

7 Ladies Named Addie

By Aaron Moore

7 LADIES NAMED ADDIE

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Characters

SASHA- African American 20-25 She is green to the world of acting and hope's to make it big. She hides from her past and it keeps her from understanding her role

THE DIRECTOR African American 50-60. THE DIRECTOR is seasoned in the theatre world. And with that she has seen a lot and has run out of patience with her actors.

GIRL 1 African American 40-50 . Is a season actor. She can be out of it at times, she's doesn't care what the gig is along as she gets paid.

GIRL 2 African American 30-40. Is the only one in the group that is classically trained and doesn't mind reminding the rest of the cast about it

GIRL 3 African American in her early 30s. She follows the the group and is just happy to have a job. She's keeps her mouth shut what she needs to

GIRL 4. African American late 20s. She puts all her emotion in to her roles. She is the only one that has patience for SASHA because she feels connected to her, and sees a little of her self in her.

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The play takes place on a stage in an unknown theatre in 1990. 5 actresses from different backgrounds with their own personalities are putting on the play “Planted in Pain, blossomed in June” which is about a young black woman (Addie) who wants to escape her poverty-stricken southern home and jump into adulthood with her new husband Sylvester. Her family wants other things for her. Especially her mother. The writer of the play has left instructions that all the characters of the play must be played by women, even the male roles. As the actresses rehearse and get closer to opening night, they find that the play is causing them to remember painful memories of their own, especially the actress playing the main role SASHA. SASHA is a new Actor, and this play is her big break but in order for her to truly find out who Addie is. SASHA must first find the pain that is inside her and use it to tell this story. As the days get close to opening night the actors break out in conversations about love, abuse, racism, and womanhood, and what it means to be a Black Actress in the world and the sacrifices you have to make.

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ACT 1 SCENE 1

We find ourselves in an unknown theatre in an unknown city. 5 ACTORS are rehearsing a production of Blossomed in Pain Planted in June. Lights up on Sasha who's is our star standing in the middle of the stage She has a spotlight on her

SASHA. When I was young, I would run in the fields near my house. I would run so fast. I'd stopped to see how far I ran. See how far my legs could carry me. I thought I was going somewhere. I wondered If I ran with all my might where I'd end up. I was a curious child. Ideas would pop in my head, I wanted to know how things worked, how I worked. Momma thought I was causing trouble. *Addie Marie why are you always getting into things, Addie Marie get down from there, Addie Marie gets up from there.* My momma wasn't a patient woman, but I would make my daddy laugh. He had a real big Ol' laugh and a real big old' belly to keep it in. He say I needs my belly or my laugh would get away from me and I'll spend all night chasing it. He loved telling them stories and I loved listing to them. See we had a special connection my daddy and I, more than my sisters. He says we speak the same language without saying a word.

Time went on and I grew up. I was like my older sister now and her friends now. I used to watch them putting on their fancy dress, painting their faces all pretty, putting their hair up. And now that was me and I was going dancing. Oh, I loved to dance. Moving and swaying to the rhythm... . And one night while I was out with my sister. That's when I met him... Sylvester Washington... Ohh he was slick with his light purple

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zoot suit. He had this green feather pinned on the side of his hat, and this one gold medallion ring on his middle right finger. When he comes on the dance floor let me tell you. You remember in the bible when the ocean parted ways... That's how it was in the hall. And he walked right up to me. As slick as he could with those fancy shoes. He grabbed my hand and we danced. We couldn't stop looking at each other, we were lost in one another. And before I knew it. I was his wife and he was my husband. The wedding was so nice. My sisters look so pretty. There was music and food and flowers. And the wedding night was something magical, I laid there naked as the day I was born resting in his arms feeling his heart through his chest. Two different people becoming one whole person. I felt pain for a moment then I felt... Ohh I can't describe it... It was nice for a while, playing house...but before long it became real, and it was my life and the music stopped. My story got dark, and it stopped becoming like daddy's stories. I can't remember the first time he struck me...but I... I ...I damn it I'm sorry I got it.. But I.. (*Enter THE DIRECTOR*)

THE DIRECTOR. Hold... Hold... Hold... Turn the house lights on please before I break my neck... every one hold please... Sasha what's wrong.

SASHA. Nothing... nothing. I'm fine I...I just forgot the ending that's all, but I remember it now. We can start right from the end. (*Enter GIRL 1 and GIRL 2.*)

GIRL 1. What's wrong now? I been waiting for my entrance for 10 mins.

GIRL 2. You know Ms. Diva always has to have her spotlight. Her costume must be too tight now. At least we got halfway through the damn thing this time. Last night she kept stuttering so much I thought the poor thing was having a panic attack.

THE DIRECTOR. Please I need quite on stage. Now Sasha dear you must connect with this piece. This monologue is the most important part of the act as it draws in the audience to the

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girl's story. It creates the world the play is in. This monologue is going to defy you. Now I know it can be a lot.

SASHA. it's not that its...

THE DIRECTOR. But you must not let that scare you off.

You have to rise to the challenge. Now your character is a southern black woman who must find herself against many odds in the world. Now I'm sure you can make a connection with that.

SASHA. I just can't seem to find her last part. make everything fit together.

THE DIRECTOR. You can do it. I know you can.

GIRL 1. Can she? I'm just saying. *(to GIRL 2)*

THE DIRECTOR. Don't think about what you can and can't do, think about what your character must do.

GIRL 2. Look if she can't do it. I'm able to fill her role. I have been running her lines and I know I can do it. Try me. When I was young, I used to run in the fields near my house. In my mind. I would run so fast. I'd stop to and turn around and see how far I ran. See how far my legs would carry me. I thought I was going somewhere. See you and I can do more.

SASHA: Ain't nobody asked you?

GIRL 2. Won't you go on ahead and quit

THE DIRECTOR. No thank you dear. The simple matter is...Your feet are too big. I'm sorry. Everyone in the house would be staring at your feet flopping all over the stage. And I can't have that. Now everyone. We have much to do tonight and very little time. So, Sasha, how about it, are you ready to try?

