Women from the Winward Maroon community, led by Queen Nanny, who speak in a Jamaican accent

**18th Century woman** – A young white woman, who speaks with a Traditional Upper Class accent

**King Midas** – A Phrygian king. According to a myth, he could turn things into gold when he touched them. He speaks with an Edinburgh Scottish accent.

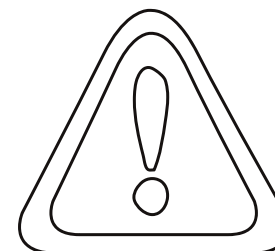
# Show Notes



## **Running Time**

The show is approximately  
1 hour and 35 minutes.  
There is no interval.

## **Age Guidance: 15+**



## **Content and Trigger Warnings**

- Loud music and flashing lights
- Infrequent strong language and frequent references of a sexual nature
- Sexual and physical violence and domestic violence are mentioned and symbolically represented.

## **Themes and Content for The Wife of Willesden**

Language: Infrequent strong language, slurs against women

Nudity: None, but frequent references of a sexual nature

Violence: Sexual and physical violence are alluded to and symbolically represented

Themes: Patriarchy, misogyny, sexuality, religion, domestic abuse, death



# Visual Guide



The play is set in the summer of 2022, in a pub called the Colin Campbell on Kilburn High Road. Most of the action takes place inside the pub before transporting us into Alvita's Tale and back to 1700s Jamaica, during Queen Nanny's reign.

The play is written in rhyming couplets, which are a rhyming pair of successive lines of verse. This is also how *The Wife of Bath* was written.



## The General Lock-in

The Author is in the Colin Campbell when the pub owner, Polly, suggests a lock-in, and a contest for them to share their stories with the best one receiving a prize.

Locals share their stories until Alvita, *The Wife of Willesden*, enters. Before exiting the Author explains that what we are about to see isn't her tale, it's a retelling of the original story: *The Wife of Bath* by Geoffrey Chaucer.

## **The Wife of Willesden's Prologue**

### **Alvita's Entrance**

Alvita starts her story talking about her five marriages. Her Aunty P and Pastor Jegede argue with her using the Bible—to them, Christianity doesn't allow multiple marriages. Colin, argues too but Alvita shuts him down.



### **Introduction to Alvita's Husbands**

Alvita explains she had issues with all her husbands, regardless of age, but was always in control of her marriages. Their issues came from negative views on women which they take turn explaining.



### **Husband No.4, Elridge**

Alvita focuses on her fourth husband, Elridge, explaining he is jealous and controlling. He criticises her looks and outfits, especially when she goes dancing. In response, Alvita reveals she has been manipulative too in her marriages to stay in control.



### **Ian and Darren's issues, and Elridge's death**

In quick succession, Alvita talks about her first husband Ian and how he struggled with getting aroused, then her third husband Darren who cheated on her. She reminisces about her youth before returning to Elridge - announcing his death.



### **Ryan's Introduction**

Alvita's fifth husband Ryan physically abused her but she loved him anyway. She flirted with him despite being married to Elridge at the time. She used to have nightmares about Ryan but ignored them.





## **Elridge's Funeral & Alvita marries Ryan**

A month after Elridge's funeral, Alvita and Ryan marry and she signs over to him her car and flats from previous marriages. She then describes the beginning of Ryan's abuse and the book from which he took all his views on marriage and women.

## **Alvita and Ryan's fight**

Ryan's book gives examples of wives who hurt or killed their husbands in Greek mythology and the news, illustrated by the cast. Angered, Alvita tears the book and Ryan punches her. After their fight, they talk and Ryan agrees Alvita should be in charge.



## **Alvita introduces the Tale**

Alvita checks with the audience that they're still happy to hear her tale. The pastor mocks how long the prologue was, Bartosz defends Alvita, Polly shuts them down and Alvita signals for the stage to transform to set the scene of the Tale.

## **The Wife of Willesden's Tale**

The tale takes place in 1723, Maroon Town, Jamaica. Queen Nanny, Ruler of the Windward Maroons, appears to judge a Young Maroon man in her army who raped a young Akan girl. Instead of sentencing him to death, Queen Nanny wants to find another punishment to make him understand his crime.



## **The Young Maroon's punishment**

The Young Maroon is tasked with finding out what women most desire within a year. If he does not have an answer by then, he will be put to death.

He asks help from the audience and locals from the pub interject. in response to a character of the Young Maroon's time who says women want to be loyal and keep secrets, Alvita shares another story.





### **King Midas interlude**

Alvita tells the story of King Midas who had two big donkey ears. He begged his wife to tell no one which she promises. Trying to keep her promise, she tells the secret to the river. Midas finds out and is about to hit her but she stops him.

