ZANNI'S STORY:
AN ORIGINAL SCRIPT AND PERFORMANCE PROJECT

A Thesis

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree Master of Fine Arts in the

Graduate School of the Ohio State University

By

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*****

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ABSTRACT

During my third and final year in the MFA program at the Ohio State University, I wrote, directed, and performed in *Zanni's Story*, a full length ensemble play revolving around five women in their twenties who live together in Brooklyn, New York. The thesis project allowed me to develop a performance piece reflective of members of my cultural community, and an opportunity to direct my first ensemble show while performing a principle role. The play ran for 90 minutes and was performed at the Ohio State Studio Theatre, as part of the 1998-1999 Ohio State University Theatre Department season, February 2-6, 1999.
Dedicated to my mother
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

People always tell me I make the best fry bread in the world, maybe it’s true. But I don’t make it by myself, you know. I got the recipe from my grandmother, and she got it from her grandmother and I listen to people when they eat my bread. They might say, “there’s too much flour. Or you should knead your dough some more.” I listen to them and I watch that Julia Child all the time. She’s a good cook too, but she gets lots of help.

- Sherman Alexie
  Smoke Signals

I wish to thank God for breaking down and rebuilding my life again and again and sitting me down at that computer to write. Thank you to Folake, Sharon, Christine, Jennifer, M.B., Karma, and Carmen who’s voices found their way into the characters Jumoke, Sade, Julietta, and Sinley. Thank you to the members of my family for their love and inspiration, particularly to my step mother for going before. Thank you to Brian for his encouragement, love, and listening ear. And thank you Brian for the heart of the character Josh. Thanks to my fellow MFA classmates for their cheers, transportation, and procrastination tactics in the computer lab. And thanks to the Scarecrow. I’ll miss you most of all. Thank you to Jessica for her you-can-do-it-hugs. Thank you to Lisa Propes, Cherie Gallinati, James Randall Wolfe, and J. Briggs Cornier for assistance with thesis formatting. And a special thank you to J. Briggs for midnight runs to Kinkos and for his humorous reassurance in times of stress. Thanks to Jeanine for enthusiasm and assistance throughout all the thesis topics. And a special thank you for being a stellar example of a persevering and successful Independent Artist. Thank you to Dr. Joy Reilly for offering her directorial eyes when mine were shut from fatigue and exhaustion. I will always be grateful for her unwavering faith in the piece and the performers. Thank you to Dr. Tom Postlewait for all of his time, encouragement, and editing over the past three years. Thank you to Vince for his impeccable organization and for keeping the production schedule on track. Thank you to Giles Davies for sharing the Studio Theatre space. Thank you to Michael Karp and Robin Gordon-Karp for their ongoing support and for graciously assisting with the Strike following the production. Thank you to the Theatre department faculty for their backing and advice. Thank you to the cast and crew of Zanni's Story for their talent, patience, and hard work. Thank you Self for your patience, endurance, faith and courage.
VITA

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2.  *Anike Ogo*; 1993 toured in Nigeria

3.  *Different Voices*; 1995 - Present; toured in United States
INTRODUCTION

My original thesis topic involved adapting Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* for a six-person ensemble theatre piece. I received verbal confirmation of the rights to do this project through the Victoria Sanders Literary Agency. The Ohio State Theatre Department offers a $150 budget for the MFA Independent Artist's thesis projects. I applied for a $20,000 grant from the Columbus Martin Luther King Arts Complex to assist in covering the costs of paying actors, technicians, sets, props, etcetera. Bates College invited the potential cast and crew of the project for a three-week artist residency at the undergraduate institution in Lewiston, Maine.

The Victoria Sanders Literary Agency would not provide written confirmation concerning the rights to produce this project, despite my frequent requests. There was a misunderstanding between the Sanders Literary Agency and me over the scope of the project. The Zora Neale Hurston Estate ultimately agreed to a private performance of the project for my thesis committee. The Ohio State University Theater department asked that I explore another thesis project that could be performed publicly. The department reasoned that as the thesis is a culmination of the MFA student's previous training and performance work, it is appropriate that the project should involve a public performance. The expectation was that the *MFA New Works* productions would be performed as part of
the departmental season.

Over the summer and early fall of 1998, I had been writing *Zanni's Story*, a full length play about five women living together in Brooklyn, New York. I became interested in writing this piece during the previous Ohio State spring quarter, when I wrote and performed a monologue about one woman’s struggles in an interracial relationship. I wrote this monologue in theatre professor Joy Reilly’s class as part of the *New Works Lab*. The *New Works Lab* was a course offered as part of the Independent Track curriculum.

If you look at the way young people are represented in the media, you might think the concerns of Generation X revolve around wearing overpriced clothing, eating cheap, unhealthy food, and spending most of the time in swank coffee shops. I was interested in writing a piece that showed young people developing their concepts of identity in a diverse, changing world. The primary characters of *Zanni’s Story* would reflect my community of young black and Latina women living in a multiracial urban society.

I wrote and rewrote a little at a time, sometimes a lot at a time. I wrote without a plot structure, as I was interested in developing the character’s voices and listening to the story they would create. After an impromptu reading of the script in September by the former *New Works Lab* students, Dr. Joy Reilly suggested I propose to act in *Zanni’s Story* as my thesis project.

Prior to Dr. Reilly’s suggestion, it never occurred to me to try and produce *Zanni’s Story* as my thesis project. There were several stipulations to performing the
script, including the need for African American and older actors. I wrote the script with a vague idea that it would be produced much later.

I eventually realized that the bulk of my time was being spent on writing Zanni’s Story, so I decided to present the idea to my thesis committee. I expressed my interest in developing a self-generated ensemble piece rather than a solo show, explaining that I had already put a tremendous amount of time and energy into the writing of Zanni’s Story. I also explained that I had a great deal of experience performing solo works. The committee agreed, and the collaborative, exciting, and challenging process of mounting the show began.

This document examines the journey of Zanni’s Story from script to production. Chapter One primarily focuses on the research involved for the writing of Zanni’s Story. I also comment on the task of directing of Zanni’s Story. Chapter Two discusses the particular production circumstances, the auditioning and casting process, and my relationships with the stage manager, designers, and technicians. Chapter Three examines my acting process. Chapter Four explores the rehearsal and performance process. Chapter Five evaluates the entire thesis production. The script itself, and various other documents are in the appendices which also include a glossary and bibliography.

I feel fortunate to have been encouraged to explore a challenging and intriguing thesis topic that brought an enormous amount of personal satisfaction. Simultaneously, I developed my playwriting skills, explored social, religious, and political issues, managed a production budget, and learned how to act and direct in a project simultaneously. I
view this thesis production as the foundation for the script development and future performances of Zanni's Story.
CHAPTER ONE

RESEARCH

2.1 WRITING THE PIECE

I conducted separate areas of research for writing and directing *Zanni's Story*. The research for writing and a brief discussion of the research in directing will be found in this chapter. Most of the research in directing occurred through trial and error during the actual rehearsal process. The research for acting can be found in chapter four. I explored texts in playwriting, racial politics, self-help/personal growth, breast cancer, and Nigerian story telling to support the writing of *Zanni's Story*. I also put together a dramaturgical text containing several readings so as to put the play in a historical context for the actors. I drew many of the elements of the play from my personal background. For that reason, I have included a brief biography.

2.1.2 Biography

I became racially aware at an early age. My mother tells me that I brought the book *Black is Beautiful*, to my preschool after some other children began questioning me about my racial background. I grew up interracial, Christian, and Jewish. My family celebrated Jewish holidays as well as attended a Christian church frequently. I was
encouraged by my father to identify as a black person. Perhaps he was afraid that my unique culture would get swallowed up by my monolithic suburban hometown and as a result pushed the issue rather hard. When I told him that I identified as biracial he angrily pointed out that claiming an interracial identity suggests to the black community a need for separatism “bordering on elitism,” as writer, artist, and activist Lisa Jones would say.¹

School was another matter. I was never self conscious about my interracial identity until I entered the second grade. A few white children would ask me if I was adopted after seeing me with my mother. One day I asked my mom to drop me off outside the door of Sunday school (in a black church) because I was ashamed to be seen with a white mother. When planning birthday parties I felt pressured to have as many black kids as white kids in attendance, which was virtually impossible considering I attended a predominantly white elementary school. I began to see my dual race as something that separated me from others and marked me as different.