SASHA. Could I have five mins to go back over my lines. Please just 5 mins. This'll be the last time, I promise. I just need to center myself.

GIRL 1. You hear that 5 mins. Like she gonna be better in 5 mins.

SASHA: You got a problem with me. Cause you don't know me.

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THE DIRECTOR. Ok, ok everyone were going to take a hard five. I'll be in the back trying to not have a meltdown. And I mean just that. Don't let me catch you outside smoking or getting food. You know who I'm talking to (*she points to girl 1.* Director walks of stage left. Enter the rest of the cast. Sasha is in center stage looking at her lines.)

GIRL 3. So, we have to waste more time. Again! Look girl I don't want to be here all night I have to get my son. The sitter charges me more if I'm not on time and I don't have it.

SASHA. I said I'm sorry. The monologue is giving me more trouble than I thought, but I'm going to have it. I know I will. And you'll be able to get your kids. You all act like you never had trouble with a show before.

GIRL 2. You in the big leagues now girl, ain't nobody got time for no trouble. Not trouble, not mistakes, none of that.

GIRL 1. she don't know about that.

SASHA. You don't know what I know.

GIRL 2. If you lucky enough to get the part, then you better make sure you ain't going to be no trouble. Nobody's gonna hold your hand, or aww baby you through it. Folks don't have the time. Especially for poor little girls that can't get their shit together.

GIRL 1: That's right. I was on set for this commercial. And this girl got her script, pretty little thing... But the poor girl couldn't get rid of her accent. It took her one time not to get it right. The director fired her right on the spot... gave the role to this little Dominican with long straight hair that could pass. You could hear her crying down the block. I felt bad, but I'll tell you what... I made sure I didn't have an accent.

SASHA: I appreciate you thinking of me, but I'll be fine, I just need a moment, if that's not too much to ask for.

GIRL 3: Y 'all hear that, she thinks we thinking of her (*They all laugh*)

GIRL 4. Lay off her. Hun you're doing fine, just take your time. Don't listen to these loud hens clucking themselves to

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death. You are not that bad. I remember my first time trust me I was much worse. The truth is everyone gets a little jammed up, especially just starting out... NO MATTER what anyone tells you?

SASHA: I'm just nervous, it's funny I never been before, nervous. Back home I could walk on stage and not think about anything be completely in the moment.

GIRL 4. Well, there you go. Get out of your head. Go back to that time when it was just you and the stage. I learned that when i was first starting out.

GIRL 3. Whatever she needs to do she better do it quick. I worked with this director before, and she don't mess around. She is strict as hell. If you get on her bad side you... Well you don't want to know trust me.

GIRL 1. Wait, what do you mean by strict? And why are you just saying something now. I'm the one that's been coming back from the breaks late. And you just saying something now.

GIRL 2: Hell we ain't on her bad side already?

GIRL 3. Our Walter lee in Raisin in the sun wasn't off book yet. She yelled at that man so bad he was trying to get away from her and walked right off stage and landed on his head. And when he came to after all he could do was say his lines from the show.

GIRL 2: So it worked. Looks like Someone should hit you up side your head (*says to Sasha*)

SASHA. Yea come try it.

GIRL 3. Nooo. He couldn't say anything else but his lines from the play. He's somewhere in a hospital saying Walter lee's last lines over and over and over.

GIRL 4. What!!! That didn't happened. That's the dumbest thing I ever heard. Don't believe these fools.

GIRL 3. Alright. don't believe me and just see what happens if you mess up a line again.

GIRL 1. She do seem old school.

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SASHA: Don't worry I ain't listening to any of you. I know what I can do. And the best thing you all could do is leave me alone.

GIRL 3. Y'all do know this play is cursed right.

GIRL 1. Here you go. Girl what is you talking about now.

GIRL 3. I mean it. Why do you think it's only been done one time?

GIRL 4. Probably because they couldn't get anybody to produce it. This show ain't the most exciting thing let's be honest and people are all into musicals now.

GIRL 3: Make fun all you want, but it's true. The last cast went crazy after opening night. They said they just got worst and worst as they got closer to opening. The playwright never got see her own show. Which was a disaster.

GIRL 4. And you believe that? Come on now.

GIRL 3. I do. Ever since I auditioned for this show. I felt a presence in the air. Y 'all can't feel it? I guess I could because I have a little Bruja in me on my mother side.

GIRL 2. You got crazy in you. That's what it is.

GIRL 1. Why you being so closed minded there many things between heaven and earth.

GIRL 2. Well not for me. For me there is only the next job. And that's where my mind is already. You can keep all that nonsense, it's for people that can afford it. When I saw they were producing a play with an all-black cast and it wasn't the same old thing. I jumped at it. Now that's the only thing I believe in. The work. That's what got me through Juilliard with all them rich white folks.

GIRL 3. Wait you don't believe in nothing... at all.

GIRL 2. I told you I believe in the work. I believe doing what you have to for the next gig and the next one after that. I left everything behind I believed for it. Lovers, friends, even my own family. You got to let go of the ties that drag you down. *(To Girl 4)* You know what I'm talking about.

GIRL 3. All I'm saying is belief goes along way

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GIRL 2. Why don't you quit then?

GIRL 3. I can't... I need the money. *(They all laugh)*

SASHA. It's a lot easy for y'all to talk about pain than it is for me... It's something that I can't get to yet, grasp it. And I'm not ashamed to admit it.

GIRL 3. What you talking about. You Black, you a woman, and yah broke. That's enough pain to knock out a heard of elephants. *(They all laugh)*

GIRL 2. Nah, that ain't it. There's something else you keeping away.

SASHA: What are you talking about.

GIRL 2: A lot of people show it. In one form or another but you... you working really hard to keep it tucked away ain't you.

GIRL 4. Would you lay off her.

SASHA: I said I'm nervous, and now I got to look out for people gunna for my part because they couldn't make the cut.

GIRL 2: Mmhmm. That's what you saying.

