

# **SNOWVILLE CAFÉ**

**By**

**Julie Whitney-Scott**

# SNOWVILLE CAFÉ

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## SNOWVILLE CAFÉ

*Snowville Café* is dedicated to the many neighborhood restaurants and café owners, especially the African Americans owners, who lived in the near east side of Columbus, Ohio before and during the gentrification of its city. My father, Arliss Whitney Sr., was one of those people who served hot fish, fries and hamburgers on a plate in his “Marie’s Fish Market” restaurant, named after his mother and my grandmother. Sometimes they served up conversations, community meetings, family gatherings and celebrations. And all these people that I dedicate this play to have families and their own personal lives, that sometimes conflict with their business.

- Julie Whitney Scott, Playwright

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ACT 1  
SCENE 1

*Rise opens on ESTELLE standing in front of a stand mic reciting poetry. Smooth jazz is heard in the background.*

**ESTELLE.** The time is now, now to be free, easy. Time to be what I need to be to myself, not you or yourself, but me and myself. The time is now, now to be true blue. To myself not you, my as in me, self as in free, myself, me. Internally...externally, the time is now, now to be who you want me to be, IF, it gets me what I want it to get me, now. The time is now, now is the time, it's time NOW! *(Lights crossfade to the small café that is owned by the Snowville family. DELPHINE is meeting with her divorce lawyer, JEROME. She appears irritated while Jerome has a look of impatience on his face. It's the end of the lunch rush. There are two other tables with CUSTOMERS in the background. JASMINE serves all of them.)*

**JEROME.** Well Mrs. Snowville, we have finally gotten to the end of this divorce proceedings. Now all we have to do to reach the finish line is to decide what property you and your husband will split between the two of you.

**DELPHINE.** Jerome, you can start with not calling me Mrs. Snowville. Delphine will do just fine from here on out. And it's not going to be that hard to split the property as you think since it all belongs to me.

**JEROME.** I know you think that Mrs. Snowville, I mean Ms. Delphine. Sorry, but I need to put some type of title on your name. It was the way I was raised, to respect my elders.

**DELPHINE.** Humph, well, I'm not trying to uproot the good upbringing you got from your parents. And I'm gonna ignore your backhanded dig that I'm old too.

**JEROME.** No, no please, that's not what I meant.

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**DELPHINE.** Save it! (*Dismisses him with her free hand. Takes a sip of her drink.*) And no, I don't think I own all our property. I know it and have every frigging receipt to show it too.

**JEROME.** As I have explained to you many times now over these last nine months, by Ohio law your husband is entitled to half of the marital property.

**DELPHINE.** (*Angry.*) What money has he invested to help make our company what it is today? Nothing! Not a dog gone thing! Stop talking bull...

**JEROME.** (*Sharply.*) Mrs. Delphine, I have asked you many times not to curse during our meetings.

**DELPHINE.** And I have asked you many times young man not to piss me off!

**JEROME.** (*Shakes his head in exasperation at Delphine who in turn shakes her head also at him.*) Mrs. Delphine, because your husband has worked as the manager of this restaurant from the day you opened your doors in 1980, he is entitled to half of it.

**DELPHINE.** I put the money up for this restaurant. The least he could do was work in it for his room and board.

**JEROME.** The law will see that as reason enough to give him half of the property. Marriage is not seen as "room and board" when it comes to divorce. You can't prove that it will be inequitable if he gets half of the marital property. You just can't prove it.

**DELPHINE.** What in the hell does inequitable have to do with anything? I done told you to stop using those legal terms and speak English to me about my case.

**JEROME.** Stop cursing please.

**DELPHINE.** Boy! Hell isn't a curse word. Everybody going to hell anyway if they not saved, right? You do believe in heaven and hell, don't you? What in hell does inequitable mean? Answer me!

**JEROME.** It means you can't prove it's unfair or unjust to give him half of the property. You two have been married for twenty-five years. There is no prenuptial agreement between you two.

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**DELPHINE.** That's because he wouldn't sign it when we started the restaurant.

**JEROME.** Prenuptial means before the marriage. He didn't have to sign it when you got the restaurant, after the marriage.

**DELPHINE.** Are you talking to me like I'm stupid?

**JEROME.** No Mrs. Snowville, I'm just trying to help you the best I can with the facts. You can't walk away with everything unless your husband agrees to it. Has he agreed to it yet?