### **The Young Maroon meets the Old Wife**

The Young Maroon gives up trying to find what women want but then meets the Old Wife, a mystical being who looks like an ugly woman in tattered clothes. She tells the Maroon she can help him but he has to promise to do what she demands once he has his answer. He agrees, she gives him the answer, and they travel back to Queen Nanny together.

### **Queen Nanny's judgement**

The Young Maroon gives his answer to Queen Nanny who is satisfied, letting him live. The Old Wife tells Queen Nanny about the Young Maroon's promise, and demands he marry her. He argues, trying to escape, but fails and must marry her.



## **The Old Wife and the Young Maroon's marriage**

The Old Wife is happy, but the Young Maroon treats her badly. She teaches him that he should be kind, that she has no control over her poverty and therefore he shouldn't judge her for it. Alvita and Pastor Jegede both interrupt to present their own very different views of poverty and what it means to be poor.



## **The Old Wife's Transformation**

The Old Wife tells the Young Maroon he can have her ugly and poor, but faithful, or pretty and young and risk other men wanting her. He decides she should do as she wishes. Delighted, she blindfolds him and begins transforming into a younger woman, at which point Alvita takes her place and her and the Young Maroon kiss. Alvita concludes the tale: men should submit to their wives' desires.



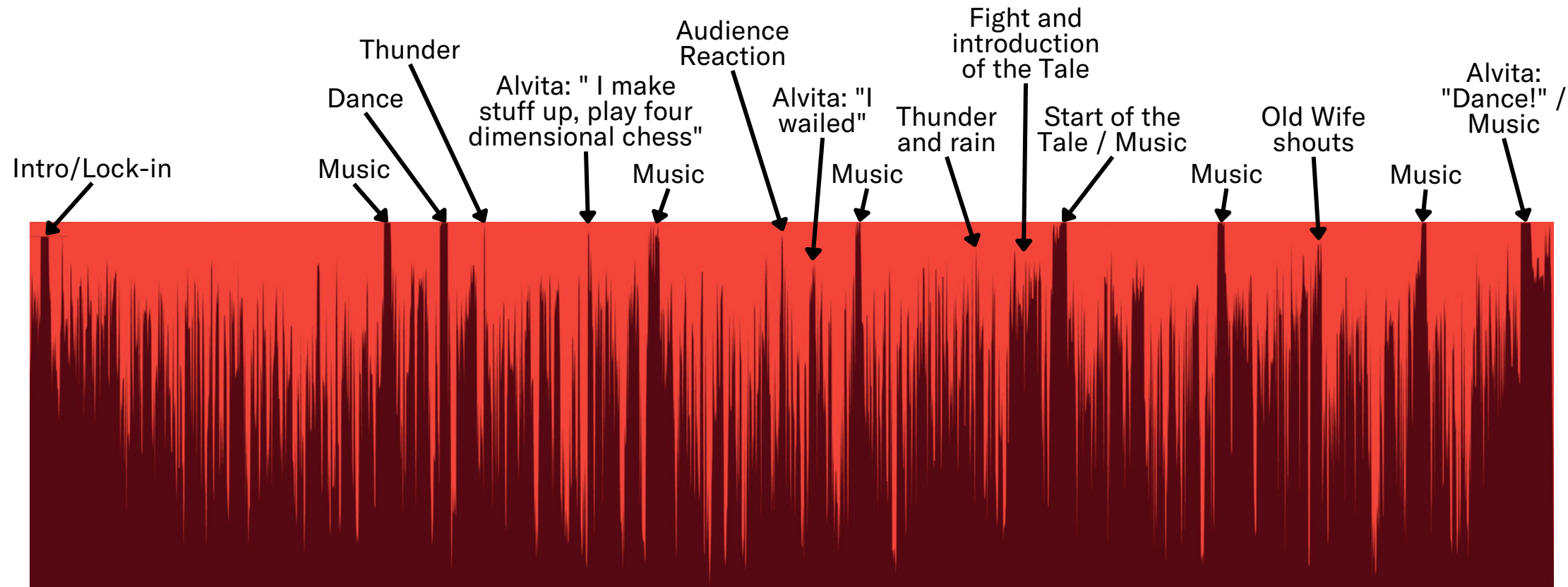
## **The Retraction and the end**

The locals in the pub celebrate the end of the tale. The Author asks the audience to blame her instead of Chaucer if they didn't enjoy the show, and starts apologising for the content of her books. Alvita interrupts her and everyone starts dancing.