SASHA: look. I don't need this. I'm going to rehearse lines in the greenroom. It's getting crowded out here. If she's looking for me that's where I'll be. *(Girl 2 stands in her way.)* Get out my way... *(She moves. Sasha walks offstage.)*

GIRL 1: Poor thing ain't gonna make It.

GIRL 4. You know we all were like that once. You need to give her a chance, instead of coming for her part. You know how hard those can come by. Especially for us.

GIRL 2. We are takin it easy on her. It's much harsher out there. Hell you know that. This world ain't made for folks like us. We have to scratch and claw for every gig we get. And then some. Just for roles like Maid, crack head in the back, sassy black friend. And those are the lucky ones. There's always...Slave girl. *(Everyone gasps)*

Everyone: Uhh.. Slave girl.

GIRL 2. Exactly! It's hard for us, but for that one...a Dreamer. She won't last a year maybe less. Only the strong survive. And

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she just ain't it. Don't nobody have time to be nice to her? Not if you want to eat. She'll find out soon enough, she got to.

GIRL 1. Y'all know what? I think I got time to head to the store real quick... *(They all sigh)* I'll be right back, I just need a few things before the store closes.

GIRL 4. I better go with you, so you don't get distracted.
(They both walk off stage right.)

GIRL 3. I guess but if they don't then that means more gigs for you and me. Haha.

GIRL 2. I had to learn the hard way. When I first came out here.. It was nothing like how it is today. y'all got it easy. Back then.. Every person was out for themselves. I worked my way through that school. and then I was free. So I thought. It was tough for a long time. Money drying up, working 2 shit jobs waitressing, and bartending in a shitting part of town. I was just about to give it all up. Then I got my first call. I couldn't believe. The soaps was bringing more black people in their stories, and these were going to be strong roles no more of that mammy shit.. Doctors, and lawyers. I got down there as quick as I could. I saw the Line but I didn't care I knew I was better than all of them wannabes. Most of em too old to matter or too young to count. It was down to me and this Diana Ross wannabe. I think I even laughed a bit when she went in. And when I saw her run out that room crying I really laughed. I walked right in that audition looked that director right in his eye and delivered those lines on point. Tell me I couldn't be the baddest chick on General hospital.

GIRL 3. Then what happened. Did you get the role?

GIRL 2. *(Beat)* The director got up and walked around me, looked me up and down, but he ain't say anything. I couldn't understand why. I just gave the best audition he ever seen. Then I felt my dress and slip go up. I could feel his breath on my neck. went in to act, but he wanted something else. This...man had his hands all over me. I couldn't move. I saw myself on TV with all the people I looked up to. And I thought

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about that shitty apartment and my shitty jobs. And I froze... letting him...in. I booked the role and I was on TV... and people noticed me... for a while... Then it faded away ... That's how fast it goes. And that's why we have to work twice as hard. And why ain't nobody got time for dreamers... for some of us this is our last chance. (*Blackout*)

SCENE 2

Lights up on the director and Girl 1 and Sasha center stage.

THE DIRECTOR. Alright everyone now I need quiet.. We are starting. Here in scene 5 we are looking at an argument that's taking place between mother and daughter after she tells her she's leaving for the city with Sylvester. I want you to look at the emotional state of these characters, what are their goals for this scene, what do they need from each other. Now when you're ready. (*Girl 1 and Sasha are left on stage.*)

GIRL 1. Supper gonna be ready soon, gone on and fetch your father. Addie... Addie... Addie Mae do you hear me talking to you. Girl quit looking out that window and go do what I asked

SASHA: It looks like a storm is coming,

GIRL 1. Good we've been due for one. It's been hotter than I don't know what around here, and this heat been making people act foolish

SASHA. Remember when daddy and me would sit up all night watching the lighting hit. I was so scared but I couldn't look away.

GIRL 1. mmhmm. I remember struggling with you in the morning. Because you were up so late. That's the thing your father never thought about. The work it was going to be for me.

SASHA: You were always there for us momma. Not many people could say that. I think god smiled on us just a little bit when he made you our momma.

GIRL 1. mmhmm..

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SASHA: You know what I like the most about a storm is momma. The rainbow that comes after. No matter how bad the storm is there's always a rainbow after. It's the surprise you get for surviving through all that dark. Its god showing us what happens when we trust him.

GIRL 1: Your father would say that's God window. He'd stand out in the middle of the rain and just look up and smile haha. He was always doing strange things like that. That's what caught my eye most when I first saw him.

SASHA: Momma tell me how did you meet daddy again. I always love it when you tell that story.

GIRL 1: That's and old story little one. I barley remember anymore. I couldn't tell you if I wanted to.

SASHA: Oh please momma...

GIRL 1. Why you want to know about us, we here now that all that should matter. You shouldn't keep up with past Addie Marie, you'll miss out on what the lord has plan for you.

SASHA. But you my momma and I loves you

GIRL 1. What are you after Addie may? You skipping in here talking bout rainbows and stories. You always going on bout something just like your father. What you really after girl.

SASHA. Momma... I wanted to tell you that me and Sylvester we's getting married. Oh momma he asked me last night I was so excited I wanted to run right over to tell you but it was so late. We went dancing and he took me to dinner and after he got right on his knees in the middle of the street can you believe that. Momma it was just like how I imagined. I'm going to be a great wife, and momma someday. And that's because of you. Aren't you happy for me momma, are you going to say something?

GIRL 1. You a fool...

SASHA. Momma...

GIRL 1. That man... that boy. The only things he know about this world is the evil in it. He got so much anger built up in his heart he don't know what to do with it. He's mad at his people,

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he's mad at the world, he's mad at himself. It's deep in him. And you can't see it, but I promise you little one he will take it out on you.

SASHA: Momma don't say that. I know you angry with me but I'm happy but don't say that.

GIRL 1. He will. I seen it with other men. They leave their homes to make something of themselves, and this world chew 'em up and spit 'em out and they don't know how to handle it. They drink and gamble. And they get hateful and take it out on the people closes to them. That's going to be you

SASHA: Stop momma... stop please.

GIRL 1: You listen to me now girl. He'll hurt you and he won't think twice about it.

SASHA: No not him. You're wrong.