**DELPHINE.** That Basta... *(Jerome looks sternly at Delphine, who in turn motions Jasmine to come over to her in an angry manner. Jasmine rushes over to her.)*

**JASMINE.** Yes, Ms. Delphine. What can I get you?

**DELPHINE.** Refill my glass please. *(Delphine gives her the wine glass after she drains the wine left in the glass. Jasmine takes it and hurries away to refill it.)*

**JEROME.** Have you given him the proposal we wrote up for him yet regarding the property?

**DELPHINE.** He got it alright. Now did he take the time to read it? That's another question. He claims he's so busy with our café that he hasn't had time yet.

**JEROME.** If he doesn't agree to it, then you are looking at a fight to keep this café all to yourself. You understand, right?

**DELPHINE.** I understand that if he wasn't here I wouldn't have any problems, now would I?

**JEROME.** You really need to stop talking like that as I have told you several times.

**DELPHINE.** Why? It's true, isn't it? If he was dead I would have it all, without the headache of seeing his face or getting a divorce that, by the way, I'm paying you a pretty penny to see that I get. *(Jasmine has returned with the wine and looks shocked at Delphine's words. Delphine notices her, takes the glass, sips from it and waves her away.)* Don't worry, I wouldn't dream of killing him. Even though the insurance money I would get would keep me sitting real pretty for the rest of my life on easy street.

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**JEROME.** That's what I'm talking about when I say stop talking like that, because if something happens to him that looks suspicious, they always look at the spouse first and you are giving them something to look at with your statements and the witnesses that have heard you make death threats towards your husband.

**DELPHINE.** You bore me. Are we finished?

**JEROME.** Yes, we are. I'll have my assistant set up our next meeting to try to mediate with you and your husband.

**DELPHINE.** Just make sure that you mediate me out of this marriage with everything that belongs to me. And that's everything!

**JEROME.** *(Jerome stands and gathers his paperwork to leave.)* I just want to leave you with this thought, Mrs. Delphine. Throughout our entire conversation today you have referred to this café as "our" café. If you think it belongs to both of you what makes you think the judge won't see it that way also?

**DELPHINE.** You still here? *(Jerome exits stage, Delphine sips from her wine glass, and ignores him as he exits stage. Jasmine comes quickly over to her table and starts to clear up the dishes. She's avoiding eye contact with Delphine as much as possible.)*

**DELPHINE.** You know what?

**JASMINE.** No ma'am.

**DELPHINE.** Never get married and stay married for as long as I have.

**JASMINE.** No ma'am!

**DELPHINE.** You get married because you're a fool in love. Right?

**JASMINE.** I've never been married ma'am.

**DELPHINE.** You still have a brain, don't you?

**JASMINE.** Yes ma'am.

**DELPHINE.** Then use it and think. Why do you think you stay married after you get married?

**JASMINE.** I don't know ma'am. Because you're a fool in love?

**DELPHINE.** No. You stay married, because you become, just a plain old fool.

**JASMINE.** If you say so ma'am. I personally don't plan on getting married.

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**DELPHINE.** Then I see you do have a brain. If you're smart, you'll keep that thought fresh and alive in it.

**JASMINE.** Yes ma'am that's the plan. At least for now. *(MATT enters from the back with the mail in his hand sorting through it. He walks up and stands behind Delphine who doesn't see him enter. Jasmine does and tries to give Delphine signals that he's behind her, but Delphine caught up in her comments doesn't catch on.)*

**DELPHINE.** Make it a long-term plan and you'll have a chance of a successful life without the headache of a husband that you can't stand to be with any longer.

**JASMINE.** Yes ma'am, can I get you anything else before Mr. Matt gets here from the back?

**DELPHINE.** You see when you've been married for almost three decades you begin to see the real person...actually, you see them within a year, but remember, it takes a while before the foolishness in you wears off.

**JASMINE.** Yes ma'am. I believe you. Let me check on the other customers behind you.

**DELPHINE.** Then after the foolishness in you wears off you begin to see the person for who they really are, but by then you feel trapped.

**JASMINE.** I think they need a refill on their drinks behind you.

**DELPHINE.** And don't have children with them because that's another type of foolishness all together. Then you think you have to stay married for the children and all you end up doing is to put them in the middle of your hellhole...

**JASMINE.** Yes sir, I'll be right with you! Their waving for me to come over behind you ma'am. *(Matt clears his throat and Jasmine rushes over to one of the other customers. Delphine doesn't turn her head or acknowledge that she hears her husband and keeps talking.)*

**DELPHINE.** Especially if you have a miscarriage and then discover you can't have any more children. Isn't that right Matt?