# Sonic Story

The Sonic Story provides information about what to expect from the music and sounds in the play. It shows the volume changes throughout the performance and highlights loud and quiet moments and when the sound changes suddenly.



# Zadie Smith's Glossary

Note on the text:

In North West London - as in any corner of any big city - we have some vocabulary that is peculiar to the neighbourhood, and may need translation. Also: places, objects and ideas.

Please find below fifty explanations and translations that we hope will illuminate some of the 'North Wheezian' peculiarities you will find in your entertainment this evening.

1. **The Kilburn High Road** - An ancient and ungentrifiable street that runs through North West London. Mainly chicken shops.
2. **The Colin Campbell** - An old pub on the Kilburn High Road
3. **The Big Issue** - A magazine created and sold by the unhoused.
4. **Flexing** - Showing off, especially with clothes or money.
5. **From mi eye deh a mi knee** - From back when my eyes were at my knees. Therefore: since I was a small child. From Jamaican Patois
6. **Brassic** - To be very low on funds; broke
7. **Slagging off /Slating** - Talking shit about somebody
8. **Kipping** - Sleeping
9. **To take the huff** - To get offended
10. **Proper screwing** - To be really annoyed
11. **'low it** - Not to judge something too harshly; to 'allow it'.
12. **Eediat** - Idiot. From Jamaican Patois.

13. **To rinse** - To use up all of something
14. **Chatting breeze** - Talking a load of nonsense
15. **Grinding** - To dance very close to another person in a sexual manner
16. **Baileys** - An alcoholic Irish Cream drink
17. **Jamming** - Hanging around with a friend
18. **Camden Palais** - A beloved North London nightclub, now under new management and renamed.
19. **Cuss** - To run someone down, verbally.
20. **Mandem** - Your crew, your boys.
21. **Galdem** - Your crew, your girls.
22. **To eff with** - To mess with somebody
23. **Chief** - A dated North West London phrase from the 90s, now obsolete, meaning complete and utter idiot.
24. **Pum pum** - A vagina
25. **Mi deh yah** - Everything is good, I'm here, I'm ok. A transplanted idiom from Jamaican Patois.
26. **Braffing** - Boasting. From Jamaican Patois.
27. **Pickney** - Children. From Jamaican Patois.
28. **Hang wid da yute** - Spend time with young people. From Jamaican Patois.
29. **Raving** - Going out to nightclubs and dancing all night. Also can be done in a field.
30. **James Crook** - A Victorian family-run Funeral Directors in North West London, still in operation.
31. **Fit** - Good-looking
32. **Traipsing** - Wandering around North West London, usually in search of late-night transport.

33. **Brent** - London is divided into thirty-two Boroughs. Brent is ours.
34. **To chirps** - To chat someone up; to flirt
35. **Arse over tit** - To fall over dramatically
36. **Teef** - A thief
37. **Banging on and on** - Talking about something in a relentless manner
38. **Bailiff** - The guy who comes to repossess your furniture when you can't pay a debt
39. **Pisshead** - A drunk
40. **Duppy** - A malevolent spirit or ghost. From Jamaican Patois.
41. **River Mumma and Ol'Higue** - Fearsome female figures from Jamaican folklore
42. **Muss-muss** - Really ugly and dishevelled. From Jamaican patois.
43. **Creps** - Sneakers
44. **Butters** - Old North Wheezian term, now obsolete, meaning: unattractive.
45. **Buss up** - Blow up, explode. From Jamaican Patois.
46. **Arks** - Ask
47. **Oh my days!** - You can't be serious! Wow!
48. **Bwoy** - Young man. From Jamaican Patois.
49. **Wastemen** - The sort of men who waste your time, energy, money; a generally useless man.
50. **Cut up about it** - Very upset about something
51. **The Ends** - Another term for your neighbourhood, wherever your neighbourhood may be. Every borough in London believes they invented this phrase, but there is no doubt in our minds that its true origins are to be found right here, in North West London.



## Other UK to US translations

These terms aren't specific to North West London, but may not have crossed the Atlantic.

**Willesden** - A neighbourhood of Brent

**A lock-in** - Event during which customers in a pub stay past the official or legal closing time and continue drinking for a period of time

**Chips** - Thick fries, usually cost extra to have with your breakfast

**Holiday to Ibiza or Magaluf** - Common holiday destinations for partying

**Mug them** - Rob them

**Oxford** - Prestigious university

**Flats** - Apartments

**Piss** - Urine. Not to confuse with: **To take the piss** - To make fun of

**Shagged** - Had sex with

**Clocked him** - Punched him

**Came a cropper** - Failed, fell

**Bricking it** - To be terrified

**Beef** - Grudge

**Your cup of tea** - Your type, your area of interest

# References

**A retraction** – A withdrawal of a statement or offer

**Author's books** - During the Retraction, the Author apologizes for some of the content in her books. In order, these refer to Zadie Smith's White Teeth (2000), The Autograph Man (2002), On Beauty (2005) and NW (2012)

**Akans** - An ethnic group from Ghana. During colonial rule slaves brought to Jamaica were primarily Akan. Some of them ran away from slavery to join the Maroons.

