

ACT I

SCENE 1 SATURDAY AFTERNOON THERAPIST'S OFFICE

(A single spot light shines down on an office chair DSC.)

Claire Charbonet, a 30 year old attractive Creole woman sits in the chair looking out. She is dressed casually.

CLAIRE

I used to love my job, but over the past couple of years, it's become, I don't know, torturous. Extreme word, right, but it's the first that comes to mind. I know the kids can sense somethin' is wrong; they're really perceptive that way. Like this little girl, Alexis; Alexis loves Princesses. So last week we had show and tell, and she brought in some photos from her summer vacation. Her parents took her to Disney World; it was her first visit, so there was a lot to see. But the only thing that mattered to Alexis was visitin' Cinderella's castle. She spent the entire day at the Castle; you know had lunch, got her hair and make-up done at the Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique. And the best part was that she met every single Princess; Snow White, Sleepin' Beauty, Belle, Ariel, Jasmine, and Cinderella. She was so excited talkin' about the trip and showin' us the pictures. But when she got to the last photo, she put it behind her back, and she started blushin'; her little cheeks turned red, and she couldn't stop gigglin'. So I asked "what's so funny, Alexis?" She eased her way over to me, and whispered in my ear that the last picture was of the Prince, and her mom told her that she was a Princess, and one day, when she got big, she would marry the Prince. The child is in kindergarten, and already she's bein' sold on the empty promise that one day she'll marry a Prince. I was so angry; I mean, I wanted to go to her house and ask her mother how she could be so cruel; how she could set her daughter up for such a let down later in life. I guess Alexis saw the disgust written across my face, because she asked me, "Ms. LeCesne, don't you like Princesses, don't you want to marry a Prince?" And despite how badly I wanted to tell her the truth, you know what I did? I lied. I said, "Of course Alexis, all little girls are Princesses, and one day they all find their Prince." God, I hate my job.

THE LIGHTS GO DOWN ON THE SCENE.

END SCENE 1.

SCENE 2 SUNDAY MORNING

(Light spills into the living room through the window. A bottle of fingernail polish and a nail file sit on the coffee table along with magazines, while empty beer bottles are littered across the room, with one broken on the floor. A bottle of gin, a bowl of potato chips, and a deck of cards sit atop the dining room table.)

Claire enters from the SL entrance dressed in a robe and no shoes. She steps into the dining room area and is frozen by the condition of the house. She walks to the living room, grips her hips and sighs deeply while shaking her head. She checks her watch, then turns and exits to the back of the house, returning seconds later with a garbage bag, broom, and dust pan. She begins to clean-up. She leans the broom and dust pan against the sofa. She walks

to the back of the sofa picking up trash, and trips over a shoe lying in the middle of the floor. Her barefoot lands on a piece of glass.

CLAIRE

Ouch!

Claire grabs her foot and falls onto the sofa.

CLAIRE

Janee! Janee!

Janee Charbonet, a Creole woman in her early 20's dressed in an oversized tank top and panties, runs into the room. She possesses a sex appeal that is instantly recognizable.

JANEE

What happen? You alright?

CLAIRE

I stepped on a piece of glass.

JANEE

That's all, you scared me half to death.

Janee drops down on the sofa.

CLAIRE

Well can you get me a band aid; I cut my toe.

Janee sighs, stands, and walks to the back of the house.

JANEE

Happy birthday.

CLAIRE

Don't remind me.

JANEE

Oh will you stop it; a person would think you turnin' sixty instead of thirty the way you been carryin' on.

CLAIRE

I just don't see any sense in makin' a big deal of it, that's all.

Janee returns with a band aid, tweezers, Hydrogen Peroxide, and cotton balls. She sits on the sofa next to Claire, and pulls Claire's foot onto her lap.

Be careful, I'm bleedin'.
CLAIRE
Janee shoots an annoyed look at Claire, and begins to pick the glass from her toe; Claire fidgets on the sofa.

Will you sit still.
JANEE

What are you doin'?
CLAIRE

I'm tryin' to get this glass up out your toe, now sit still.
JANEE
Janee continues picking the glass from her toe.