**MATT.** That's how you think Dell. Not me. There is more than one way to have a child. If you really want more children that is, you didn't really want children, now did you Dell?



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**DELPHINE.** If I didn't want children I wouldn't have gotten pregnant, now would I? You always did blame me for losing that baby didn't you Matt?

**MATT.** That baby? *(Beat)* Please...How many glasses of wine have you had Dell?

**DELPHINE.** You do, don't you? Tell the truth coward! Shame the devil and give God praise.

**MATT.** You know what, you need to stop drinking so much, especially so early in the day. It makes you talk and think crazy thoughts.

**DELPHINE.** That's always your go to card isn't it. I'm crazy. I talk crazy. I think crazy.

**MATT.** And don't forget you act crazy.

**DELPHINE.** You unworthy piece of dung!

**MATT.** Dell stop it! *(The customers look up startled at Delphine. Jasmine tries to cover for Delphine.)*

**JASMINE.** No ma'am we are out of honey buns, I can get you a piece of pie. *(Matt sits down at table. The customers pay their bill and leave. Matt waves to them. Jasmine asks the couple if they need anything else. They tell her no and she rushes off the stage with the dishes from the other tables. Looking back over her shoulders at them as she exits stage.)*

**DELPHINE.** You still know how to clear a room don't you.

**MATT.** I need you to transfer about \$1000 in the checking account so I can pay these bills that just came in today.

**DELPHINE.** Money, money, money. That's all I am to you right? Someone to pay the bills.

**MATT.** It's so tiring to hear you keep talking like the money is all yours Dell. I've been managing this restaurant for twenty plus years now, from the first time the doors opened. That's what keeps the money coming in and the doors staying open. My management. You just come in to sit, eat, drink and spy on me because you think somebody wants me other than you. And you don't even want me half the time. Correction. None of the time.

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**DELPHINE.** If I thought that way I wouldn't be asking for a divorce, now would I? And when are you going to sign those divorce agreement papers I gave you last week?

**MATT.** When I get darn good and ready, if I agree with it that is, I'll sign it.

**DELPHINE.** Matt, please don't make a big deal out of this, just sign the papers.

**MATT.** When you tell me the real reason you want a divorce I may consider it. But one thing is for sure, I will never agree to give up my half of this restaurant. Never! So, if that's in the paperwork you gave me to sign you may as well take it back for your lawyer to revise it.

**DELPHINE.** Why Matt? Why won't you sign the papers?

**MATT.** Why Dell? Why should I sign them? There's a lot of me in this restaurant and a lot of you too.

**DELPHINE.** A lot of my money. That Daddy left me in his will. That's how we got this place. With my money.

**MATT.** And a lot of my hard work and sweat. This place has been a cornerstone of the community for decades, way before we took over. Think of all the famous Black people, artists, politicians, community leaders who have performed, ate, and met in this Bronzeville landmark building, that we own. This is the hub of the community. How many civil rights meetings did they have here in the 60's? How many community events to sign up people to vote have we had here? What about the times people just came here for a safe place to just hang out with their friends. What about when the police shot down Ms. Mable's boy, right here in front of this building because they thought he robbed a bank. How we had the community here to support her. Snowville Café has been the graveyard of my soul too over these many years, and too much blood is in it to let it go now. Too much love built here too.

**DELPHINE.** Who's blood Matt? What love? Whose blood and whose love are you referring too? *(They look at each other as the lights crossfade to ESTELLE in front of mic.)*

**ESTELLE.** I've prayed the prayer of many mothers,

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especially the prayer of the Black mother.  
Whose heart is full of grief and pain,  
who has felt the loss of sons who died in the game  
of being and living in a Black man's life.  
Whose tears have fallen from their eyes  
attempting to wash the bloodstains from their minds  
and the streets where they live  
and the ground where they died oh so  
many Black sons abound  
we stand today to face the demons to say  
STOP killing the Black sons,  
STOP the hated ways,  
STOP, STOP, STOP!  
I've prayed the prayer of many mothers,  
especially the prayers of the Black mother.