I attended an all black summer camp and continued to attend black churches with my family and on my own. I found my suburban hometown to be somewhat of a stifling community. I enjoyed a strong school system that included fairly good theatre training, but was uncomfortable in the relatively homogeneous atmosphere. Most of the friends my family spent time with were African American. With the exception of one interracial couple very early on in my life, I did not have interracial role models, or see interracial couples living an interracial lifestyle. Occasionally I would see my cousins on my

¹ Jones, Lisa Bulletproof Diva: Tales of Race, Sex, and Hair (New York, Doubleday Dell Dell Publishing) 1994 58.
mother’s side. This was infrequent, however, because my mother’s relatives had all but cut her off entirely when she decided to marry a black man.

When I attended Bates College as a freshman in 1988, I quickly got involved with the black community on campus. This community was small, yet comfortable. The majority of the Bates population has always been Caucasian. Most of the African American students hung together as a group and yet we all maintained friendships with people from different races.

After graduation I went traveling to Nigeria and Israel on a Thomas J. Watson fellowship. People called “oyinbo” to me in the streets of Nigeria, which technically means “white man.” This jeer was difficult to take as I was coming to Nigeria in part to claim my African ancestry. Like most black communities however, I still found the people welcoming my sincere interest in my culture. I also found amazingly similar cultural ties between the black American and Nigerian cultures. I was particularly struck by the Nigerian sense of community and responsibility to family.

Israel felt like “home” in another way. The Jewish ancestry ties the Israeli people together historically and culturally. Many people thought I was a Yemenite (a Jewish person who migrated to Israel from Yemen) and perceived me as an Israeli. This assumption gave me a sense of comfort and ease living in a foreign country. A gentleman turned to me one day as I was chatting with a friend in a cafe. “Excuse me,” he said “but why are you speaking in English?” I enjoyed both Nigeria and Israel, yet ultimately had stronger ties to the United States. I remember one day overlooking the Old City in Jerusalem with my closest Israeli friend. She said to me “You know Anike,
when I meet American Jews I tell them all, you should come and live in Israel. But you, you are different. You belong in America.”

In 1993 I returned to the United States and began teaching elementary school in the South Bronx, New York. New York City can provide anyone with a sense of anonymity. There are several different cultures living in the city, many of them mixing daily on the New York City Transit system. People are not too concerned with assessing everybody’s racial background. A large portion of the New York population is of Latin descent. I lived in Dominican neighborhoods, and with my coloring and features, several people assumed I was Dominican. My social circle was largely African American, and I formed a close knit group of women friends with whom I spent most of my social time. A lot of that time was spent in Fort Greene, Brooklyn.

Fort Greene, a largely African and African American community was the place where my friends and I ate African food, got our hair done in black hair salons, and bought African influenced clothes and jewelry. We spent weekends sharing poetry, dancing to hip-hop, and Reggae music with young artists like ourselves. Our conversations spanned such topics as our mixed African, West Indian, German, and Jewish backgrounds, being first generation American, the ups and downs of attending predominantly white or predominantly black schools, and living in multiracial communities. I like to imagine that this group of poets, singers, actors, and writers, still exists, meeting together at Fort Greene park or in black owned coffee shops. In reality we have all dispersed, to different areas of the city, some outside of the city, to graduate school. Some of us have started raising kids, or are busy fighting out our careers.
My close group of friends became my sisters, culturally, politically, and personally. Their humor, wit, and talent followed me on the journey to Columbus Ohio, where I entered the culture shock of the Midwest. I missed the fast-paced nature of New York, the many types of food, and the cultural diversity. I especially missed traveling on the subway, now without a car and having to walk everywhere. Most of all I missed my women friends and the unique and intimate friendships we shared.

I realized when I arrived in Ohio how much the culture of New York had become a part of my identity. The Latino communities where I had lived, where I bought my rice and beans and cafe con leche or the black communities where I taught black children and spent so much of my social time. These places were the retreats of my New York experience. I missed these places and I wanted to tell people about them, represent them truthfully and with integrity. I abhorred watching television programs featuring a false and glitzy persona of New York City. I was interested in representing New York’s rare and extraordinary hard edged diversity.

2.1.3 Racial Politics

*Who are you, what are you, where are you from, no, where are you really from, where are your parents from, are your grandparents Americans? Are you from here, what’s your background, what’s your nationality, where do you live? Are you black, are you white, do you speak Spanish? Are you really white, are you really black? Are you Puerto Rican, are you half and half, are you biracial, multiracial, interracial, transracial, racially unknown, race neutral, colorless, color-blind, down with the rat race or the human race? Who are you? Where are you coming from who are your people?*
The Identity Fairy: Excuse me, before you get all up in my business, don't you want to know my name?²

In Lisa Jones’ book Bulletproof Diva, Jones defines herself as “ethnically African American and politically as a person of color.”³ She is an interracial woman with her picture on the cover of her book. She looks an awful lot like me. The above statement reflects the persistent line of questions frequently asked of me concerning my racial background. When I think about how race plays a regular role in my everyday reality, I am struck by the fact that most white people who are used to being in the racial majority, do not realize that when they walk around in the world they are perceiving themselves, and are perceived by others as the racial standard. As a person of color you carry your race around with you like a badge, announcing to the world before you ever speak that yes I am a black, Hispanic, Asian, (etcetera) person. If you are interracial then your race is probably unclear, which means it is open game for questioning from all sorts of people all of the time. Growing up, I was constantly amazed how many people were interested in determining my racial background before getting to know who I was.

As a member of the multiracial world and as a black identifying interracial person, I had mixed feelings about interracial relationships by the time I reached adulthood. Perhaps Jones puts it best:

I had written a sentimental tribute to my sixty-five-year-old-Aunt Cora for a series the paper ran for Black History month. In one section I recount my aunt’s visit to Minneapolis, where I was living

²Jones, Lisa Bulletproof Diva, 54.
³Jones, Lisa Bulletproof Diva, 54.
at the time, her brushes with racism there, and her reaction to the large number of white female-black male couples that coexist there alongside this racism. I sized up these couples as “Debbies curled up with Sam” - to allude to the lady-stud legend that burdens them and, at the same time, to pry it apart. I was sure to note, in the same breath, that if one Debbie hadn’t curled up with one Sam, I wouldn’t be around. Clearly I was saying that these duos tangle up my emotions; I look at them as a child of an interracial marriage, but also as a black woman who has witnessed the market value put on white femininity.4

I had come to identify as a black woman. A black woman who would marry a black man and who would have black children, and live in a black community. When as an adult I fell in love with a white man, I had to tear down several walls I had built protecting my sense of self. I became terrified of the idea of “losing” my culture, which in essence would mean losing myself. And when the old self does not work, the only choice is to build a new self in its place.

2.1.4 IDENTITY (RE)CREATION

i wanna be down with that generation x thing
but everytime they talk about 18-30 year olds
they always seem to focus on the
pale-face-existentialist-seeking-candy-apple-eating-
my-whole-body-is-pierced-
i-take-ecstasy-on-sunset-boulevard-cocksucker
who thinks vietnam and watergate
and reagan and the recession are his/her/its modus operandi

Most important of all, unconditional love requires Black Women to

4 Jones, Lisa Bulletproof Diva, 30.
5 Powell, Kevin Recognize (New York Harlem River Press 1995) 28
Coming to terms with being in an interracial relationship, I began to enter a new stage of self development. I had to construct a new yardstick for self acceptance, balanced by personal decisions that made me happiest. Over time I began to realize that choosing a soul mate was less about choosing a mirror, and more about choosing a person with whom my soul could connect. I did a great deal of reading by Iyanla Vanzant, a modern day guru who gears her writings to African American women. Vanzant encourages women to take personal stock and responsibility, establishing an open and honest relationship with God and with oneself.

I became increasingly interested in developing a piece that focused on women making smart, individual choices for their lives and their own personal growth. Presenting characters as healthy people in the face of difficult choices, was a problematic approach at times in the construction of Zanni’s Story as drama thrives on conflict. I often had to rewrite characters and character conflicts so as to mark their journeys as opposed to solving their problems.