GIRL 1. You can't see what's right in front of you child. You jumped in to something you don't know about. You get that from your father.

SASHA: Why can't you see I'm happy?

GIRL 1. You just going to have to tell this man no. I'm sorry but you are not marrying him. I forbid it. Your young child. You got your whole life waiting for you. You gonna be alright.

(Sasha turns away from Girl 1)

SASHA. When we met I knew he was made for me; I knew that he was my rainbow after the storm. You never liked me momma. You ain't never out right said it, but you showed it. I don't know why but I took it. Every-time you snatched your hand away or beat me, or kept me from doing something that I cared about. I took it with a smile and a yes ma'am. The way you treated me over my sisters... I couldn't see why. At night I'd lay in bed wondering what I did so badly to you. I tried every day... I tried so much that I though the only thing I could do was hide away and not be seen, but not anymore. You ain't going to take this from me. I found something momma. I love him and he loves me. Where going to leave this place and start

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our own family and I'm going to love my children with all of my self.

GIRL 1. Love?... What you know about love...you don't know nothing about no love. You got big eyes girl; you always have. You had your head in the clouds when you were a child and you still got em up there now. You wouldn't know love if it stood right in front of you. Love ain't just about the good times you have, its working with your husband to build something for yourself, it's more than a song and a dance. Can't you see that? Its times of strain and hard work, sacrifice. Looking at your husband leave your house knowing how the world sees him, knowing that he might not come back, but you got to let em leave so he can stand on his own two feet. Men need that.

Your aunt was like that she though she found her world in a man and she was happy for a while. Then he left her with 4 kids in a shack. Lost to the world.. Addie May this man will get inside of you and he'll take everything you got.

SASHA. We getting married momma. And it's gonna be beautiful. Papa gonna be there Rosa, Patrice. Rev' Jacobs gonna marry us, we gonna have flowers from the garden all around us. It's gonna be a good day. And I hope you can be there. If you ain't then that's ok too, because I'm not hiding away from you anymore.

GIRL 1. If you marry that man, I want you to get your things and get out of this house. You ain't gonna bring all that suffering here.

SASHA. That's fine momma. That's just fine. (*The Director gets up.*)

THE DIRECTOR. And scene. Better everyone.. That's the work I'm talking about... (*Points to Girl 1*) A little shaky in that middle monologue. But I like what you did at the end. Sasha easy on the southern accent we ain't cooking malaises here.

SASHA: Thank you. Yes I'll work on it

THE DIRECTOR. You don't need to tell me just do it. Alright everyone we are going to take 10. When we return I want to

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work on scene 6? This is the first time we see Sylvester... where's she at... anybody no where is she.

GIRL 2. I'm here I'm here. I was just getting some rest for my big scene.

THE DIRECTOR. Mmmhmm listen my cast is on time when I'm giving notes. You hear me. Or you can be out on the streets waiting for some company to do Dreamgirls.

GIRL 3: *(To Girl 4)* See I told you

GIRL 2: Yes ma'am.

Director. Good, Now listen. Your scene is up next I hope you're ready for it.

GIRL 2. Well that's just the thing Ms. I wanted to see if I could play someone else. If I could switch with one of the other girls

GIRL 3. Not-uh

GIRL 1. I don't think so

GIRL 4. I'm sorry I don't think I could..

GIRL 2. Its not that I'm not grateful, because I'am. It's...I can't play a man. I have played great roles. Woman roles. Ruth Younger, Dussie Mae, Berniece, I was even Juliet. All I'm saying is Ms. I think my talents would be wasted confined in the body of a man. My hair, my curves you don't want to cover this up. And my voice is light as a feather. I couldn't get my voice any lower if I tried. This role is such a delicate one I wouldn't want to do it any... injustice

GIRL 1. She's lucky that she got it at all. If you ask me.

GIRL 3. I know that's right.

GIRL 2. Well ain't nobody ask you. Won't you just keep on standing there looking tall and lengthy and mind your business.

GIRL 1. Oh don't you worry about it sister girl. We see you. Standing there begging. Go on keep it up. You ain't doing nothing but wasting everyone's time.

SASHA. We need to make this about the show. That's what matters. We are all good performers here. Nobodies questioning that. Fighting isn't going to solve anything.

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GIRL 2. I do not need your help.

GIRL 4. Don't talk to her like that. Just because you been in a bad mood since forever don't give you the right to talk to people how you feel like.

THE DIRECTOR. Girls..

GIRL 2. And why don't it. Especially when it comes to her. I can say what's on my mind whenever I feel I like it because I've earned that.

THE DIRECTOR. Ladies please.

GIRL 3. And that's why you playing her ugly husband.

GIRL 4. This is pointless.

THE DIRECTOR. Enough!!!

GIRL 2. but she.

THE DIRECTOR. I said enough... Now listen everyone. The way this play was written it must have an all-woman cast. And our job is to take the words on these pages and bring them to life. We must pour ourselves in to these characters with everything that we have and then some. Give them some meaning because they haven't had any. If we can't do that, then why are any of us here?

We have been given an opportunity that few of us get. With a play like this. Just a few years ago people would've laughed at the idea hell I'd laugh. They'd laugh big and loud. Some of you are young so you don't know how bad things were, some of you may have forgotten. The stage, this stage is our battle ground, our church, our home. it's the place where we can even the odds. remember that.

You... You're playing a man so what. Play him. Play his wants and needs, Play his soul. Once you find that then no one can tell you a damn thing. Make them see. This play is about life, And we have been given the responsibility of telling it. Don't waste it. Don't give the people who doubt us anymore reason to. Instead make a believer out of them. Let your performance touch god herself. Now let's get ready for the next scene... please. (*Blackout*)

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SCENE 3

Lights up on center stage. Enter Girl 2 and girl 4 they are rehearsing.

GIRL 2. Well hey there Ms. Rosa, you show looking mighty fine this morning. I wanted to call on Addie May. The church is having their summer picnic and I wanted to walk with her there.

GIRL 4. Good Morning Sir. I'm afraid my sister is not at home at the moment. She went in town with momma.