### SCENE 2

*Scene opens in the restaurant in the evening. It's dinner time at the restaurant. It's 1970. BOBBY and Matt enter stage left with books in hand. Bobby is talking. Delphine is cleaning off the tables.*

**BOBBY.** Well, per Title Eight of the Fair Housing Act, passed back in April 68, we can buy any house we want to in Franklin County. Sure, even in Bexley, Ohio. In Whitehall! If some of us get a crib in those places maybe we can drive down Broad and Main Street past Nelson Rd eastward without the pigs pulling us over to frisk us and give us a ticket. I still have one I haven't paid yet. *(Bobby and Matt laugh and Delphine comes over as they sit down at a vacant table. She pours them a glass of water, sits the water pitcher down on the table and takes her order pad and pencil from her apron pocket.)*

**DELPHINE.** What you gonna have today?

**MATT.** How about a nice new house for you and me to live happily ever after in Dell?

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**DELPHINE.** How about you call me by my given name Matthew? What you having Bobby? I don't have time for this knucklehead.

**MATT.** Now why I have to be a Knucklehead beautiful Mama? And calling me Matt is just fine.

**BOBBY.** Don't pay this brother no mind Delphine. I'll have a coke, some fries and one of those juicy hamburgers.

**DELPHINE.** You want the same Matt?

**MATT.** Nah, the hamburgers here are good but not as good as Spencer's. I'll just have a Perch sandwich, without the tartar sauce. Salt, pepper, and hot sauce only. Tartar sauce messes up the flavor.

**DELPHINE.** This is not Mickey Dees! We don't mess up good Whiting or Perch with tartar sauce. Boss Man doesn't even keep it in stock. You want something to drink with that?

**MATT.** This water is just fine foxy lady, like you, fine as wine.

**DELPHINE.** Bobby why you hang with this jive turkey I will never know. *(Matt whistles at Delphine as she walks away to place their order in the kitchen.)*

**MATT.** Ok let's get back to business. What did you think of the press release that Barbee from the Open Housing Advocates wrote to the Columbus Board of Realtors in 68, did it do any good?

**BOBBY.** You tell me man. You see that many Black people living in the suburbs like Bexley or any place decent here in Columbus.

**MATT.** Not really. But I don't know every Black person that lives here now do I? Would you buy a crib in one of those neighborhoods?

**BOBBY.** Maybe. Maybe not. I don't know if I want to be in my house before dark.

**MATT.** What you talking about?

**BOBBY.** I'm talking about not being out after dark in Bexley man. No way. Not this cat.

**MATT.** Soon as they saw you coming the realtors would be jumping up and down with glee. Black busting will put a lot of bread in their pockets and bank accounts.

**BOBBY.** Man please. Those Whites are not letting me, or any other Black man live anywhere close to their precious White women and children.

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Right? Ask the KKK. And I think you mean Blockbusting, not Black busting.

**MATT.** I meant just what I said. Black busting our heads, after they make their bread from Blockbusting fees and the White man flees from the Negroes who try to live as their neighbors.

**DELPHINE.** (*Delphine comes back to the table with their drinks.*) Here you go Bobby. I'll have your grub in about ten more minutes. Nice and hot. What's Black or Block busting?

**MATT.** What about my food pretty thing. It's not as hot as you are I'm sure...

**DELPHINE.** Quit bugging me man. What are you all so all fired up about over here? What you rapping about? What's Block busting?

**MATT.** Planting black families into all white neighborhoods to cause white flight just so real estate agents can profit from prejudice in America is Black busting. I don't care what the White man calls it.

**BOBBY.** This brother thinks there is going to be some type of change in Black folks being able to buy a house somewhere outside of the projects. Dig?

**DELPHINE.** How and why would that suddenly happen?

**MATT.** Because some of us are fighting for our rights, that's why. And we are demanding change.

**DELPHINE.** Ok so let's say you get your rights. Now how you going to get a loan to buy a house when the federal government has approved ninety-eight percent of all suburban home loans to White people since 1934.

**MATT.** Well now, I see you do pay attention in class.

**BOBBY.** I'm getting mine with my GI loan. They better give me a loan after the hell I lived through in Viet Nam. Fighting their white war, and for what? You know how many brothers are dying over there? Dying for what?

**DELPHINE.** For freedom man.

**BOBBY.** Freedom for whom? So we can live in America and die in America as a poor Black man in the slums.

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**MATT.** Well, that's what this bill will do, it will make federal government agencies, like HUD, do their jobs to ensure that housing loans are given fairly to all races of people, especially poor minorities like us who can't catch a break.

**DELPHINE.** Look, President Johnson only passed that bill to stop the Holy Week Uprising.

**MATT.** What?

**DELPHINE.** The riots fool. To keep us from rioting and burning down DC after they killed King. President LBJ needed to keep the peace and do something to stop those Negroes from trying to burn the city down.