In the early drafts of the script, Singley explains to Omar the importance of developing their relationship in a healthy way. She declines the offer to move in with him yet vows to invest herself emotionally in the relationship. The scene concludes with the two of them praying together. The scene reeked of my desire for resolution as opposed to the honest decision making of the characters. After a lot of deliberation as to

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6Vanzant, Iyanla *The Value in the Valley*, pp. 98
what to do with this couple, I wrote a playwriting exercise surrounding Singley and Omar. The exercise requires the playwright to overhear the character’s voices and transcribe the words as opposed to forcing something to happen on the page. The scene must close with one character exiting leaving the other character alone on stage. Finally the playwright must mentally maintain a dominant metaphorical image and establish its presence in the scene.7

I wrote the last scene between Singley and Omar with the image of the Odide Bird held firmly in my mind. As I was writing I asked myself, “what does Singley need in order to find personal freedom? Can she fly away like the Odide?” As I wrote the exercise I “overheard” Singley explain to Omar that she could not move in with him. She needed time and familial support in order to figure out what she wanted and needed. She decides to move back in with her parents in New Jersey. Omar responds to this in fear and attempts to kidnap Zanni.

I was troubled by this scene, as I was initially excited about the idea of creating a positive African-American couple. And yet I did feel that there was an element of truth in this scene that had been missing before. Pulitzer prize winning playwright Tony Kushner addresses this conflict;

*You have to say: what am I feeding into? I think you should ask yourself that question and then make the decision based on the answers you come up with. I regret having made the only black person in Angels a nurse; that was an inept thing to do. I was very scared about writing a play where there’s a couple, one has AIDS and the other*  

7Van Itallie, Jean-Claude The Playwright’s Workbook (New York, Applause Books 1997) 42.
walks out. I thought, this is transgressive and scary and am I going to become public enemy number one in the gay community for having written a character like Louis? On the other hand, you have to be willing to scare the horses. You have to be interesting and you have to be daring and you have to be willing to write things that shock. Shock is part of art. Art that’s polite is not much fun.¹⁰

Perhaps Omar and Singley do reflect a realistic relationship, and in further script drafts can contain a seed for potential healing.

I had found elements of the Jewish and Christian faith to be footholds during challenging emotional times in my own life. I used the ten days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, the Jewish New Year, when personal atonement and forgiveness is encouraged, as the time frame for Zanni’s Story. About midway through writing the play, I was baptized in my neighborhood church. I felt that formalizing a relationship with Jesus Christ was the next step I needed to take in a process of self healing and self renewal. During the climax of Zanni’s Story Julietta calls upon Jesus in prayer to assist Sade in her own healing and self-forgiving process.

2.1.5 ILLNESS, DISEASE, And DISORDER

Beginning in my late childhood I watched my mother suffer from epilepsy. Her seizures were mild at first, growing into prolonged dizzy spells of about thirty seconds or so. Over time these dizzy spells turned into falls,

¹⁰ Selection from Tony Kushner interview found at; http://www.mojones.com/MOTHER JONES/JA95/bernstein.html
increasing in number. My mother eventually bought a bicycle helmet to wear to protect her head from the falls. The helmet cracked frequently and she would need to replace it with a new one. Eventually she was fitted for a specialized helmet that she rarely wore.

My mother received minor surgery for a vagel nerve stimulator in an effort to control the seizures. This stimulator has worked minimally. Her steady increase of medication and falls eventually lead to brain damage, hospital stays and a brief stay in a nursing home.

The epilepsy has been and continues to be a source of pain and confusion in my family’s life. The dilemma of caring for one’s parent in a time of crisis persists as a difficult issue. My mother wears the helmet inconsistently as a means to safeguard her head from these falls. The constant head injuries affect her mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

My friends and I have shared conversations about our mothers and surrounding health issues. One friend discussed her mother using only homeopathic remedies growing up for everyday illnesses such as the flu or colds. When the doctor told her she needed to have her tonsils removed she was extremely resistant to the idea. When this friend had developed a fibroid, her mother suggested a radical change in diet and an exercise plan to reduce the fibroid.

Another friend talked about caring for her mother who died from heart failure. The doctors told this woman that she could resume a normal life if she
would only have a heart transplant. She refused however on the basis that as a West Indian woman, a heart transplant would mean going against her cultural and religious ideology. She would die with the same heart she was born with rather than taking on the possible detrimental emotional qualities of the heart donor.

This woman (my friend’s mother) was also insistent about having her daughter and husband care for her and was extremely resistant to the idea of going to a hospital.

All of this information went into creating the Nigerian mother who resists having surgery to heal her of her breast cancer. I decided that Mrs. Ola would suffer from breast cancer because it involved disfigurement of the body, and because breast cancer is killing African American women at a higher rate than Caucasian women. I consulted several pamphlets published by the American Cancer Society as well as collected several articles from magazines and from the Internet. I found several homeopathic efforts are in effect, including the current popular breast cancer diet. I discovered that surgery has its risks. Assuming that it does eliminate the cancer, there is no safeguard against the cancer returning or attacking another part of the body. I read stories about women discovering the transitory nature of life here on earth and the newly realized value women began to find in themselves and in their interpersonal relationships.
2.1.6 Nigerian Storytelling

During my stay in Nigeria I found that proverbs were commonly used as a method to stress a particular point. I was interested in creating a story featuring Nigerian proverbs, that would mirror the journey to personal definition and freedom the women were finding in the play. I consulted books on Nigerian folktales and was drawn to one particular story; *The Elephant Woman and the Hunter*. The story features an elephant that transforms into a woman. The Odide bird who changes from a bird to a baby girl developed from this metaphor.⁹

2.2 RESEARCH IN DIRECTING

Being a first time director, I really did not develop a directing methodology. Most of my directing was based on what I had experienced with other directors. I did attend several plays including *Amen Corner* at the Martin Luther King Arts Complex, *Angels in America* at the Cleveland Dobama Theatre, *All My Sons* and *A Tuna Christmas* at the Contemporary American Theatre Company. For the first time I was watching productions exclusively for a director’s perspective.

I was struck in *Amen Corner* at how intimate scenes were not directed intimately. Actors would be blocked so that they would be speaking far away from each other. I was equally unimpressed with the direction in the Cleveland Dobama Theatre production of *Angels in America*. There is a split scene in the

⁹ Tutola, Amos *Yoruba Folktales* (Ibadan, Nigeria, Ibadan University Press) 28-34.

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play that is supposed to contain overlapping text. This split scene was staged so as to run the action and words on top of each other rather than skillfully overlapped. The result was confusion and a tremendous pull of focus for the audience. I was dazzled with the stage pictures created in *All My Sons*, aware that blocking would be my toughest challenge in directing. I was also impressed with the use of gesture and suspension of disbelief to create the atmosphere of several different characters in several different venues in *A Tuna Christmas*.

I consulted several texts including Francis Hodge’s *Play Directing* and William Ball’s *Sense of Direction*, but not until midway through the process. The most profound elements of advice I found in these texts were praise your actors, and give them initial blocking. Without praise, the actors suffer from unimaginable lack of security, and without basic blocking they wander around unsure of what to do with themselves. I wished I had read such texts before beginning this directing process rather than in the middle of it.

There were also many days I would roam the hallways of the Ohio State theatre department, seeking advice from various professors about directing a show. I received a great deal of support. Among other things I was instructed to maintain faith in myself and my performers.

Members of the Saratoga International Theatre Institute came to Ohio State for an artist residency in the winter of 1998. The visiting instructors stressed the company’s philosophy and commitment to collaborative production process. The director, actors, dramaturg, writer, sound and lighting designers work
together as equals, sharing creative ideas in an effort to develop the strongest show possible. The playwright is encouraged to discuss his vision during rehearsals, while the dramaturg contributes instructive images as well as text resources. The designers are present throughout the rehearsal process commenting on what they see and what they can create based on what they see. The director and actors trust each other and their impulses enough to make bold physical and emotional choices and to dispute these choices if necessary in the name of artistic clarity and integrity. Playwright, screenwriter, and professor Paula Vogel comments on her collaboration with the Anne Bogart/SITI collaboration.

*If I could articulate what I most appreciated about my first Bogart collaboration, it is that we didn’t get married. There was no “fusing” of our aesthetics, an attempt to synthesize her interpretation to mine. Instead, she created an atmosphere in which we all were partners in the process, all playing our role but changing the air itself by our presence. Denise Yaney, the Circle Repertory stage manager, and the interns helped stage the way the sofa was used. The actors presented short tableaux according to Bogart’s exercises during a brief but intense discovery period, which each of us in the room responded to as audience members.*

As an actor I always felt rather low on the totem pole in terms of contributing to the vision of a production. In this thesis production I was committed to experimenting with a collaborative style of direction in hopes of creating the strongest production possible.