GIRL 2. Oh nooo. I had the whole day planned. See we gonna take a nice strolled through the flower garden. Then we make a picnic basket, then I thought I'd take her by the river to eat. What you think about that?

GIRL 4. I think that sounds nice... Real nice

GIRL 2. I thought you might like it Ms. Rosa. Seems like such a shame that it's gonna go to waste.

GIRL 4. Well, she's going to be home in a little while. Momma don't like shopping too long it messes with her knees. ...Would you like to come in and wait for her? Get out of that heat. I just made some tea.

GIRL 2: Oh now Ms. Rosa I wouldn't want to be no trouble. But it is mighty hot out here and some of your famous tea would be nice.

GIRL 4. *(She lets him in)* Oh Mr. Sylvester please it's not that good just some regular tea. Momma taught me how to make it when I was little. I don't know why everyone loves it so much.

GIRL 2. Well, I always say it ain't the thing it's the person who makes it. And that's in the Bible.

GIRL 4. It is?

GIRL 2. Sho is. Somewhere in Corinthians I believe every word true as the day it was written. Now Ms. Rosa you wouldn't be in this big ol'house alone now would you.

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GIRL 4. Sho am everybody's done gone off to do things. Patrice and daddy went down to the picnic. Daddy likes to get there first so he can get him some sweet potato pie that's his favor, but that's everybody's favor to. And I had to stay here until I'm done practicing this here piano. And beside I'm old enough to be here on my own. I'm 16 teen years old

GIRL 2. Is that right. Well you sho have grown in to a mighty fine lady from what your sisters tell me, and from what I can see. I bet all the young mans be falling all over themselves trying to court you. You walking all round here Stratton your stuff.

GIRL 4. Ohh no Mr. Sylvester, momma would tear my hide a new one...

GIRL 2. Oh no...Not even just a little bit, oh come on you can tell me. I ain't nobody.

GIRL 4. Well there is this one boy at school. I seem to have caught his eye, but I don't be paying him no mind (*She pauses*) He did give me some flowers outside of the schoolhouse this one time, and they did smell nice. They was so pretty I couldn't help but take them.

GIRL 2. Is that right. Well Ms. Rosa.

GIRL 4. But I threw them away on my walk home. I couldn't let my daddy or momma see them. Lord knows what they'd do especially my momma. More people afraid of her than they are of daddy.

GIRL 2. Your Momma is a... Mighty woman. So you never even kissed a boy before Ms. Rosa. Now that I find hard to believe. I imagine you have done it at least once. As pretty as you are. I bet all you got to do is walk a certain way or rub your pretty little fingers through your hair. Have the sun kiss your skin the right way. And you shine. I bet there's a fella out there with your name on his mind right now (*He gets up and begins to rub Rosa's shoulders*)

GIRL 4. Mr. Sylvester you are far to kind. I would never believe any of that thou.

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GIRL 2. I would even say... Sometimes. I be looking at you like I do yo sister. I just can't help it. You have gotten to be so pretty.

GIRL 4. You telling stories. My sisters are pretty. I'm nowhere close to looking like them. Why they look like the girls that be in them moving pictures.

GIRL 2. Ms. Rosa you like music. Theres this song I just be humming all the time (*He begins to hum.*) I just can't get it out of my head. It starts peaceful, then grows like one of them title waves.

GIRL 4. It does sound like a pretty song. (*He begins to get up and walk over to Rosa*)

GIRL 2. Don't it thou.

GIRL 4. Mr. Sylvester what are you doing

GIRL 2. Don't you want to know what it's like to kiss a boy... wouldn't it be better to try on a man... (*He grabs her and starts kissing her neck*)

GIRL 4. Please sir you are making me very uncomfortable.

Girl 2. Shhh relax.

Girl 4. Mr. Sylvester you ain't finish your tea.

GIRL 2. Oh come now you like learning don't you. I'm just trying to teach you something

GIRL 4. I don't want this sir. What about Addie May

GIRL 2. I just can help it, you so pretty. (*Girl 2 snatches her dress off at the top*)

GIRL 4. Take your hands from me or I'll scream... I mean it

GIRL 2. Come on now just relax. (*Girl 2, throws Girl 4 on the floor*)

GIRL 4. Mr. Sylvester I said no!!!! (*She screams*)

GIRL 2. (*He strikes her and jumps back*) What's yo problem. You acting like you ain't want it.

GIRL 4. You're the fox in the hen house sir.

GIRL 2. Fine where's my jacket.

GIRL 4. You're the monster in the woods.

GIRL 2. just calm down now.

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GIRL 4. You tried to steal me, like a fox.

GIRL 2. Listen here Ms. Rosa the world ain't full of gentleman like me. You can't be swing your hips. If I was any other man... I would've taken what you got to give... Stop your crying you the one brought me in here. Now this gonna stay between you and me because... Because... Well look at you, ain't know body gonna believe you. They gonna see exactly what I see. So if I were you I keep this to yourself.... *(He walks out the door)* You don't know what you missing girl, what you could have had. Uhummm.

(She is laying on the ground with torn clothes on crying.)

GIRL 4. You tried to steal me like the fox. *(Girl 2 walks to the side of the stage still shaking from what she's done. Enter the Director.)*

THE DIRECTOR. Now that's acting everyone. Take a look at this woman venerable, weak from fighting off this animal, fighting for her life. She has become fully engulfed in her character. That is what the audience needs to see. That is the rawness I was talking about. And our Sylvester. Bravo...bravo. And you told me you couldn't do it. I think not. You did more than try to have your way with this girl, you tried to take her soul. And that is acting. I hope everyone has taken notes. *(She goes back to her desk to takes notes, Girl 2 walks over to girl 4)*

GIRL 2. Are you ok.. I didn't hurt you did I...Hey look I'm sorry ok. I was just playing the part. You can't be mad at me for doing that. It's not like I really did it. Look it's just stupid play. I'm sorry ok. *(She walks off stage left)*

THE DIRECTOR. Wait a min! We're on a roll here. Where are you going? Where is she going, hey? What is going through that child's mind? Now what's wrong with you?

