

Run Rebel – Content to Consider

This sheet is for anyone who would like to have a greater understanding of the sensitive content prior to seeing the show, therefore please be aware that if you read on there will be significant spoilers.

This show has an age guidance of 14+, it contains depictions of violence (including domestic violence), alcoholism, bullying and discrimination. The production also includes references to 'honour' killings, some strong language and flashing lights.

SYNOPSIS

Act One

Amber Rai lives with her mum (Surinder) and dad (Harbans) in the Palm Wood estate. She has a sister called Ruby who has left home. Amber meets with her friends Tara and David on the first day back at school. David looks different after the summer break and Amber is attracted to him. In PE, Amber talks about the running track as being the only space she feels "free." Amber's teacher, Miss Sutton wants Amber to train with the school so that she can go for the English Schools Athletics Championships. Amber says she can't because her dad won't let her. After school, Tara, David, and Amber go to McDonald's®, but Amber is trying to avoid being seen. After Amber runs home, her dad, Harbans, accuses her of lying about where she has been. He is drunk and aggressive. He reminds Amber about "The Man who killed his daughter-The daughter who shamed the family", a story Amber and Ruby were told as children to scare them into behaving. That evening, Amber follows the routine of having to read out her mum's shopping receipt to her, as neither her mum nor dad can speak, read or write English. Ruby, Amber and her mum then make and serve dinner for her dad when he returns home, he then goes back out again, and Amber's mum, Surinder, asks Amber to spell out her name in English so she can see what it looks like.

Back in school, Amber's History class starts learning about revolutions, and something stirs within Amber. At David's house for lunch, David's mum, Beena, asks about Amber and her mum, and says she was once in the position Amber's mum is. She wants Amber's mum to go down to the community centre to meet people. Amber takes her dad to the job centre, and interprets for him in a meeting about their benefits being cut. After he criticises her interpretation, Amber answers back, and her dad threatens to break every bone in her body.

Miss Sutton gives Amber a letter for her parents about allowing her to run. Amber is reading it aloud and her dad hears. He is in a strangely good mood and says he will think about letting her go, which amazes Amber, but when she tells her mum, she is suspicious.



Surinder pours all of Harbans' alcohol down the sink, and when he returns home he attacks her in a rage. Amber is reminded of the History lessons and the stories of "Rebellions and their rebels" and she interrupts the fight, shouting at her dad to leave her mum alone.

Mirroring Harbans attacking Surinder at home, Amber verbally attacks Gemma, a girl at school, threatening her.

Surinder is looking at Amber's school books in her room and asks Amber to teach her to read English in secret. Amber teaches her slowly, starting their own revolution. Surinder signs the letter, consenting for Amber to take part in running practice after school.

Act Two

Amber continues to train to run, and Surinder continues to learn English. Amber is questioned by her dad again about where she has been after school, and she lies, telling him she has been studying. He threatens her by saying that people in the community will tell him things, and he will find out the truth. Amber is scared, but she is still strong, and tells her mum that "We can't let him win. We have to keep going Mum." Surinder goes to the community centre and meets Beena.

Amber trains but as she runs she is troubled by images of Tara and David, who she thinks are getting closer, and her mum, dad and the Man.

The home routine of Harbans returning home drunk is played out. Harbans aggressively criticises Surinder for the chapatis being dry, and she answers him back, saying "What more do you want me to do? Nothing is ever good enough." This enrages Harbans, who then physically attacks her in front of Amber. Surinder is in hospital, and Ruby blames Amber, saying she is selfish. Jas, Ruby's husband, says they should do something to protect Amber and Surinder.

Back home, Amber looks after her mum and tries to make her comfortable. At school, Amber is angry and scared about everything that's happened at home, and takes it out on Gemma, threatening her. In a parallel scene, Harbans bumps into Beena and threatens her, ordering her to stay away from his family. After she has bullied Gemma, Tara and David tell Amber that she was out of order and that it "wasn't cool." Amber lashes out, telling them they don't understand what her life is like, and they argue. Tara and David try to understand but Amber pushes them away and they fall out.