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CHAPTER TWO
THE PRODUCTION CIRCUMSTANCES

There were numerous details involved in bringing Zanni's Story to life on stage. I applied for a Graduate Student Alumni Research Award in search of funding for food, costumes, and sets for the production. Unfortunately I did not receive this grant on the basis that the production was not significantly research based and a scaled down production could take place without additional funding. I knew I was not going to be able to put a successful production together alone. One of my immediate tasks was to find a good stage manager.

3.1 Relationships with the Stage Manager and the Lighting Designer

The department assigned undergraduate student Edna Berkey as the stage manager for the MFA New Works productions. Edna was eager to stage manage for both productions. After assisting with callbacks for Zanni's Story, Edna decided that it would be best if she stage managed for one production only, and preferred to work with Giles Davies', the other MFA New Works performer. Mary Tarantino, the resident lighting designer and coordinator of stage managers, agreed to assign another stage manager to Zanni's Story. She also suggested that I seek a stage manager on my own.

Luckily, I did not have to look very far. Christ Athanas, an undergraduate student
who I knew previously as the assistant stage manager for *Fortunes of the Moor*, worked in Drake Union, the theatre building. “Will you please consider stage managing for my MFA thesis?” I pleaded with him. “Will you please look for someone else?” was his answer. “If you absolutely can’t find anyone to help you, come back and talk to me.”

After making a few more inquiries with other people, I returned to Christ the following week. “I really can’t find anyone else”, I told him. He laughed warmly at my blatant desperation and agreed to stage manage. Little did I know how fortunate I was.

Undergraduate student Ryan Osborne was assigned as the lighting designer for the *MFA New Works* productions. Ryan had a relaxed manner and was easy to communicate with. He explained that the department would be offering a basic lighting plot. *Zanni’s Story* can generally be considered a realistic play, and so I expressed relatively minimal lighting needs.

3:2 The casting process: discoveries during auditions, casting meeting

At the time of these initial meetings with the stage manager and the lighting designer I was also going through the auditioning process. I typed a flier advertising the auditions as well as called several individuals, inviting them to come out to audition. I visited Ohio State’s African American and Latino student organizations armed with audition fliers, and asked everyone I knew to spread the word. Finally, I attended a production of *Amen Corner* at the King Arts Complex in downtown Columbus. Prior to the performance, I went backstage and spoke to the actors about the upcoming auditions for *Zanni’s Story*. 

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On November 6, 1998, I sat behind the auditioning table rather than auditioning in front of it. I enjoyed watching the MFA actors as almost all of them entered, performed, and exited professionally. I was disappointed in many of the undergraduate actors because many of them arrived unprepared, unfocused, dressed sloppily, and in other ways reflected inexperience and a lack of professionalism. I was disturbed that as the auditioning panel we encouraged such inappropriate behavior by allowing actors to start and stop or audition with a script in hand. I told actor Wakaso Peterson, who eventually took over the role of Omar, that although I wanted to originally cast him to play the role, I refused to cast him due to his unprofessional audition.

I was generally pleased, however, to find the types of actors I was looking for. Ebony Wimbs walked in and performed one of my favorite selections from Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*. I was not particularly impressed with her performance of the passage, but she displayed a sense of maturity and humor that I thought could work for the role of Sade.

Marieli Beltran gave a poised audition, and had the body type for the role. I wondered if I could come to believe this petite young woman could become Julietta from Washington Heights, New York City. Jenso Soto came in with such remarkable humor, energy, and a look for the role that I was sure that he would be perfect for the role of Christos.

Callbacks were exciting and somewhat overwhelming. There were more people to audition then there were roles, to everybody's surprise. Edna Berkey organized groups of students outside the door, Assistant Professor Jeanine Thompson, the chairperson of
my thesis committee, sat in with me at auditions. Jeanine offered support and encouraged me to write down potential casting choices. Jeanine also allowed me to make my own decisions and follow my own instinct as to who was right for each role.

I was conflicted over a couple of issues. I had three actors I was strongly considering for the role of Omar. The first actor was extremely talented but not appropriate for the role, the second actor was appropriate for the role but had little acting experience, and the third was both experienced and appropriate, but auditioned poorly. After much deliberation I cast the actor with the most experience. I later found out that this actor had poor rehearsal habits and I ended up replacing him. There were three appropriate women for the role of Jumoke, one of whom was a close friend of mine. I did not casting her and this caused a great riff in our friendship.

The casting meeting with the other winter quarter production directors went smoothly. Luckily there were no conflicts over the people I wanted to cast for my show. I was pleased to have been able to cast all of my first choices.

3.3.1 Production process: working with designers and producer

Finding my way through the production process was challenging. Dan Gray, the resident set designer was kind enough to walk me through the studio theater performance space while discussing Zanni’s Story scene by scene. We discussed potential set pieces and props that might be available for the show. After an hour of conferring about the show, I had a clear sense of what would and would not work in the space, considering all set and prop limitations, and made many changes in the script accordingly.
3.3.2 Production Meetings

I found production meetings stressful as this was my first experience requesting technical support for a production. I tried to be as prepared as possible with a typed *Production Concept* for the first meeting (see appendix) and a memo outlining all concerns such as requests for a reception, a cue system availability, and the need for a small run crew. I put together initial lighting, prop and furniture requests lists for these meetings, developing a final request list (see appendix). Production coordinator Vince Landro was especially helpful during these meetings and throughout the process keeping us up to date with production needs and guidelines.

3.3.3 Props, furniture, lighting, sound, costume needs

I informed my cast that they would be responsible for providing their own costumes. I gave them a general list outlining what I was looking for and later asked them to bring in a few alternatives for approval (see appendix). I picked up a few costume pieces later at the costume shop such as robes, shirts, and scarves. Throughout the rehearsal process I requested small props here and there, and finally visited the prop room myself to select exactly what I needed for the set.

3.3.4 Summary of production process

I learned a great deal from this production process. I realized how little I knew about the design and technical aspects of a production. I was encouraged throughout the process to use as few props or realistic set pieces as possible due to the workshop nature
of the piece. Unfortunately due to a lack of experience in this area, I mistrusted the theatrical suspension of disbelief and was anxious for the security of realistic sets and props. Reflecting on the process, and had I to do it over again, I would have preferred to use either super realistic sets and props and costumes designed and mounted by student/professional designers or minimal sets, props and costumes. In either instance, I could focus on the acting, developing character relationships and directing scene transitions only. I believe the production of Zanni’s Story fell somewhere in between, adding a somewhat sloppy finish to the production. I discuss this further in the closing chapter.

I ran into communication conflicts with the design area. I had no idea that the formal way to request a prop, for example, was to leave a note of request on the Studio bulletin board for the departmental prop master. The first dress rehearsal was moved to a different time at the request of Mary Tarantino, the resident lighting designer. This was due to the fact that the department had set the first dress rehearsal for 1 p.m. on Saturday, January 30, whereas I had set the dress rehearsal for 2 p.m. on Saturday, January 30. I was unaware that the department had set a specific time for the MFA New Works dress rehearsals. There was an assumption that my stage manager or I should have known this information, probably due to our experience in other Ohio State productions. People did not fully take into account that staging a production was a first time experience for Christ, my stage manager, and myself.