GIRL 4. Nothing I'm fine... I need... I'll be fine.

THE DIRECTOR. You don't look it... *(She pauses and looks Girl 4 up and down)* When did it happened?

GIRL 4. I said I'm... 3 years ago. It was our last run of Hair. In this little dink theatre up state. It was fun. It was just us and

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the audience you know one of those kind of shows. And its Hair. So we've been running back and forth backstage for a month now, moving and changing in front of each other. We just got used to it, you wouldn't think anything other than what it was.

The night we were getting ready to open. We couldn't find one of our dancers and people are panicking because the shows about to start. You know how it is backstage. 2 mins before the curtain opens she comes out of nowhere, her and one of the main actors. People didn't notice the strap on her right shoulder was torn, or that her dress had a tare in the front, or her smeared makeup, but I did. Our eyes met and she stared at me lifeless, as if she was trying to tell me something but I knew... Something happened, And I knew she was looking to me for help. To stop everything thing and notice her, but I didn't, I couldn't. There was a reviewer from the city in the audience that night. I couldn't stop the show now. This was everything. This was going to finally help me make my mark. No more dinky theatre's. I was going to be a star. *(She laughs)* So I kept my head down... I ignored her. And here I am.

When I did that scene and I had her hands all over me. I don't know... I kept seeing her torn clothes, her face staring at me. I felt her. And I couldn't keep myself together. This play... this play is cursed. Every word we say from it brings something out in us. Something hidden.

THE DIRECTOR. You ain't do a thing wrong.

GIRL 4: What!! Did you hear what I just said?

THE DIRECTOR. I did. You told me a story about some girl, somewhere, and I don't got sympathy for you. If that's what you're looking for. I'm sorry. You survived. Sometimes you got to leave folks behind. I would've done the same thing... I have done the same thing.

GIRL 4. That's disgusting.

THE DIRECTOR. No!! That's life. Didn't you hear my speech before? All that matters is what we do here. Most

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people look at a theatre like this and see wood, steel, and carpet, but this place is sacred. It holds the past lives of thousands of people. That girl in your story I feel bad for her but she ain't you. She's just another sad girl that life preys on. The performance must come first. Hopefully one day the world's gonna see all the work we've done and give us our moment without sacrifice, but I'm not gonna wait on someday. And as much you hate it. You won't either or you wouldn't be here.

GIRL 4. Just go on then?

THE DIRECTOR. Exactly. (*Blackout*)

SCENE 4

Lights up on all the girls. They are all at different parts of the stage finishing up their lunch break

GIRL 1. Look y'all I don't want to complain or nothing, but do y'all really think people gonna like this play. I don't want to start no trouble. It's just Some of the words thou, well most of the words don't really sound like everyday talk. Is what I mean.

GIRL 3. See y'all I told you. The words of a crazy person.

GIRL 2. Why did you get her started again?

GIRL 3. What? She's right. Listen to this. I loved standing on the lake on a cool summer night seeing all the fireflies glowing and hearing the grasshoppers talk. I always wondered what they were saying. I can't believe any one talked like this, even back then. Home girl had her head all the way in the clouds.

SASHA. I think it's nice. Seeing her view of world. There so much misery out there. maybe we need a little crazy.

GIRL 1. You would think that. (*They all laugh*) Listen to how she speaks about her father. This wondrous man, with a big laugh and open arms. Now I ask. Was y'all daddy's like that? Huh. (*They all turn their heads to the floor*)

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GIRL 4. Not my daddy. He took one look at me when I was born then looked at my mother and told her he was going to get some coffee from the machine down the hall... haven't seen him since.

GIRL 3. Exactly. You know who my daddy was...A drunk.. He was a fish. He drank during the day and at night. He was a mean drunk too. He use to throw my brothers around like rag dolls. And with us it wasn't his hands that he raised, he used his voice. He would say these hurtful things that got inside you. He come back from drinking and he see me sitting there in the dining room. He come right up to me stumbling. He say. look at you sitting there looking like your black momma. You know I ain't think you was mine at first. You was too ugly to be mine. I thought your momma did what she do best, lay on her back. But I guess I'm the lucky one. I sit here and look at you and see her. You gonna be just like her. Another dark hateful bitch. Gonna have a whole bunch of men's up inside you like her too.

He say whole lot of shit like that. And I use to believe it, oh yea I thought his words were gospel. Until I saw him out in the world for the first time. Saw how this white man treated him at his job. Here was my father who suddenly became small hahah I could put him in my pocket.

When he was on his death bed. I got close to him just like he use to do me. I told him how small he was, how he was going to die small. hmmm That's who my daddy was.

SASHA. Damn that's cold. My father isn't anything like that, he supports me He's a bank manager but he always wanted to be a singer like the Temptations or something, but he never made it. So I guess he's living through me.

GIRL 2. Say what you want about this show, but I'm telling y'all right now if I had to be Ruth Younger or, Rose Maxson, or lady in blue one more time I was going to fucking lose it. I've been in those roles so many times I can say the lines in my sleep. No matter how good you are or what prestigious drama school you attended. If you a Black woman you only good for

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playing one thing... *(She stands up and walks to the middle of the stage)* Oh lawd, help my husband, I know he drinks, and he gambled all our money away, and he don't like the kids, and he beats me senseless, cheats on me night and day, and did I mentioned he likes to drink. Please if you can help this man get through what he needs to get through so he can continue to treat me like garage. I'll show would appreciate it. In your name amen. *(They all laugh)* It's too funny. This is all they can see for us. These sad broken women that put other people first in the name of Jesus.

GIRL 1. And why they all got to be from the south.

GIRL 3. I know. It's like they think that's the birth place for all black woman. Some peach farm In Georgia. I for one have never even been south of DC.

GIRL 2. Don't get me wrong I'm not saying that men don't get type casted, but they get to play leaders and heroes. Joe Wellington, Porgy, Purlie, Othello the list goes on and on. They get to overcome obstacles while walking all over us. And where the women...huh.