At Christmas, Surinder encourages Amber to buy treats and nice food, as she wants this Christmas to be different. Amber reflects on how her running and rebelling against



her family has caused her mum harm, and starts to think that Ruby is right, and she should give up being selfish and just look out for her mum more.

On Christmas Day, Amber's dad goes to the pub, but she asks him to come back by four so they can eat dinner together. He doesn't return, but is brought back hours later by neighbours who found him collapsed. Ruby and Amber kick him angrily as he lies unconscious on the living room floor. Ruby and Amber bond over this moment, and finally talk after years of being estranged. Ruby says she had to distance herself from the family when she moved out, to protect herself, and Amber tells Ruby how much this upset her.

At the Interschool Games, Amber races. She wins and is through to the regional finals, but struggles to be happy because of the turmoil in her life. Surinder talks to Beena, and says she is nearly ready to leave Harbans.

Amber attacks Gemma again, physically punching her this time.

At home, Surinder is reading with Ruby, and Harbans enters. He is angry, he has found out Amber has been at a running competition. He explodes in a rage at all of them, saying they have the devil inside them. As he goes to hit Surinder, Amber steps in and pushes him down. They call Beena, who comes to get them, and they leave with a small suitcase, Harbans begging them to stay.

At Ruby's house, Amber has a panic attack, full of fear that because they've left, the Man will now come after them. Jas tells Amber and Ruby that the Man across the street "wouldn't hurt a fly" and it transpires that the story of the Man murdering his daughter was made up by Harbans, to control them with fear. Amber and Ruby are shocked, but ultimately relieved.

Amber briefly returns home to find her father in a pitiful state. He attempts to tell her about his life, mentioning growing up in a horrible orphanage. He says he is "broken" and it's too late for him to learn how to love. Amber tells him it isn't too late, and leaves. Back at Ruby's, Ruby confronts Surinder about not leaving Harbans sooner, and says she feels angry that she didn't have any choices when she was 18.

Amber and Surinder get their own home together and throw a small party. Surinder is more independent, shopping for things herself and she attends classes at the community centre. Amber goes to the county finals to race, and David is there. He confesses his feelings for her, and they kiss. The play ends with three women together, Amber tells the audience they did it, they rebelled and they won. "We are rebels."



SPECIFIC MOMENTS

Act One

Whilst Amber is catching up with David & Tara about summer break, Tara asks Amber how her holidays were, she says “Erm...Fine. Nothing to report really. Just a regular boring summer break.” There is then a sound of crackling static, some buzzing and tube lights flash at the rear of the stage as Amber’s Mum, Surinder, says “It wasn’t your fault”

Amber is on the running field and talks about how running makes her feel better it “turns down the rage in my stomach, loosens the phantom grip on my throat”, she continues and says “Legs pounding, arms propelling. Flashes of that night. The crying”, Amber stumbles and the lights at the back of the stage flicker as her parents, who are standing at microphones on the edge of the stage, argue about Amber joining the running team. Amber narrates what she saw including “Smashed plates. The blood. Lines blur.” She then hears her PE teacher Miss Sutton and she is back on the running field.

When Amber finishes running she tells Miss Sutton she can’t keep training because her Dad won’t let her. Miss Sutton offers to meet with him or write him a letter and Amber replies it won’t help. Miss Sutton says “I can’t have you give up” and Amber says to the audience “That’s the problem with privilege. If you have it, it can be hard to imagine why others can’t live as freely as you”.

Miss Sutton exits and Amber dreams about making it to the Olympics, she becomes realistic again and then Amber has another flash back to her parent’s arguing about being part of the school running team, the static crackling sound is back and the lights at the rear of the stage flicker.

After practise, Amber meets up with Tara who shows her pictures of the holiday she went on with David. Amber gets jealous but doesn’t share this with Tara and she gets annoyed when she hears a girl, Gemma, singing, Tara calms her down and invites her to McDonalds with her and David. Amber decides to go but on the way she mentions she is anxious about being seen by members of the community who would tell her Dad. She sees a woman coming out of Wilko’s, her friends tell her she’s being paranoid, but she continues to worry and eventually leaves her friends.