**MATT.** Don't call people "fools" Dell. I just didn't remember the name. The sad part is that they were burning down their own neighborhoods. In Baltimore, Chicago, Kansas City and Washington D.C.

**DELPHINE.** Proverbs says, "the tongue of the wise utters knowledge aright; but the mouth of fools pour out folly." Cool out Brother Man.  
*(A bell rings in the background for Delphine to pick up the food ordered.)*

**MATT.** That's your signal to go get our food with your jive talking self.

**DELPHINE.** Just get your bread ready man. We don't take no IOUs from you! *(Both men laugh at her as she switches off to get their food.)*

**MATT.** Hey sugar, it's snowing down south. *(Delphine looks down and sees her slip is showing and pulls it up as she laughs with them. Delphine picks up their plates and brings it back to them and lays the bill upside down on the table beside each plate.)* The areas surrounding downtown are mostly Black now. White people moving to the suburbs to get away from us. Just about everybody who lives between west of Nelson Road and east of Parsons Ave is Black people. They only have about two White kids going to East High School.

**DELPHINE.** I went to the RKO Palace last weekend to see a movie and I think I only saw about five White people. Downtown is almost all Black people now. Even in Lazarus.

**MATT.** Who did you go to the movies with? I thought you didn't have a man? What did you see?

**DELPHINE.** Don't worry about who I have or don't have, and what I saw and didn't see, Matt.

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**MATT.** I'm not worried. Just asking, that's all.

**DELPHINE.** Well don't ask. You ready to pay your tab yet? Yours is \$1.50 and you owe \$1.00 Bobby.

**BOBBY.** Matt, you got some change I can borrow. I'm a little short.

**MATT.** How short?

**BOBBY.** About a \$1.00.

**DELPHINE.** Well, we see who couldn't afford a house even if you could get a GI loan for one.

**MATT.** I got you man, but you owe me. I'm saving up to buy this restaurant. I heard Boss Man is thinking about selling now that he's old and everything.

**DELPHINE.** Boss Man been saying that for the last three years. Keep saving your money. *(Lights dim and time moves forward to the 1990's. Music from the 90's.)*

### SCENE 3

*Scene opens in restaurant 1990s. Matt and Delphine are married and own the restaurant. It's morning. Matt and Delphine enter the stage laughing and happy.*

**MATT.** Hey Luv, do we have enough eggs to get us through the morning rush?

**DELPHINE.** I hope so Mattie, they delivered 15 cartons of twelve.

**MATT.** I thought we agreed on twenty after last Saturday when we ran out.

**DELPHINE.** Oh, did we? I'm sorry baby, I forgot.

**MATT.** That's OK honey. *(Pause)* You been forgetting a lot lately. What's wrong?

**DELPHINE.** Nothing. I just forgot that's all. We need help here. When can we hire somebody?

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**MATT.** Got a lady set up for an interview today. Should be here soon. We've been doing pretty well since we added the kid's menu so now's the time to hire while we got the dough.

**DELPHINE.** That was smart of you love.

**MATT.** Makes sense. Got to keep up with the "happy meal" craze.

**DELPHINE.** Where you find someone to interview? You place an Ad in the Call & Post? I hope it wasn't the Dispatch. We sick of seeing our people on the front page looking like junkies for every single crime they commit. You'd think only Black people commit crimes in Columbus.

**MATT.** Nah. She came in looking for a job. You know her, Estelle, she graduated with you.

**DELPHINE.** Estelle... the poet? Yeah, I know her. She was always good with the rhymes. She still slamming?

**MATT.** I don't know. All I asked about was if she could count and hold a tray. And of course, be sociable with our customers.

**DELPHINE.** Estelle. Be good to see her again. You know what? Maybe we should think about having some poetry nights here if we hire her. Could bring in some more customers.

**MATT.** That's something to think about, something indeed.

**DELPHINE.** Well, right now, let's think about how we can open these doors and serve the customers that I claim right now will be rushing through those doors for some good old home cooking.

**MATT.** Well, since we have about an hour before we open the doors, how about we take about fifteen minutes of that time and have a little love making session?

**DELPHINE.** *(Laughs)* Now you know you make me all hot and bothered when you talk that talk that you generally can't back up.