You mind tellin' me what happened in here last night.
CLAIRE

Life, nothin' but life, Claire.
JANEE

Who was over here?
CLAIRE

Lisa, Jimmy, and Peanut.
JANEE

Doin' what?
CLAIRE

Playin' cards.
JANEE

What time ya'll got back here?
CLAIRE

2, 2:15 I guess. You didn't hear us?
JANEE

I was so worn out last night. I wouldn't have heard anything if a war broke out.
CLAIRE

One almost did.
JANEE

What happened?
CLAIRE

JANEE

Lisa gets up to go use the bathroom right, so Peanut gets up and follows her to the back of the house; says he's goin' to get a beer out the kitchen. A few minutes later Lisa comes back into the livin' room all flustered and tells Jimmy she wants to leave.

CLAIRE

No Peanut didn't.

JANEE

You know he can't hold his liquor; that fool was drunk as Cooter Brown.

CLAIRE

That boy needs help?

JANEE

Well, Lisa and Jimmy leave. When Peanut comes back in the room, I ask him what happened? He tells me he was just playin' around with Lisa, and she took it the wrong way. Next thing I know, Jimmy is bustin' back in the house pissed off.

CLAIRE

So what happened?

JANEE

You see this glass I picked out your toe (Janee holds up a piece of the glass), the rest of it ended up in Peanut's head.

Claire balls over in laughter. Janee finishes putting a bandage on Claire's toe, and she stands, wincing in pain as her foot hits the floor.

CLAIRE

I wished ya'll had cleaned up all this glass that didn't land in Peanut's head.

Claire begins cleaning again, as Janee stretches out on the sofa.

JANEE

I'm sorry, but they ain't left out here until after four. I was sleepy.

CLAIRE

Yeah, but, Janee, the place is a mess. You know Franklin is comin' over here after church.

JANEE

What ya'll havin'?

CLAIRE

What do you mean?

JANEE

I know you go feed him.

Claire shoots Janee a nasty look.

CLAIRE

Gumbo. I made some last night. You didn't see that big pot in the refrigerator?

JANEE

That was for today?

CLAIRE

You didn't give my food to those fools last night, did you?

JANEE

We had a little. But what's the big deal, you made a whole pot.

Claire glances at her watch.

CLAIRE

It's almost 9 already; I have to get ready for church. You're goin' to have to finish cleanin' this place up.

JANEE

I'm goin' back to bed.

CLAIRE

Janee, I can't have Franklin comin' in here with the house lookin' like this.

JANEE

Why? He don't care what this place look like; he only concerned with what you look like.

CLAIRE

Don't start that again.

JANEE

Much as that man is over here?

CLAIRE

How is he goin' to fix the roof without bein' over here?

JANEE

It don't take no two months to put shingles on a roof; he could have built a whole new house by now.

CLAIRE

You are so ungrateful; how are you goin' to complain about how long it's takin' him when the man is not chargin' us a penny.

JANEE

Considerin' the way you feed him, he should be payin' us.

CLAIRE

What does that mean?

JANEE

Claire, last Sunday it was Fried Chicken and Collard Greens, the week before that Catfish with Red Beans and Rice; you ask me, the only work he doin' is testin' out whether the stove work.

CLAIRE

Now you know I cook like that every weekend, regardless of who is comin' over here.

JANEE

Franklin the only one who come here besides Sweet, and you always complainin' he eat all your food.

CLAIRE

Sweet is your man; you're the one supposed to cook for him.

JANEE

With that line of thinkin' Franklin must be your man.

CLAIRE

Nonsense. I'm just tryin' to show my appreciation; there's nothin' else goin' on.

JANEE

That's because you won't let it. Don't make sense if you ask me. Franklin is a good man; he a little old, and kind of country, but he a good man.

CLAIRE

I never said he wasn't.

JANEE

And he good lookin' too, although I'm kind of surprised you like him, I mean he a little dark for your taste.

Claire stops, and turns to confront Janee.

CLAIRE

First of all, I didn't say anything about likin' him, and second, what do you mean he's a little dark for my taste?

JANEE

It means Franklin is blacker than shoe polish and all you ever dated was them high yellow...

CLAIRE

How can you say I don't like dark men; what about Andre?