Amber runs home and when she arrives, her Dad confronts her and asks where she’s been, he accuses her of lying, he then accuses Amber’s mother of teaching Amber to lie. He then tells Amber he knows she’s been in town, a member of the community told him. At this moment ‘The Man’ appears on stage and tends to a rose bush and Amber’s father threatens her with the story of ‘The Man’ saying: “Do I need to remind you of The Man across the road. The Man who killed his daughter. The daughter who shamed the family. The family. The community who keep quiet. Quiet when I give the instruction –



The instruction that will see you disappear. Disappear like his daughter. It would just take one phone call. I can read the lies in your eyes". Amber's father leaves and she talks of feeling dizzy, sick and rapid breathing, as if she's having a panic attack.

The scene changes to David at home with his mother Beena, he mentions being concerned about Amber and Beena suggests that David invite Amber for lunch. The scene quickly changes to Amber standing frozen and she says "When I was little this man was the monster under my bed...I'd sleep with the light on, praying I wouldn't become his prey. Now, he is real."

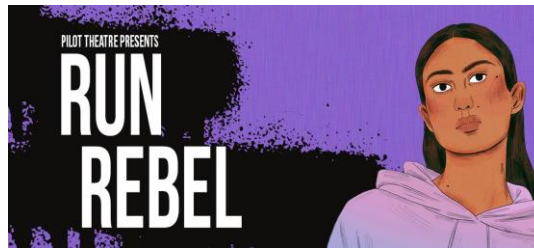
In the next scene we meet Amber's sister Ruby, Amber explains she's frequently in a bad mood and describes how she begged Ruby to marry who she wants, and to fight, but Ruby wanted to honour and respect their parents, Amber explains Ruby didn't fight and they became strangers overnight.

Surinder enters and Ruby & Amber help her read her shopping receipt. Dad then arrives home, the static crackle noise and flashing lights reappear. Ruby, Amber and Surinder serve and make dinner, Amber says "Ruby serves. We serve. Here to serve. Dad eats. I want to scream the house down." After dinner Amber asks her Dad to sign a form for a school trip, he signs with an X and she suggests she should teach him to write his name, he says "Don't need you to teach me anything", she suggests teaching Mum and he replies "She doesn't need to learn anything either... Put some tea on, you're doing my head in." Amber puts the tea on but it boils over whilst she's helping read her Dad's post, he calls her stupid and useless.

We meet Ruby's husband Jas. Amber and Jas talk about Amber's running. Ruby then tells the audience how her Dad refused to let her go to university in case she "run away, got pregnant, did drugs". She describes attempting to run away to escape an arranged marriage, how her Dad found her and grabbed her hair, how she screamed and they fought whilst neighbour's curtain's twitched. She now talks to Amber and warns her not to run behind their Dad's back, as "He'll find out. He always does. And when he does, he'll kill you."

After a lesson with Mr Jones where he introduces the class to the eight stages of a revolution, Amber goes with Tara and David to David's house. David's Mum, Beena, suggests Amber helps her in the kitchen. Beena asks Amber what it's like at home, and mentions she spoke to Ruby before she got married saying Ruby found things hard too, Amber responds, "It's like prison" and she mentions her concern for her Mum.

Amber returns home and tries to hide from her Dad as she goes upstairs. She is reading a history book and whilst she reads she is disturbed by her Dad who is experiencing a nightmare, he calls out for help and for his Mum. He wakes up scared, picks up a bottle of alcohol and drinks.



The next day Amber goes to the Jobcentre with her Dad. The man is unhelpful and asks if he can smell alcohol on Dad's breath. After the meeting Dad calls Amber useless and says she didn't translate properly and asks "what's the point of school if you can't do these basic things." Amber responds "If they're so basic, why can't you do them yourself". Dad then threatens Amber, saying "You speak to me like that again, and I'll break every bone in your body."