**MATT.** What you talkin about woman. You know that I can do the thing thing when I want to, come over here and let me show you. *(Matt walks over to Delphine who meets him halfway and they begin to slow dance. They start to move towards the back of the Cafe and just before they get off stage they hear the bell over the doorway ring and ESTELLE enters Cafe. Delphine and Matt quickly get professional and Estelle acts like she didn't see their interaction.)*



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**ESTELLE.** I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt.

**MATT.** You're not interrupting, please come on in and have a seat. Did you bring your resume with you? This is my wife, Delphine; you remember her don't you Estelle?

**ESTELLE.** Yes Sir. Hello Mrs. Delphine.

**DELPHINE.** Now don't be getting all former with us Estelle. Call me Dell. How you been doing? You're looking well.

**ESTELLE.** Hanging tight. You know. Trying to live.

**DELPHINE.** Aren't we all. How's your mama doing? And your brother Junior?

**ESTELLE.** Mom's doing well, and Junior is getting out of rehab soon.

**MATT.** He still fooling with that white horse huh?

**ESTELLE.** He was until he got busted shoplifting in the Eastland mall. He's lucky the judge gave him rehab time since it was his first offense, that he got busted for that is, and put him on probation. He about broke Mom's heart.

**DELPHINE.** Sorry to hear that Stella?

**ESTELLE.** You remember my nickname?

**DELPHINE.** Sure, I do, it's easier to say Stella than Estelle. Sounds prettier too.

**ESTELLE.** How's are your parents doing Dell? They still married?

**DELPHINE.** I hope they are, they're both in heaven now, I believe. First Mom went and then Daddy followed her a year later. If what they taught me is true, then they both are singing glory glory in heaven together and still pretending to have a happy marriage.

**ESTELLE.** Well, that would be a waste of time pretending to be happy when you get to heaven since heaven is supposed to be the place where everybody is happy just to be there and counted in that number.

**MATT.** Oh, that's that Baptist teaching coming out in you Estelle. Your daddy was a preacher, wasn't he?

**ESTELLE.** Is a preacher. Here's my resume.

**DELPHINE.** Sounds like somebody don't wanna talk about their daddy. I'm going in the back to set up for breakfast Matt. Good to see you again Stella. Hope you get the job.

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**ESTELLE.** Good to see you too Dell. Thank you.

**MATT.** Well, have a seat and let's talk business. I see on your resume that you have had some experience as a waitress. That's good. You have a two-year-old son. Will babysitting be a problem for you Estelle? I need someone who will be dependable. Will your husband help you with your son?

**ESTELLE.** My mother takes care of my son. She has custody. There is no husband or daddy involved.

**MATT.** How about transportation? Will you have any trouble opening or closing the restaurant when the buses aren't running?

**ESTELLE.** I have my own car and only live ten minutes from here, over on 21<sup>st</sup> Street, so I can walk if necessary.

**MATT.** That's a plus. When would you be able to start work?

**ESTELLE.** Today.

**MATT.** We can only start with minimal wage and if you do your job well, you'll get a raise in six months.

**ESTELLE.** Sounds cool.

**MATT.** You need to wear a clean white blouse and a black skirt or pants. We'll provide the apron and name tag. Do you have those?

**ESTELLE.** Yes.

**MATT.** Also, Dell thinks you could help us increase our business if we have a few poetry nights. She says you're a great poet.

**ESTELLE.** I write and recite.

**MATT.** Well, if you agree we can talk about adding that, maybe monthly, and you can get a cut of that door fee. It would help promote you as an artist as well as Snowville Cafe.

**ESTELLE.** Sounds like a plan. So, does this mean I have the job?

**MATT.** This means you have the job. You start in the morning. Meet us here at 7:00 AM and we'll start teaching you the ropes. *(Both stand and shake hands. Delphine comes back on stage, wiping her hands on dishcloth.)*

**DELPHINE.** Looks like a deal is being made, am I right?

**MATT.** As usual my dear, you are right. Welcome Estelle to the team.

**DELPHINE.** Welcome Stella.

## SNOWVILLE CAFÉ

**ESTELLA.** Glad to be here.

### **SCENE 4**

*Scene opens afternoon in the Café. Summer 2015. Jerome and Jasmine are talking as she takes his order.*

**JEROME.** So, Jasmine. How have you been?

**JASMINE.** I'm doing fine Jerome. What will you have today? Or are you just here to meet Dell?

**JEROME.** Both. Give me a double cheeseburger and a diet soda. Where is the Queen Bee?

**JASMINE.** Don't let her hear you call her that unless you wanna get cursed out.

**JEROME.** It would be better to tell me what to say not to get cursed out. She finds a way to cuss every chance she gets.