GIRL 3. I'll tell you where we at. We are the supporting, good dutiful wife. Who is sitting in the back just in view, but not to much so we don't steal the scene from our husband? Who is delivering a powerful monologue about his place in the world?

GIRL 2. You see what I'm saying. Not only do we have to fight for every role we can with white people, but we have to beg for dignity in our own damn shows. And I went to Juilliard *(They all turn from her in annoyance)* I did. I performed with the best of them. And I was good, but now their 4 blocks away on a Broadway stage. And here I am. With all y'all.

SASHA. It's how you finish things. That's what counts. So you got to work a little harder. That's all of us. Standing there emotional ain't going to do anyone any good. We got to work together. That's how we make it. You're tired well do something about it. I say start here with this play.

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GIRL 3. Well listen to Ms. Thing acting like she know something about something...even makes a little sense too. So you do get it.

GIRL 4. We better get ready before you know who comes up in here and sees us having fun. You know she don't like that.

GIRL 2. You not lying. *(They begin to impersonate the Director's voice.)* What?? Y'all in here having fun. Not on my time.. not on my time.

GIRL 3. You can take all that someplace else.

GIRL 1. Hey you either in my show or you can be on the street

SASHA. Better stop mocking her. I think she got super hearing or something. She knows stuff.

GIRL 4. Yea she umm... creeps me out. *(They start walking offstage)*

GIRL 2. *(To Sasha)* You know something you ain't all that bad.

SASHA. Thank you.

GIRL 2. You still walk around here like your shit don't stink, but you alright.

SASHA. I'm going to take that as a compliment

GIRL 2. You do what you want with it. *(Blackout.)*

SCENE 5

Lights up on Sasha and Girl 3 on stage facing away from each other. Girl 3 is doing Sasha's hair.

GIRL 3. The Thompson girl's momma said she'll do it. You just gonna have to explain what we need her to do very carefully. She's a bit touched that's what her momma say.

SASHA. What's that's supposed to mean. A bit touched.

GIRL 3. Hell if I know. I think it means common sense don't come naturally to the child. Poor thing.

SASHA. Remember that's what momma said about Cousin Esther *(They both laugh)*

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GIRL 3. That's when she burn her whole house trying to cook biscuits.

SASHA. Aunt Ethel ain't leave her in the house alone ever since

GIRL 3. I don't blame her.

SASHA. Oh did you pick up the flowers from the garden. The white ones..

GIRL 3. Yes the whites and the blues and the pinks ones. The ushers from the church are setting them up in the morning.

SASHA. What about...

GIRL 3. And the choir is rehearsing your wedding song as we speak.

SASHA. And...

GIRL 3. Yes and I made sure that the deaconess cook an extra pie for daddy. I got this little sister. Every detail down to the last has been planned and then planned again. I wish you had more faith me.

SASHA. I do... I do I loves my sister. You have done so much for me I couldn't possibly return the favor if I tried.

GIRL 3. And you never have to. Seeing you happy is enough. But you are going have to try to calm down. Or you're going to be up all night. And you do not want to get married with big bags under eyes ain't like you going to be getting much sleep tomorrow night anyway.

SASHA. *(They laugh)* You need to stop all nasty talk.

GIRL 3. Just teasing little sister, just teasing. You seem so wound up. enjoy this moment.

SASHA. I know its jus that... I's getting married.. I'm so excited I couldn't sleep if I wanted too. Tomorrow I'm going to be a wife. I start a whole new life. We gonna travel Patricia and see the world together. Sylvester say that he gonna take me to Paris, and we gonna go up that big tower they got over there, he say it's so tall you can see the rest of the world from it. And the food. He say it ain't nothing like it is over here. And the

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music oh Patricia I'm going to be married in pairs. Just like in all them books. Can you believe that.

GIRL 3. I'm happy for you Addie but if you don't quit moving you gonna look a mess in Paris. Stay still child.

SASHA. Patricia, aren't you happy for me.

GIRL 3. I am little sister very much so, but I have to finish your hair and then go do Rosa's, then my own. And I don't want to be up all night now. So please stay still.

SASHA. Alright... Alright. You know He reminds me of daddy you know he's kind and gentle. I love how he looks at the world. He even sings to me. He'll hold me in his arms and just hmm a tune in my ear and I'm in heaven.

GIRL 3. It does sound nice. Like a dream come true. That's all we can ask for isn't it.

SASHA. Isn't it thou. And it's my dream. Some don't see it like that.

GIRL 3. Oh now don't pay momma no mind she don't mean to be mean and grumpy that's just in her veins. Remember she came up from a different time than us. A much harsher time. The woman done seen things, she tougher than iron. She just stuck in them old time ways that's all.

SASHA. I wish you heard the things she was saying about Sylvester. I mean she wouldn't even give him a chance. To her he was the devil himself.

GIRL 3: Don't worry about momma. Tomorrow is your day not hers, and she's just going to have to get used to it , but she still cares in her own way.

THE DIRECTOR. No. tender. She's confining in you. She's trying tell you something don't run away from it. Listen to her. Be gentile with her. Going on.

SASHA. Cares!!! Momma ain't ever cared about me. Y'all were her children... I was the other one

GIRL 3. Don't say that, you don't know what you're talking about.

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SASHA: Oh she took care of me. Nobody's arguing that, but it was all second hand wasn't it. Second hand clothes, second hand bedding, second hand love. And I won't beg for that any longer.

THE DIRECTOR. Good. Just like that. Let it build to something.

SASHA. Her love comes with a price and I'm the one that pays.

GIRL 3. Watch yourself girl. I can see you leading yourself somewhere and I don't like it.

SASHA. What! I'm I lying. That woman has always had it out for me. I think it's because she can't stand her own life, being small, in a small town. And she needed someone to take it out on and there I was.

GIRL 3. You letting your anger get the best of you Addie May, and I won't stand for it. You hear me? Stop I say.

Director. Show us your frustration, show us what you won't stand for. She's not listening to you make her listen. .

SASHA. Why are you defending her, it has been her word vs mine. And in your eyes I'm just a misbehave child. I's a woman now. Look what she's done to daddy. Taken this man full of hopes and dreams and broken him down like one of our horses.