I believe a production class oriented towards all Independent Track students would be beneficial as a precursor to the production process. Such a class could be
supervised by one major professor, with heads from all the major design areas teaching a few of the classes throughout the quarter. In these classes, students could construct various design concepts for small pet projects. This would give students an opportunity to explore various aspects of technical design and give them a frame of reference from which to work on future (thesis) productions. Such a class would also give the design/technical faculty the opportunity to disperse all the necessary information an MFA student will need to communicate with the area effectively when in production.
CHAPTER THREE

ACTING THE ROLE OF REBECCA

Because I wrote, directed, and acted in my own script, I found it impossible to score my character’s performance in the traditional way. It was difficult to discern what my objectives were as the actress/character as opposed to what I knew the playwright’s intentions were for the character. I applied a character analysis to Rebecca according to the format I learned in Brian Silberman’s play writing class.¹ I also wrote additional scenes between Josh and Rebecca, and an additional monologue for Rebecca (see appendix). These writings did not go into the actual play, but they were useful to me as an actress in my understanding of my character. I used a systematic approach entitled P.A.S.T.O as a means of dissecting the role. The acronym stands for Preparation, Attack, Struggle, Turn, and Outcome. In this chapter, we will journey through the play using the P.A.S.T.O as a guide.²

Zanni’s Story opens on an Autumn Sunday morning. We meet all of the roommates interacting in their apartment. Prior to Rebecca’s entrance, Sade is anxiously

¹ Brian Silberman was the Thurber House playwright in residence during the winter quarter at Ohio State.
² I learned of the P.A.S.T.O system from colleague Wendy Bagger.
awaiting a phone call from a man she has met the night before at a nightclub. Jumoke insists that the man is not likely to call. Rebecca enters singing song lyrics, "what a mighty good man", alluding to the idea that she has spent the previous night with a man. The audience learns early on that relationships with men are important in these women's lives, as well as the fact that Rebecca has a secret.³

Rebecca's mother enters to collect Rebecca for a family baby shower. Edna suspects that Rebecca has been out all night and teases her about being sexually promiscuous. This embarrasses Rebecca and she does not disclose information as to her whereabouts the night before. As Rebecca and her mother are leaving for the baby shower, Josh calls her on the telephone. Rebecca has an awkward moment when she tells Josh she loves him over the phone. Rebecca's roommates and mother are surprised, as they have never heard Rebecca discuss a "Josh" before.

On the way to the baby shower, Edna presses for information about Josh. After some prodding, Rebecca tells her mother that she is conflicted over the fact that Joshua is white. They proceed to discuss past events in their lives. Edna refers to Rebecca's bat mitzvah, entertained by a Jamaican steel band, and jokes that she was not expecting Rebecca to marry a Jewish man. She also explains that there are several issues that come up in a relationship and advises Rebecca to take her time getting to know Josh. Rebecca talks about being questioned as a youth as to whether or not she was adopted and implies that she was pressured by her father to identify as African American. Rebecca further

³ This singing was an actor choice, not the choice indicated in the script.
explains that because she now identifies herself as African-American, she is not interested in dealing with the challenges an interracial relationship will bring. Rebecca also implies that she inherited her impatient and worrisome nature from her mother. This scene sets up the close relationship between mother and daughter, yet also presents Rebecca’s desire for independence and a sense of ownership over her identity.

Rebecca visits Josh after the baby shower. She tells him briefly that she is frustrated with her mother. Rebecca quickly changes the subject by asking him to take her rock climbing as a new venture for the two of them to do together. Josh suggests that he go with her to her apartment and meet her friends as an alternative. Rebecca reluctantly agrees. It is this conversation that incites Rebecca to attack or move into action. Rebecca is afraid to tell him that she is uncomfortable with the fact that he is white. Avoiding a potential confrontation, she postpones dealing with these feelings until Josh actually does meet her friends.

Josh meets Rebecca’s roommates sooner than she expects. On the way to school Rebecca and Josh stop by her apartment so that she can collect her books. They stumble upon a tense situation. Sade (and the rest of her eavesdropping roommates) has just been informed about Mrs. Ola’s diagnosis of breast cancer. The roommates stare at Josh not only because they are shocked that he is white, but at the timing of his visit as well. When Sade informs Josh and Rebecca of her mother’s impending death, Rebecca wants to leave the apartment with Josh as soon as possible. Sade invites Josh to eat, however, and Rebecca leaves him with her friends while she gathers her things for the academic
lecture.

The situation is awkward and humorous as everyone tries to get to know Josh, while Josh has the experience of being a minority. Rebecca returns to find that Josh and Omar have found commonality in their love for science fiction and in their favorite film trilogy *Star Wars*. Rebecca’s embarrassed at how naive, and “white” Joshua appears, and again attempts to coerce Josh into leaving with her. This is difficult, though, because Josh is enjoying his conversation with Omar, and doesn’t want to leave so quickly. Rebecca practically drags him out the door, aware of what a spectacle her boyfriend has become. She shrinks inwardly, imagining the conversation her friends will have following their exit.

It is clear at this point in the script that Rebecca is a person who avoids confrontation, and chooses to worry as the antidote. She has skirted telling her friends and mother about her relationship with Josh. She has not talked with Josh about her predicament over the race issue. When Rebecca is informed that her roommate’s mother is going to die, she reacts by trying to leave the room as fast as possible.

Omar, Michael, and Rebecca’s roommates discuss the couple upon their exit. Jumoke remarks that she feels betrayed by Rebecca. Jumoke explains that as long as she has known Rebecca, Rebecca has always defined herself as a black woman who has avoided intimate relationships with whites. The exception being in Rebecca’s relationship with her mother. Jumoke also refers to their history together as roommates at *Howard University*, a historically African-American college. These are keys to
Rebecca’s personality, reaffirming her commitment to identifying as African American. Michael’s response is if Rebecca has found a relationship that could potentially lead to marriage, than her roommates ought to be supportive of her. He also points out that there are several components to making a lasting relationship work that go far beyond the issue of race. His comments underscore Rebecca’s struggle over her love for a soul mate that in her mind happens to be the wrong race.

Rebecca reveals her struggle with Joshua in the following scene. Josh interrogates Rebecca as to why they needed to leave so abruptly. She reveals her “problem with him being white.” Rebecca explains that she has spent most of her life proving that she is “black enough,” and “Jewish enough.” She points out that she is not interested in raising interracial children. Josh responds that he has known this has been a problem for Rebecca for some time, and demands to know “what are they going to do about it?” Rebecca begins to attack him about his cultural upbringing, accusing him of naivety. Rebecca also struggles over the fact that they grew up very differently from one another. Josh accuses Rebecca of being overly analytical so as to avoid taking decisive action. Joshua walks away from her, leaving her with the ultimatum that she make decisions about what she really wants. Rebecca is not ready to take responsibility for her conflicting feelings however, blaming Josh for insisting that he meet her friends in the first place.

In a later scene with her roommates, Jumoke confronts Rebecca about her relationship with Josh. Jumoke reminds Rebecca of her need to be around black people,
and her previous claim to only want to raise black children. Jumoke also warns Rebecca that by dating Josh she would inevitably end up spending more time with the white community, and less time with the black community. The moment of Rebecca's turn happens here. She sarcastically addresses the fact that she waited for the ideal black man and he never appeared in her life. She confesses to her friends (and to herself) that she loves Josh, white or not. She remarks that people can change their views about people, and redefine who they are. It is in this moment that Rebecca decides that she is going to move forward in her relationship, accepting him for who he is.

When Rebecca sees Josh again she is eager to tell him that she is making the choice to fully invest herself and her commitment to the relationship. Unfortunately, Josh comes to the apartment to tell her that he is leaving the city to go ice climbing for a year. He wants to use this trip as an opportunity for writing and self-discovery. Rebecca is bewildered and afraid that she has lost Josh forever. He assures her that he is going away, not necessarily going away from her. Rebecca has made the turn in her life, and yet she fears it is to no avail.

A few scenes later, Edna comes to the apartment to collect Rebecca for Yom Kippur services at the temple. Rebecca confides to her mother that she has pushed Josh away due to unfair expectations of him and the relationship. Edna assures Rebecca that she cannot predict the future of the relationship, and that she ought to trust the events in her life as they unfold. She tells Rebecca a story of forgiveness and a newfound trust for Rebecca's father. Rebecca goes with her mother to temple, depressed about her present,
unsure of her future, but grateful for the support of her family and her cultural and religious tradition.

When Rebecca returns from the temple, she receives a telephone call from Josh. She is overjoyed to hear from him and apologizes for her selfish and immature behavior. There is hope that their relationship will survive by the end of the play.

I found it challenging to play a role that was so close to my own personal experience. The P.A.S.T.O helped me to clarify the differences as well as the similarities between Rebecca and myself. Rebecca avoids conflict and direct communication concerning conflict. This is a trait we do not share. She is a person who is terrified of losing her sense of self which is an experience that I can relate to. Ultimately the P.A.S.T.O kept me on track with the character. Applying this process also allowed me to trace holes in the writing. I realized, through playing the role, that Rebecca’s super objective is not clear. This is an issue I will need to address when writing future script drafts.
CHAPTER FOUR

REHEARSAL PROCESS

The full Zanni's Story cast came together for a readthrough of the script on November 14, 1999. I handed out a list of rehearsal guidelines (see appendix) as well as provided coffee, tea, juice, cookies, and fruit during the week of table work. I attempted to create as relaxed an environment as possible, encouraging the cast to eat throughout these rehearsals. I knew that once the working rehearsals began food would not be allowed.