**JASMINE.** She doesn't cuss at me.

**JEROME.** That's because you don't challenge her, you're scared of her.

**JASMINE.** No, not scared of her, just, it's just that I...

**JEROME.** What? You What?

**JASMINE.** I feel sorry for her in a way.

**JEROME.** Sorry! For her?

**JASMINE.** Yes, for her.

**JEROME.** Why?

**JASMINE.** I know she's suffering. She can't express it any other way except through anger. It's like a wounded animal, you know, how if they get hurt and are in pain and you try to help them, at first, they snap at you and will even bite you if you don't pull away quick enough. Then, after you keep talking softly to them, and reassuring them that you aren't going to hurt them, gradually, slowly, eventually, they allow you to touch them so you can help ease their pain.

**JEROME.** Yeah, well, I've tried that with the Queen Bee and each time I got stung so I'm just doing my job and nothing more. Where is she?

## SNOWVILLE CAFÉ

**JASMINE.** She hasn't come in yet. Should be here soon. She doesn't like to be late or miss appointments.

**JEROME.** We don't have a scheduled appointment. I just thought I'd check in with her while I was out this way.

**JASMINE.** In that case, she may or may not be coming in today. She doesn't come in every day like she used to before she started wanting a divorce.

**JEROME.** What do you think about the divorce Jazz?

**JASMINE.** I think it shouldn't happen. They both love each other.

**JEROME.** Really? Have you heard how Dell talks about her husband to me?

**JASMINE.** Oh, I hear her. I hear how she talks to Matt too. Downright disrespectful is what it is, disrespectful.

**JEROME.** You call that love?

**JASMINE.** Of course not! That's just talk, that's all. I see the way she looks at him when he's in the room. She tries to act like she doesn't love him, but she can't hide it in her eyes when she speaks his name. You must not be paying much attention to her when she speaks to you.

**JEROME.** It's probably because she doesn't "speak" to me. She barks at me. My goal is to get in and get out. Get the business done and on my way.

**JASMINE.** Well, maybe next time you meet with her you'll take the time to really look at her. See her for the woman she is and not the female she portrays. (*Lights crossfade to Estelle in front of mic.*)

**ESTELLE.** When you look at me and you see  
what you think you see,

you may not see the real me. See.

When you look at me, you look at me and see what you want to see,  
but you see only what I want you to see when you look at me,

see the color of soaring black birds high in the sky,

lifting and supporting each other with the wings of love

that blow gentle breezes of positive feedback that dispel and erase  
all negative thoughts, actions, and regrets,

when you look at me see

the anger, hurt and pain of days, months, years

## SNOWVILLE CAFÉ

of desperate searching, longing, and yearning  
for acceptance in a world that doesn't want to accept.  
When you look at me and you see what I let you see  
then you will have seen the real me.  
See. When you look at me.

### SCENE 5

*Later that evening after the Cafe is closed. Delphine and Matt are sitting at a table, he has a shot glass drinking scotch, and she has a glass of wine.*

**MATT.** There was a time when you loved me Dell.

**DELPHINE.** I still love you.

**MATT.** But not the way you used to love me. You used to love me like the grass loves the dew. Like the birds love to fly. You used to love me as your only lover, your only friend, your only reason for being in love. Now you love me like one of your many friends. And not the close ones either.

**DELPHINE.** Oh Matt. You can be so dramatic at times.

**MATT.** I remember when you used to like my sweet talking you. Who's sweet talking you now?

**DELPHINE.** I don't need anybody to sweet talk me. I need somebody to hear me.

**MATT.** I hear you Dell.

**DELPHINE.** Really. What am I saying then Matt? Huh? What have I been saying to you this past year? Have you heard it; can you recite it back to me? Word for word?

**MATT.** Now you're being dramatic. How could I remember verbatim every word you have said to me this past year.

**DELPHINE.** Just sum it up then, what have I been saying to you?

**MATT.** You've been saying you don't love me anymore.

**DELPHINE.** That's all you heard from me?

**MATT.** That you want a divorce from me.

**DELPHINE.** And...

## SNOWVILLE CAFÉ

**MATT.** Isn't that enough? A man can only hear so much bad news before he stops listening.

**DELPHINE.** And we're back to square one. I need someone that listens and hears me. I've been telling you for a year now, years now, that I'm not happy and I want to sell this restaurant and leave this city.