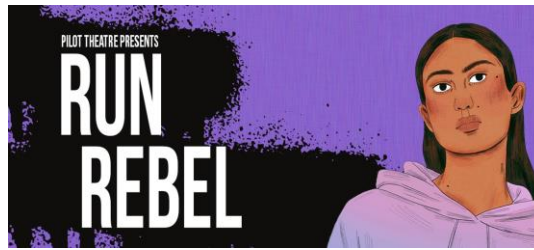
After school, Amber is back home training, running up and down the stairs. Out of a window she sees 'The Man' come out of his house and she steps back, frightened, she starts running up the stairs again, like she's trying to run away from the fear.

Amber returns home and Dad appears to be in a good mood, he says she can maybe return to running. Amber relays this to her Mum who warns her "Have you forgotten what he did when we spoke about all of this before". Amber says she thinks he's changed and then starts telling Mum about what's she's learning about revolutions at school.

The scene changes and Amber and Dad are in the kitchen cooking, a song comes on the radio and Dad says it's his favourite and starts dancing, he's in a good mood. Eventually the music starts glitching and the crackling static and flashing lights return. Mum is rushing around the house finding all of Dad's bottle's of alcohol and pouting them away. Dad realises his alcohol is gone and Mum and Dad argue whilst Amber recites what she's learn about revolutions, attempting to block out the argument. Mum calls Dad a joke and an embarrassment and Dad threatens Mum, Amber asks them to stop. Amber gets between Mum and Dad and screams at them to stop. She tells Dad to stop and leave Mum alone. Dad says "Don't ever raise your voice to me again. I'll let it go this time. Next time, you won't be so lucky. And you can forget about that running team. Dad leaves and Mum asks Amber to give her the letter, she says she'll sign it if Amber teaches her to read.

Act Two

Act 2 opens with Amber running, she then catches up with David who says he loves hanging round with her, the scene quickly changes to Amber practising the alphabet with Mum, they get to J and Amber starts worrying "Do you think Dad knows?", at this moment the lights go red and 'The Man' appears, he remains for the rest of the scene. When they reach the end of the alphabet, Dad comes home. Dad tells them they are acting strange and says "People tell me things, there are people everywhere that know us." Amber and Dad look at 'The Man' as the lights flicker red, Amber tells herself it's her imagination and not real.



After history class with Mr Jones, Amber is at the community centre with Mum and Beena. Beena asks if Mum has somewhere safe to go and she says she thinks they could stay with Ruby. Beena offers to talk Mum through everything and they agree to take it one step at a time. Beena leaves and Amber & her Mum both admit to being scared, Amber says “We can’t let him win. We have to keep going Mum.”

Back at home, Amber is explaining to Mum the difference between an “O” and a “D” when Dad returns, the crackling static starts and the lights flash. Mum says “Don’t say a word. Can’t he wait? Five minutes, just five minutes”. Amber and Mum make him dinner. Mum tells the audience when they arrive she could have taken classes, learned to drive, read and write, but explains that since her husband can’t read and write, he doesn’t want a thinking wife, a progressive wife. After Dad’s eaten he asks Mum and Amber “What’s going on with you two” they say nothing. He threatens “People tell me things. I always find out.” Amber reads in her room whilst Surinder practices the alphabet, this is interrupted by Dad’s nightmares. Amber starts to explain her hopes for a better life, but then both her and Mum confess to feeling sick with worry, “a phantom grips that hugs my throats just gets tighter and tighter”. Amber now sees her fears play out – David and Tara flirting, Mum and Dad fighting, ‘The Man’ appears. Amber shouts for everyone to go away and stop, she settles herself as everyone leaves.

Amber is back with Mum who is practising writing her name, Amber tells Mum how she’s worried and feels sick all the time, Mum reminds Amber, “If he knew, do you really think he’d be keeping quiet? Trust me.” Mum continues practising when Dad returns – as do the crackles of static and the flickering lights. Amber and Mum set about making dinner, Dad complains the chapatis are dry. Mum and Dad start arguing whilst Amber narrates their fighting, “Hot food on her arm. Mess on the carpet. Blood on Mum’s head. Mum running. Dad, cutting her off. Mum turning. Lounge, hallway, kitchen, stairs. Dad is faster. Mum and Dad’s room. Mum gets a suitcase. He pushes her against the wardrobe.”, Dad says “You want to leave? You’re trying to leave”, there is the sound of plates smashing, then Amber says “hospital” and the scene transitions.