5.1 Early rehearsals: table work, collaborative process

During the first eight days of the rehearsal process I worked without the assistance of a stage manager. The cast read and discussed the script together Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, while Tuesday and Thursday I worked with small groups of actors on individual scene work. Part of the following week I continued working with actors on scenes. Scene work consisted of reading the scene through a few times, discussing the given circumstances, and improvising within the scene material. I think my favorite part of the rehearsal process happened on these eight days. I encouraged collaboration, inviting people's ideas, questions, and suggestions. We shared our opinions, discussed lines that didn't work and inquired about one another's characters.
We got the story of the play straight in our heads.

I went back to the computer for a new round of editing and rewrites based on some of the actor’s suggestions. The Monday following Thanksgiving, the cast and I showed our first reading to the thesis committee. Following the reading, I gave my cast a calendar and a “Homework” list over the break.

The committee’s response to the play was positive, yet several changes were suggested to promote an easier flow to the script. Suggestions included cutting all extraneous roles and maintaining most of the scenes to the roommate’s apartment. This meant shifting and cutting several scenes so as to fit the majority of the play inside the apartment. The running time on the production was also a concern. Some of the characters and their relationships, such as the relationship between Omar and Singly was said to be unclear and somewhat unfocused.

Once again I returned to editing and research process. I read the text *Me Wanna Holler*, an autobiography by Nathan McCall in the hopes of getting a clearer understanding of what it means to be a black man in America. Nathan McCall wrote about his experiences as a criminal, his reformation in prison, and his development as a person with a new lease on life. I read through the *Playwright’s Workbook* and chose writing exercises to assist in fleshing out particular characters and scenes that weren’t working. I also viewed the *Star Wars Trilogy*.

After sharing a couple of new drafts with thesis committee member Dr. Joy Reilly, I developed the final rehearsal draft. I sent all of my cast members a copy of this draft through the mail and reminded them to have their lines memorized by the first day
of rehearsal.

5.2 Working rehearsals: goals, process, discoveries

No one came back with their lines memorized, myself included. A high school theatre teacher and director once told me that a director should have two off book dates, the date that the cast thinks they are supposed to be off book, and the date that the director truly needs everyone off book. By the following week most of the actors had their lines memorized, there were certainly no line problems once the show opened.

Working rehearsals officially began on January 3, 1999. The stage manager distributed and read the Company Rules #1 (see appendix) and the Responsibilities of the Actor sheet. The deputy was chosen. Megan Mateer joined the team as assistant director on this day. I had broken the scenes down into units, and handed everyone a unit break down sheet (see appendix). Actors were called to rehearse according to unit.

I used elements I had learned from actor and director Rex McGraw in my directing style. I asked the actors to rehearse the unit one time. I would then ask them to run through it again making entirely different choices. After this second run I gave actors feedback about what I thought worked and what did not and ask them to run the scene again.¹ After the third run I included a collaborative process, asking for actor input concerning any ideas they were interested in putting into action. I encouraged the cast to talk to me about disputes over lines as the play was still so new. I informed actors that if

¹I was directed by Rex McGraw in Ah, Wilderness!, and The Cherry Orchard at The Ohio State University. Rex McGraw was a professor in the theatre department for eleven years.
we were in disagreement over directing choices, or lines as they were written, they
needed to clearly state their conflict as well as provide an alternative.

I did not give the actors blocking choices right away. I wanted to give the actors
an opportunity to move where they would naturally. This approach proved to be
problematic as most of my actors were inexperienced and did not trust their own instincts
towards movement. Ohio State visiting theatre professor Bruce Hermann suggested a
couple of books that discussed blocking methods. One of those books was Directing
Plays by Stuart Vaughan. This text included a list of axioms about movement that
proved helpful when forming blocking ideas. (e.g., to use stillness, making sure to
motivate crosses).

I also consulted William Ball’s book, A Sense of Direction at this time. Ball
offered useful advice, such as praising the actors and answering an actor’s question with a
question:

_When the actor asks a question, a wise director doesn’t answer the
question. The answer to the question is not in the director; the answer to
the question is in the actor. Answer the question by asking another
question. Allow the actor to resolve the difficulty. He already has the best
answer in mind before he asks the question. Here is an example:_

*Actor: Shall I wear this hat?*
*Director: What would be best?*
*Actor: Well, it’s too small. It gets in the way. I don’t know where to put
it, and if I do put it down, I have no way of getting it off stage when I
leave.*
*Director: Let’s leave the hat out.*

I also used a technique I called “Exploring the Golden Key.” I gave the cast a list

\footnote{Ball, William A Sense of Direction (New York, Drama Book Publishers 1984) 75.}
of adjectives and nouns from Ball's *A Sense of Direction*, explaining that one of these aspects was the "golden key" to their character. I asked the actors to physicalize one of these aspects without words and to show it to the rest of the cast.

The weather conditions during January were terrible, with excessive snow and hail. A couple of rehearsals had to be canceled because it was so dangerous to travel. Actors were as much as twenty minutes late to rehearsals due to traveling on icy roads and getting caught in traffic jams. A few actors missed whole rehearsals. It was difficult to block scenes when actors were missing. I stressed that starting on time was critical to an effective rehearsal process. I came down hard on tardy actors, perhaps too hard at times, particularly on those who were driving to rehearsals from full-time day jobs. The actors playing Mrs. Ola and Omar quit their roles because they felt my policy regarding timeliness was too strict. Perhaps they also felt that I was unappreciative of their efforts, considering the fact that they were not being paid. I replaced the actor playing Omar immediately. He had missed a few rehearsals in addition to being late and I was relieved to replace him. I did invite the actress playing Mrs. Ola back to the rehearsal process, offering to adjust her rehearsal schedule so as to make it slightly more accommodating.

Working with a baby was an additional challenge. I was fortunate to cast a mother and daughter team together. Morgan, the baby playing Zanni, was well behaved for the most part. There were times she would get cranky if we were rehearsing for a long time or late into the night. Other times we might have to interrupt rehearsals so that actress Cat (the baby's mother) could change or feed Morgan. The cast really enjoyed caring for Morgan and gave her a lot of attention, sometimes to the point of distraction. I
was extremely impressed with Cat's patience and endurance in both acting her own role and caring for Morgan on stage. Morgan internally learned the story of the play, repeating her actions in every performance. It was amazing.

In the second rehearsal week, assistant professor Jeanine Thompson came to work with the cast running a Viewpoint Workshop. She discussed the Viewpoints and ran improvisational exercises, encouraging actors to find character relationships and the physicalizations for their characters. Many of the actors commented that this was their favorite rehearsal as they felt free to explore character choices concerning themselves and their relationships to other characters. Runthroughs also began this week.

Megan Mateer's assistant direction and watchful eye was particularly helpful during this process. There were times I felt that I had difficulty communicating with an actor, or in staging a scene effectively. Megan's ideas and outside perspective were very helpful. I was nervous about the notion of blocking, and she was comfortable in offering blocking ideas. My only major concern was that we had different directing styles. I had to frequently remind her to not give line readings or even expression readings to actors but to ask questions to indirectly lead actors to appropriate choices. Megan could also be a bit defensive with the actors if they disagreed with her directing ideas in a scene. Defensiveness is detrimental to a collaborative rehearsal process.

On the Saturday evening, at the end of the week, the "roommates" got together for pizza and a movie to "bond." We talked about our careers and our personal lives and ate and laughed a lot. And we watched one of my favorite feminist movies of all time, I Like it Like That. The film shows a woman taking charge of her destiny amidst the
background of Washington Heights, New York City.

Scene work and runthroughs continued through the week of January 18. A costume parade took place in the middle of the week, allowing me to view potential costume choices. The costume parade took up a lot of time, with people changing clothes at different rates. I never got an opportunity to see how everyone looked together in each scene, which was the whole purpose of the costume parade. People were reluctant to leave their costumes in the theater and I noticed during the run of the show that some of the actors made costume substitutions, essentially subverting the point of the costume parade.