**Bigamy** - Marrying someone new, whilst already being married to another person

**Cana, Galilee** - Cana of Galilee is the location of the Marriage at Cana

**Chastity** – The state or practice of refraining from sexual intercourse

**Cudjoe's Leeward Land** - Referring to Cudjoe Town, Jamaica. Formerly known as Trelawney Town. The town was eventually named after Captain Cudjoe, when he led the Maroon into battle, during the first Maroon War in the 1730s. The word 'Leeward' refers to one of the two main Maroon groups in the 18th century: the **Leeward Maroons** and the **Windward Maroons** – the former led by Cudjoe and the latter led by Queen Nanny

**Ecclesiastes** - A Book found the Old Testament of the Bible

## References Cont.

**Isicholo** - A word used to describe a married woman's traditional hairstyle, worn to show respect for her husband's family, as well as the hat worn later in marriage to replace this hairstyle

**Maroon Town** - Maroon Town is a settlement in Jamaica - it is a former home of runaway slaves who became Jamaican Maroons. It was routinely attacked by British Colonial forces, but stayed in the hands of the Jamaican Maroons with the leadership of Queen Nanny

**Original Story** - The Wife of Bath by Geoffrey Chaucer

**Prologue** - A separate introductory section of a play

**Proviso** - A condition or qualification attached to an agreement or statement

**School of Hard Knocks** - A phrase meaning the (sometimes painful) education one gets from life's usually negative experiences, often contrasted with formal education

**The Good Book** - Another name for the Bible

**Wicked Lamech** - the striker-down; the wild man. The fifth in descent from Cain, he was the first to violate the ordinance of marriage in the New Testament

If you'd like to understand more about some of the references and other characters mentioned or appearing in the show, you will find below a non-exhaustive list of references which may help give you more context.

## Other Characters

### Celebrities

**Bob Marley** - Famous Jamaican singer

**Women of Marley** – Referencing Bob Marley's two wives: Rita & Celine

**Nelson Mandela** – Former president of South Africa, who speaks with a South African Xhosa accent

**Stevie Wonder** – American singer and song writer

**Jordan Peterson** – Clinical psychologist and Author

**Beyoncé** – American singer

**Jourdan Dunn** – British Model

**Naomi Campbell** – British Model

**Chaucer** - English Author and writer of The Wife of Bath



## Other Characters Cont.

### Greek Characters

**Hercules** – Greek hero famous for his strength, husband to **Deianira** who gifted him a poisoned piece of clothing which burnt him

**Socrates** - A Greek philosopher and husband to **Xanithippe**, who poured wee on his head

**Pasiphae** – Queen of Crete, who procreated with a bull and gave birth to the **Minotaur**, a hybrid of human and bull

**Clytemnestra** – Wife who killed her husband, King Agamemnon, as revenge after he killed their daughter

**Eriphyle** – Sold out her husband **Amphiaraus** for a Gold chain

**Livia** – A Roman Empress who poisoned her husband

**Lucilla** - Gave her husband a love potion so that he would not fall in love with any other woman, but the potion was too strong and killed him

# Other Characters Cont.

## Other Characters

**Female speaker & Male speaker** – A newly engaged couple. The Female speaker speaks with a General Southern English accent. The Male Speaker has a Birmingham ‘Brummie’ accent.

**Uncle P** – Deceased husband of Auntie P

**Ovid** – A Roman poet

## The Wife of Willesden’s Tale other characters mentioned

**Ol Higue** – Caribbean folklore figure who seeks out babies and sucks on their blood

**Captain Cudjoe** – The leader of the Leeward Maroons in Jamaica

## Biblical Figures

**God**

**St Paul** – An apostle from the Bible, who speaks with a Contemporary Standard English accent

**Jesus** – Son of God

**Abraham** – Father Abraham from the Bible who had four wives

**Samson** – Biblical warrior whose long hair gave him strength-- **Delilah** cut off his hair

**Black Jesus** – Black version of Jesus

**Nazareth boy** – Reference to Jesus

**Samaritan woman** – A woman from a biblical parable who is shamed for having five men