**MATT.** And what would we do if we sold this place? Just go somewhere and wait to die?

**DELPHINE.** Oh, we got to die, huh? We can't just live a different lifestyle. Maybe, enjoy our years left together, no we got to die! We can't retire like normal people and spend time together just being together, no we got to die together. We can't enjoy the fruits of our labor, and we have labored for decades, in our sage years, no we got to die!

**MATT.** (*Stands*) Well, what do you want to do Dell? What do you want to do! Where do you want to go? You keep saying you want to leave me, you want another lifestyle, but you don't never say what kind of lifestyle, you never say where you want to go. You just want to leave and go, just leave and go without any plan, without any direction, without any of my input. Just leave and go.

**DELPHINE.** I just know that I have to get out of here, out of this place. Away from the grease, the smell, the rush of customers, the lack of customers. The rotten food, the bill collectors, the delivery men, all of it. I just am so tired of it all Matt. (*Lights dim and Matt paces for a few steps, then sits back down. Light center both at table. Both turn away from each other, talking to themselves, as if alone in the room.*)

**MATT.** You think I don't get tired of it all? You think I'm happy with everything that comes with this restaurant?

**DELPHINE.** I think you are comfortable with it. That you are fine with the way things are and with the way things will stay if we let it. This café seems to be all that you need, not me.

**MATT.** I'm comfortable with it because it's provided a steady income for us. It's allowed me to not have to work for any man but myself. I'm the boss man here, something I couldn't be for the White man. It's familiar to me and I'm familiar to it. It's been dependable, steady as a rock and faithful to me.

## SNOWVILLE CAFÉ

**DELPHINE.** And you have been dependable, steady as a rock and faithful to it, haven't you Matt? More so than you've ever been for me. You used to be that way with me, for me, for us.

**MATT.** One time, one time I thought about leaving you. One time and I didn't go. I wanted to leave this café for someone else to run. But I couldn't leave, couldn't stop being here, with you, here in the place where we have spent so many years together. I just couldn't leave, can't leave.

**DELPHINE.** You talk about this restaurant like it's a woman. Your woman. I feel like the wife that is being replaced by a mistress.

**MATT.** You've always been jealous of this restaurant and anything that has to do with it and me. I don't get that, and I'll never understand it. This is something that we both built together. Side by side, sometimes almost 24 hours a day, working together, and yet you are jealous of it.

**DELPHINE.** You've always spent more time in this restaurant than in our bedroom. In our home for that matter. Then with me. I don't get that you don't get that there's more to life than working in this restaurant. I'm not jealous of it. I hate it. (*Lights full and Matt and Delphine turn to face each other.*)

**DELPHINE.** Any woman in her right mind would understand where I'm coming from Matt.

**MATT.** Are you in your right mind Dell?

**DELPHINE.** Excuse me?

**MATT.** Are you in your right sober mind?

**DELPHINE.** I don't have to be sober to know what I need.

**MATT.** Why don't you try it sometime?

**DELPHINE.** Try what?

**MATT.** Being sober for more than a few hours a day. You might think differently if you think with a clear head.

**DELPHINE.** Well, here we go. Blaming my rational thoughts on being drunk.

**MATT.** Oh, you don't get drunk. You just get belligerent and nasty with people. The only person you treated decently when you were drinking was Stella.

**DELPHINE.** Don't bring up Stella.

## SNOWVILLE CAFÉ

**MATT.** You can't keep acting like Stella isn't a big part of what's been your problem.

**DELPHINE.** Problem?

**MATT.** Your drinking Dell.

**DELPHINE.** I don't have a problem. I drink when I want to, and I don't drink when I want to.

**MATT.** You didn't drink before Stella. Not like you do now. You went from being a sociable drinker, to an anytime drinker. And when was the last time you didn't want to drink? *(Delphine and Matt both look deeply at each other. Then they both take a drink from their glasses. Lights crossfade to Estelle at mic.)*

**ESTELLE.** In my third season of life my streets are worn, covered, repaired many times over, in hopes of renewing honor and glory. My life has been one of first fruits raw vegetables of first loves, lost hope of new tomorrow's, old yesterdays. I've weathered many storms, for righteousness and justice, for peace and war, for young and old. My face has been retouched, sculpted, chiseled, carved, molded, by a fine surgeon named life. Trying to cut away my scars, wrinkles, lines, my wisdom accumulated, through life and death. I stand steadfast, unmovable in all trials and tribulations of the people who dwell in my hiding places, my open spaces.

**END OF ACT 1**

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