JANEE

He don't count, that boy had straight hair and blue eyes; I don't know what that nigger was.

CLAIRE

Janee!

JANEE

What?

CLAIRE

You know I don't like that word; we heard it enough growin' up.

JANEE

Oh calm down; it's just a word.

CLAIRE

It's a poison is what it is; one that black people are force feedin' each other on a daily basis.

JANEE

Yeah, well, I'm talkin' about Africa black like they used to grow 'em in dark alley.

CLAIRE

You sound like Mama.

JANEE

I ain't worried about what I sound like; cause Lord knows I love me a dark man. Hell, Sweet so black he sweat chocolate. (Janee laughs) You the one share Mama taste in men.

CLAIRE

I do no such thing; don't put that ugliness on me. Dark skin or not, I think Franklin is a very attractive man.

JANEE

Then what you waitin' on? I know you like him, I mean don't you want...

CLAIRE

It doesn't really matter what I want, now does it.

Claire's statement weights the air in the room. The women stare at each other in silence for a few seconds.

CLAIRE

Look, I have to go get ready. Here.

Claire hands Janee the garbage bag.

CLAIRE

You finish gettin' this place cleaned up before I get back. And turn off the air conditioner and open the windows; let some fresh air in.

JANEE

Claire it's a hundred degrees outside.

CLAIRE

Well it's stale in here, so you're goin' to have to do somethin'.

Claire heads toward the back of the house.

JANEE

You can't let what happened make you stop enjoyin' life.

Claire stops, and turns to face her sister.

CLAIRE

I am enjoyin' life; I'm just not goin' to live in a fantasy world. I don't have anymore time to waste doin' that.

Claire exits to the back of the house. Janee watches after her sister for a moment, then begins to clean the room.

(LIGHTS GO DOWN ON THE SCENE)

END SCENE 2.

SCENE 3 LATER THAT AFTERNOON

The lights come up on the Charbonet' household. The room is spotless.

Franklin, a black man in his mid-thirties with deep dark chocolate skin, sits at the dining room table. He has just finished eating.

FRANKLIN (TALKING TO
SOMEONE OFFSTAGE)

I'm gonna keep guessin' 'til you tell me somethin'.

Claire, now dressed in church clothes and slippers, enters with a pitcher of Iced Tea and refills Franklin's glass.

CLAIRE

I'll tell you, but you can't laugh.

FRANKLIN

Now why would you say that; I'm not go'n laugh.

Promise?

CLAIRE

I promise.

FRANKLIN

Alright, Winnie The Pooh.

CLAIRE

Winnie The Pooh?

FRANKLIN

CLAIRE

Mama bought me this little stuffed Winnie The Pooh bear; she said it would protect me at night. From that day on I wasn't scared to sleep in the dark by myself.

Franklin smiles.

CLAIRE

You said you wouldn't laugh.

FRANKLIN

I ain't laughin'.

CLAIRE

I used to love that bear; took it everywhere I went until the stuffin' started to come out. I still have it.

FRANKLIN

Claire, that is 'bout the cutest story I ever heard.

CLAIRE

Yeah, well, I better not hear anybody at the church talkin' about it.

Franklin laughs. Claire reaches for Franklin's plate.

CLAIRE

You want some more?

FRANKLIN

No, no, I'm 'bout to burst; but I tell you the truth, you sho' can make a good gumbo.

CLAIRE

Why thank you.

FRANKLIN

No, thank you. Now, I need to get on out there and start work. Fool 'round and end up talkin' all day and don't get nothin' done again like last week.

CLAIRE

(joking) What? Are you sayin' I talk too much?

FRANKLIN

No indeed. I could sit here all day and talk to you, not to mention eat your food, but that ain't what ya'll payin' me for.

CLAIRE

You won't let us pay you anything.

Franklin laughs, and stands from the table to head outside.

FRANKLIN

Truth be told, the way you been feedin' me the past few weeks, I'm the one makin' out on the deal.

Claire laughs.

CLAIRE

You sound like Janee.

FRANKLIN

Why? What she say?

CLAIRE

Tryin' to be funny, that's all; talkin' about the way I feed you, you should be payin' us.

FRANKLIN

I can't argue with her on that.