On January 24 we did a full run through of the show, followed by notes by Thesis Committee Chair, Jeanine Thompson, and Ohio State Black studies (and Nigerian) Professor, Mrs. Abiola Irele. The cast later convened at the Drake Union green room for a traditional African meal. I prepared jollof rice, pounded yam. Cast member, Karibi Fubara’s mother made egusi soup and cast member Mary Tabor cooked brisket. Several actors fried plantain at the feast, and I also contributed a homemade birthday cake for actor Ane Kidd’s birthday. This dinner gave the cast an opportunity to connect with each other socially as well as to taste traditional Nigerian cuisine and a Jewish brisket.

Throughout the rehearsal process I found it difficult to find time to work on my character. Because I was so busy managing the production and directorial aspects to the show, I neglected my acting process. I came to depend on Shawn McKenna (the actor playing Josh) a lot to work with me as an equal in our scenes, and I directed him minimally. I did rely on my character analysis and P.A.S.T.O to keep me grounded in the
character and found that I did as much experimenting as I could during rehearsals. Associate professor Sue Ott Rowlands and Professor Joy Reilly also assisted in directing these scenes. The following week was tech week. On January 26th we performed the show for Ryan, the lighting designer, and afterward watched independent artist Giles Davies perform his Whu is One show. Thesis committee member Dr. Joy Reilly also visited rehearsals this week and began to work some individual scenes. I was grateful for the help because at this point I was truly tapped out creatively and emotionally.

5.3 Technical rehearsals: crew watch and final technical rehearsal

The technical rehearsal on January 29 went rather smoothly. This was the first time I noticed Christ, the stage manager, visibly stressed and impatient with cast members. Christ had been so helpful and accommodating throughout the rehearsal process that the actors forgave his short temper. About halfway through the technical rehearsal, Ryan suggested that I step out of the process so that I could look at the scenes. It had been some time since I had looked at the scenes as a director. Ryan was gracious enough to allow me to redirect the climax during this rehearsal. I was a lot clearer on how to direct this scene with the lights intact.

Music was also implemented at this time. Friends from New York wrote an original score for the Odide Bird sequence as well as music to immediately proceed the production. These friends recorded the music and sent it to me on an audio tape to play during the show. A flute and African Xylophone were among the instruments used.
5.4 Performances

The dress rehearsal was filled with friends and family of cast members who brought a lot of cheer and support to the house. The opening night show had a small but enthusiastic audience. The shows were successful with audience size building every performance. Throughout the week actor Shawn McKenna and I got together for a couple of publicity events. We visited the Ohio State Theater 100 lectures, speaking about the process and performing scenes. We were also interviewed on two OSU radio shows. As the week progressed the houses for each show got bigger as word spread.

5.5 Publicity

During a production meeting, the stage manager and performer for Whu is One, the second MFA thesis production, remarked that the attendance for this show suffered dramatically. This was attributed to the fact that many friends and family of the Zanni's Story cast bought up performance tickets preventing other interested audience members from getting tickets. These people would leave during the intermission following Zanni's Story. Many people left because the show was long. I want to emphasize that I did a great deal of advertising for Zanni's Story. I printed twice as many fliers as the department supplied and absorbed the cost from my budget. Cast members and I distributed and pasted these fliers ourselves. I wrote to the Lantern and several Columbus critics, requesting that they attend and review the show (see appendix). I sent a memo to fellow MFA students, requesting that they announce the show in their classes and perhaps offer extra credit for any student who chose to attend. This was all in
addition to the promotion that actor Shawn McKenna and I did. All of this is to say that a primary reason for the big audiences at Zanni's Story was due to self-generated, aggressive marketing.

5.6 Summary

Looking back on the rehearsal process there are a few changes I would consider. The first is that I would build time in the rehearsal schedule to work on my role. I would spend less time on certain production areas and devote more time to acting. And most importantly I would have praised my actors, including myself, frequently and specifically.

Please find rehearsal and performance schedules in the appendix.
CHAPTER FIVE

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

I am pleased with the overall process and performances of *Zanni's Story*. *Zanni's Story* is the first ensemble play I ever wrote. Directing this thesis production was my first major directorial experience. I also performed a principle role and handled many of the production aspects of the play. Considering all of the responsibilities involved with this particular thesis production, I believe that the project was met with great success. I will be rewriting, acting in, and perhaps staging *Zanni's Story* again. Through this documentation process I have been able to reexamine the artistic and technical choices I made. I have also been able to construct a list of do's and don'ts concerning future MFA New Works projects.

I wrote *Zanni's Story* during a particular painful time in my life as part of my own process of self-healing. It was important to me to create a piece that reflected women attempting to put their lives on a positive, healthy path. I wanted to write a piece that examined romantic relationships in the context of identity construction.

In writing from one's own experience, there is a danger of creating something that is entirely too self-absorbed. After the thesis committee first listened to a reading of *Zanni's Story*, professor Phil Thompson remarked that although all of the characters had distinct voices, many of them maintained a similar level of emotional sophistication.
Some thesis committee members also remarked that perhaps a “bad” character was needed and that the character Omar may be able to fulfill this role. I was concerned about contributing to the stereotype of the irresponsible black man who walks out on his family. But I did understand the fact that people are not perfect and love one another and survive together through their imperfections. I realize that what audiences find most interesting is the emotional journey of characters, and that these emotional journeys do not have an impact if other characters do not stay where they are. I will continue to work on this in the rewriting stages.

I also found that the through line and play structure can continue to be developed. Although audiences enjoyed the characters, it was difficult for audiences to grasp who were the central characters and therefore how to construct the story in their heads. In rewriting, I will focus more on Sade and Rebecca and their conflicts, and develop the other characters less. My hope is to works towards an ensemble style similar to that of playwright Anton Chekhov. The depth of all characters is alluded to, yet some are more developed than others. This would offer actors and directors a natural yet ample balance of material to work with.

Zanni’s Story is set in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, during the week of the Jewish new year. My research is perhaps weakest in these areas. In rewriting I would like to implement more reference points to both Fort Greene and to the back drop of the Jewish holiday.

I created the Odide Bird story primarily from reading Nigerian folktales. I found in the production that the cast members found it difficult to relate to the story and that
audiences didn’t particularly listen to the words of the story. Audience members tended to focus on the action happening on the stage. Perhaps by rewriting the story so that Mrs. Ola and Sade perform characters in the folktale may help to bring this tale alive. As I continued through my research I realized that Nigerian proverbs are used in daily poetic speech and to emphasize a point. In rewrites I would like to implement more of these proverbs, following the ideas that Mrs. Ola, Sade, or Michael are trying to emphasize. I would also like to write a folktale that is Nigerian in style yet uses American reference points. This story from the Native American film Smoke Signals may illustrate my point;

*I remember this time, me and my boy Victor. We were playing two on two basketball against these two Jesuits. These Jesuits had on their white collars and their black robes and they were pretty damn good. By the way they were playing I couldn’t swore they had seven out of the twelve apostles on their side. Because every time I tried to shoot the ball there was a storm of looks that come flying in and blind me. I was shootin’ in the dark I tell ya. But my boy Victor, he was magic. He couldn’t miss. Those Jesuits didn’t have a prayer stopping him fair and square. Victor was only twelve years old and kinda small. Those Jesuits were beating up on him real good. They were beatin’ up on him and chantin’ like he was possessed or something. Maybe Victor was possessed by the spirit of Jim Thorpe. Because he had this look in his eye and he was mean. “Come on Victor,” I shouted. “We’re up against the son and the father here! And these two are gonna need the Holy Ghost to beat us.” I meant the score was all tied up. Next basket wins you know? The Jesuits had the ball and this great red head Jesuit comes driving in and knock my boy over. My boy, he was tough, you gotta have faith see, faith. Next basket wins. He took it to the hoop. He flew man, flew, right over that Jesuit. Twelve years old and he was like some kind of indigenous angel or something His wings were made out of tv dinner trays. My boy Victor he was the man that day. He took the shot and he won that game. It was the Indians vs. The Christians that day. And for at least
one day the Indians won.\textsuperscript{1}

The story bridges the Native American and Anglo American culture. The style of the story has a Native American bent to it, yet it is accessible to readers/listeners outside of the culture.