Amber is at the hospital with Ruby and Jas, Ruby blames Amber for what has happened to Mum and calls her selfish. Amber tells the audience she knows she is to blame.

Amber and Mum return home, she tries to make Mum comfy and give her courage.

Amber then goes to school and says “I am a hurricane.” Amber confronts Gemma, concurrently Dad finds Beena in the street, the crackling static and flickering lights return. Amber berates Gemma whilst David and Tara tell her to stop. Dad warns Beena to stay away from his wife and daughter and tells her to stay out of his family’s business, he says “You should be scared of me.” Beena walks away. The scene with Amber, Tara and David continues. Tara and David tell Amber that her behaviour



towards Gemma isn't cool, Amber argues with them, she tells them they don't understand and that she's disappointed they aren't on her side, Tara says it isn't easier being Amber's friend. Amber tells them to leave her alone and the scene transitions to a training session.

After shopping for Christmas, it's Christmas day. Dad decides to go to the pub, Amber tells him to return at 4 for dinner. Mum, Amber and Ruby wait for Dad, it gets to midnight and he isn't home so they start calling the hospitals who say he isn't there. At 2.30am, Dad is carried home, drunk, by neighbours who found him in the road, the sound of static crackling can be heard.

Ruby and Amber kick him angrily as he lies unconscious on the living room floor. Ruby and Amber bond over this moment, and finally talk after years of being estranged.

After Christmas Amber returns to school and wins the first official race of the year, however Amber says "It's just hard to celebrate when Fear follows me...", 'The Man' appears and Amber tries to ignore him. Concurrently Mum speaks to Beena explaining she thinks she's ready to leave, she worries Dad might come after Beena and Beena tells her "I can handle him." Amber continues talking about her fear when she finds Gemma, she asks Gemma, "Why won't you fight back??" This time, Amber hits Gemma and she falls to the floor.

The scene transitions to home, Dad returns, angry and drunk, there are sounds of static crackling and lights flickering. Dad knows they've been lying and were at a running competition, he confronts Amber and says "I always said you had the devil inside you." He goes to punch Mum and Amber steps in, she catches his fist, overpowers him and pushes him to the ground, she tells him "This ends now." Mum tells Amber to call Ruby, to tell her they're ready to leave. Dad tells them they aren't going anywhere, Mum screams at Dad to get out of the way and pushes him. Mum and Amber leave and are with Ruby, Ruby asks Mum why it took so long to leave, she says Mum took her choice from her, Mum says "I didn't know how to leave before". Amber starts breathing rapidly, she has a panic attack, she says "What if he comes after us?", she means 'The Man'. Jas, Ruby's husband, asks who 'The Man' is, Ruby and Amber explain. Jas realises he knows him, Mr Garcha, he also knows the man's daughters and they are both fine and doing well. Mum, Amber & Ruby realise Dad had been lying to them the whole time, he created a story to scare them.

After Amber makes up with Tara and David, she goes to visit Dad. Amber asks her Dad what happened to him, he explains his life wasn't easy, he was in an orphanage, a horrible place. He says he is broken and broken people can't love. Amber tells him it's never too late to learn to love.



SUPPORT LINKS

We have included information about support organisations for those who are experiencing, or have experienced, domestic abuse.

National Support Organisations for Domestic Abuse

National Health Service <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/getting-help-for-domestic-violence/>

Freephone, 24 hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247

<https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/>

Home Office <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help>

Local Support Organisations for Domestic Abuse

Next Chapter 0330 333 7444 www.thenextchapter.org.uk

Colchester Borough Homes <https://cbhomes.org.uk/help-and-advice/domestic-abuse>

Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Partnership <https://setdab.org>

Essex Compass www.essexcompass.org.uk