THE DIRECTOR. Demand it!!

GIRL 3. Stop this now.

SASHA. I seen what she's done to you. (*Girl 3 slaps Sasha across her face. They both take a step back and turn form each other.*)

GIRL 3. Addie, I'm sorry...I (*She walks closer to her, but Sasha steps back.*) Look now I didn't want to do that but you was talkin nonsense. Now you need to take it back.

Addie...Addie May do you hear me... Do you hear me talking to you girl I said take it back right now?

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SASHA. You just like her. All of you are. She ain't protect me, she ain't hold me, she hated me no good reason. All yall want me to be silent about.

GIRL 3. You wasn't there... you wasn't there for the hard times. Before this house. The times we was starving, and cold when we didn't see daddy for weeks at a time because he was out there working in somebody else's field in the heat for barely anything, but every time he came through that door stinking and covered in sweat she hugged him. She rubbed his shoulders, gave him a kiss. Made him matter. And she taught me to look for that when it's my time. Our momma may not be perfect, I'll say that but you ain't gonna talk about her like that wedding or no wedding.

THE DIRECTOR. No... No... You need to show her that you're not just hurt, you're not, just disappointed, but you are angry. You're forgiving her too soon. And you (*She faces Sasha*) Don't you see. This is your final goodbye the last step. Once you turn your back on your sister then this whole chapter of your life will end, but you need to show us that, not showing us you acting it. There needs to be an urgency. Like before.

GIRL 3. I'm sorry I'm kind of confused here I thought we were doing that. I was doing that.

THE DIRECTOR. No you were showing us interruption, and that is very different. Two completely different things.

GIRL 3. I'm afraid I'm going to have to disagree. The scene called for urgency, we gave that to you, you said not to run from the conflict. We ain't go anywhere.

SASHA. Maybe we just need to run it again.

GIRL 3. No...No we don't need to run the scene. Why would you say that? We're not going to run it again.

THE DIRECTOR. I decide that thank you very much. And we are going to run it again. Just do what I ask you to do. I promise I'll take you all the way to the top if you can just do that. Now again.

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GIRL 3. Our momma she may not be perfect, I'll say that, but you ain't gonna talk about her like that. Wedding or...

THE DIRECTOR: Keep going

GIRL 3. Wedding or no wedding.

SASHA. Ain't you going to say sorry.

GIRL 3. I Did.

SASHA. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about me... you said all this for momma sake. You ain't never said nothing for me. Where do I stand in all this? I'm supposed to take all she got to give with a smile on my face.

GIRL 3: Sorry !!! ... I'm sorry that you can't see how alike you two are. You just as prideful as she is. Addie You leaving, you getting out. You so stubborn you can't see that you won already. You can go anywhere, do anything. You're not stuck in this town.

SASHA. Is that how you feel... That you have to stay here. Because you don't...Come with me.

GIRL 3. I want so many things.. So many precious things that I...

THE DIRECTOR. Hold! Again. You're not making me believe it. You're acting, not connecting.

SASHA. Hold on. It could be me I could be messing up somewhere. I think that last line was a little shaky.

THE DIRECTOR. No, it's not you...

GIRL 3. You saying it's me...

THE DIRECTOR. I'm afraid so dear. You don't get the scene, or your goal in it.

GIRL 3. I understand it quite well; you can't see outside of the box. Or the hard work we are doing up here.

SASHA. Ok maybe we should take a break, we could look at the scene with fresh eyes.

THE DIRECTOR. Girl you ain't even on the map. How you going to be outside the box.

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GIRL 3. You're not respecting me; you don't respect any of us as artist. We're just chess pieces you move around at your whim. No heart no emotion, no vision.

THE DIRECTOR. That's my job darling. I tell you what to do, you do it right we make a great show, and the world applauds you for it. But somewhere along the way you lost that lesson. And I don't have time to teach you. Now going on
(She turns her back to her.)

GIRL 3. Teach me. Do you know who I am? I've performed in castles for royalty, across oceans. Who the hell are you?

SASHA. We all are dedicated to the show Ma'am. The stress of opening night is getting to her that's all. It could happen to any of us.

THE DIRECTOR. Yes and that's very nice, but that don't buy talent.

GIRL 3. You're crazy.

THE DIRECTOR. What did you say? What did you say to me?

GIRL 3. Nothing. I didn't mean to say that...It just slipped.

THE DIRECTOR. Slip... it didn't just slip. You got something to say then say it. Everyone

GIRL 3. I don't have anything to say...I didn't mean.

THE DIRECTOR. Well, if you ain't got the damn heart to speak your mind then stop wasting my time and somehow muddle up some talent, hell I'll take some attention at this point and do the damn scene.

GIRL 3. I said you're fucking crazy, out of your mind, insane, bizarre, grumpy, dictator. That's the one. Dictator, and you have been driving us insane this whole production. Hold, that's wrong, keep going, do the scene right...and the list goes on. I have worked with crazy people in my time but you ma'am take the cake without question.

GIRL 2. (To girl 1) And I thought I was a diva

GIRL 1. She just wrote her own death warrant.

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SASHA. (*Sasha gets in between the girls and The Director*)
Oh ok... words have been spoken... How about we all just take
a step back from...

(*The director cuts her off*)

GIRL 3. God that felt good to say. I didn't want to say it but it
felt good. That's how we all feel. Have for a long time now.

GIRL 2. When she say we all. What she really mean is that we
all are so grateful to be given this opportunity. And that we
know how important this show is to you. (*She gestures to Girl
1*) Is it working?

GIRL 4. She's only acting like this because she wants
attention.

GIRL 3. You don't know a damn thing about me so shout your
mouth or I'll shout it for you. Who are you anyway some red
bone little thing waving your finger at me? You ain't got
nothing to say for yourself? I saw you mopping around here
earlier today after you talked to her too. You hiding something
too.

GIRL 1. She just going after everybody... I like her. (*The
arguing continues lights fade. Blackout.*)

END OF ACT ONE

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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