Reflecting back on the playwriting process I am still struck by how much writing and rewriting took place. Playwriting is very different from other forms of creative writing in that it must be worked and staged in order to determine its adequacy. Upon hearing the scene between Singley and Julietta, I was shocked how poorly written it was. I think I put a lot of pressure on the actors (including myself) to really delve into the character’s needs and desires when perhaps the objectives of the characters were not as well written as they could have been. I think I’ve been so subliminally indoctrinated in television and poor movies that I glossed over the imperativeness of high stakes in a well made play. Zanni’s Story will be staged next month at the Cleveland Women’s Theatre Project. I am looking forward to learning more about the script and the changes to be made after this workshop. I am also looking forward to rewriting this summer now that I have a clearer idea about the characters, the story, and perhaps most importantly the play structure.

I spent a great deal of time during the pre-production and rehearsal process focusing on production elements such as costumes, props, set pieces, and promotion. Perhaps some of these production responsibilities should have been shouldered by the Ohio State theater department. Going through this process was useful, however, in that

\textsuperscript{1} Smoke Signals. Dir. Chris Eyre. Miramax Films, 1998
Independent Track students need a clear understanding of all of the elements involved when putting a production together. In a conversation with visiting playwright Brian Silberman, he explained that one of his new plays was produced with a stunning set. “The set,” he commented, “swallowed up the actors.” “I often forget how in the theater the setting is determined by the experience an audience member brings to it,” I responded. “It’s all about what you bring to it.” Brian remarked further. He also suggested a professional staged reading, or a staged production with mimed props and sets as the possible alternatives to the production that was presented. Looking back on the process, I think I was afraid that by miming props and sets, the play would become about something other than a realistic, contemporary play. Upon further reflection, I believe implementing these techniques would enhance the theatrical illusion and suspension of disbelief.

I could not escape feeling the need to prove myself through this process. Prove that I was capable, prove that I was worthy of being an Independent Artist, prove that I had a useful message in a well produced play. “Proving” myself is perhaps another way of saying that I was attempting to reach a standard of perfection. If I was to give a recommendation to future Independent Track Students it would be to work on strengthening the acting and directing of the production rather than the technical aspects of the production. Bells and whistles can wait. One can never reach perfection in live theatre nor should one expect perfection. The first major staging of any production will have holes in it. Just as a baby cannot walk before he learns to pull himself up, every great artistic process is developmental.
I am saddened that I was unable to develop further on my acting process as Rebecca. I think that in handling the directorial and production elements I neglected my acting process. Being busy and and feeling overwhelmed can become addictive. What I wish for now, when I look back on the process, was to have taken moments of stillness, quiet, and reflection. I wish I had taken the time to enjoy my acting. This would have meant taking time away from the producing aspects of the show, such as publicity. Perhaps it may have been worth it. And yet as an independent artist I will most likely be producing my own work. What better way to gain producing experience and knowledge than in the thesis process? The performer/producer paradox is a challenging one.

Perhaps the most valuable tool I gained as a director was in coming to understand the importance of praise and positive reinforcement. I am currently acting in The Ohio State production of Angels in America and realize the inherent desire for the actor to please the director, to get it right. One actor in Zanni’s Story insisted that she was not told in specifics what she was doing right. I was reminded of my departmental performance review given two and a half years prior, that contained largely negative feedback. Although I worked hard in response to the critique, I also carried around a lot of unnecessary baggage concerning feelings of inadequacy and incapability. I found the complaining actor to be unprofessional and challenging to work with, but as a result did find ways to tell the actors more and more what I appreciated in their work. I even sent the cast individual notes in this regard. Perhaps director and writer William Ball puts it best; “An Artist is someone who draws attention to what is praiseworthy in the
universe.”² I was sure to tell actors during a cast meeting that receiving a directorial note did not mean the actor wasn’t a good actor, but a note was a point of guidance for the production, and that notes are standard in every professional production. The “complaining” actor remarked that as leaders, teachers, and artists we should all be responsible for creating new models so as to encourage the finest of artistic performances. I agree. I think perhaps I pushed my actors too hard at times guiding them towards the unreachable goal of perfection. Although I meant well, such a guide inevitably disempowers and disengages actors. To support actors, and to support oneself, takes an incredible amount of courage and faith. And yet it is required for excellence. Excellence, not perfection, is the goal.

Some of the actors felt I was too strict in adhering to the rehearsal guidelines (no food, starting on time etcetera). My feeling at the end of the process is still the same as is the beginning, rules are rules. Rules inconvenience everyone some of the time, but they support everyone most of the time. As a director and actor I realized that it was important to consistently adhere to the standards as outlined at the beginning so as to establish trust and continuity in the rehearsal and production process. Most of all as a director you must recognize that you are the leader, and therefore responsible for encouraging a professional work ethic to everyone’s benefit. With this understanding the opposite is also true. There are times where leniencies have to be made, and they should be discussed on a case by case basis.

Being a director, although exciting and empowering, is an isolating and lonely

² Ball, William A Sense of Direction, 46.
experience. It is a frightening position in that the director is the person with the final word. It is challenging in that the director must maintain self control, despite any and all challenges. The accolades the director will receive after a successful production will usually not outweigh the difficulty (s)he will deal with in the production process.

A few weeks following the production, another Independent Track student said to me quite frankly "Anike, I don't understand why you did all that." I didn't really know what to say in response. And then when I really thought about it I realized that ideally an independent artist can contribute to the world of artists as well as to the world of art. This thesis project not only left an indelible mark on Ohio State audiences, it also gave inexperienced actors, stage manager, and a director an opportunity to grow and develop as artists. What greater gift can a creator give?

It is extremely difficult to both act and direct oneself. With this understanding I would recommend that the Ohio State theatre department give the student the option to self direct, or to be directed by an outside director. I would also recommend that MFA Independent Track students be given an additional Directing crash course along with the directing course that is already offered in the MFA acting curriculum. This crash course should cover such elementary directing basics as blocking, text analysis, director's concept, casting, developing the arc and tempo of the production, etcetera. In this sense even if the Independent Track student, is directed by an outside director, (s)he can work with the director as a consultant and colleague as well as a director. I personally would have preferred to not have been my own director. I received a lot of compliments and appreciation from my cast. I just do not want to be a director, however, a teacher yes, a
director NO. Actors coming late to or missing rehearsals, keeping track of all of the artistic elements of the show, and communicating with designers was an exasperating, if also exciting experience.

Overall, I am proud of my thesis production. I worked hard, I placed faith in a script and in several people and for the most part the risks paid off. The production and the process was not perfect, and in some sense the artistic qualities of an effective, successful production suffered. But I learned and quite honestly that is what this thesis process is about. Most importantly, I taught a team of actors skills and discipline. I gave audiences a message about interracial relationships, identity construction, and perhaps a deeper notion of "Generation X". And I have a foundation from which to develop an even stronger script, and for the next time, a personally stronger acting job.

After reflecting on this thesis process, I have some recommendations for future Independent Track MFA projects:

For the Independent Artist

1. Praise. Praise. Praise. Support your cast, your production team and most importantly yourself. Find ways to develop your artistic faith. Build a support system beyond your family, friends or romantic partner. These resources are important resources of course, but they are limited.
2. Get super organized. Then organize your super organization.
3. Build time in the schedule for writing that reflects on the process, even if this means sacrificing some rehearsal time. The knowledge you will gain in terms of reflection and evaluation will save you a lot of time both during and after the rehearsal/performance process.
4. Collaborate with other artists to share advice and support.
5. Stick to the rules you set. Make necessary adjustments on a case by basis and only if you need to.
6. Find an organized stage manager who is willing to work hard with you.
7. If you are not given full technical support then do not concentrate on the technical aspects of your show. Concentrate more on raising the artistic
quality of the production.

For the Ohio State Theater Department

1. Construct a class for the MFA New Works students that focuses on production and design. If a class is not available then construct an orientation.
2. Bill one show per night.
3. Charge tickets at a reduced rate.
4. Assign designers from all areas to the productions, even if they can offer advice and supervision only.
5. Implement thesis requirements and guidelines for the MFA independent track in the departmental handbook.
6. Cancel all departmental rehearsals on the day of the MFA New Works opening night so that students and staff can support the productions.
7. Select and offer a director for the Independent Track Project. The actor can choose to either self direct or be directed by the appointed director.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY

MFA New Works - This term refers to students in the Independent Track at Ohio State Theater department. This term also refers to the classes and curriculum provided for the Independent Track students.

Independent Track - MFA actors who both write and create their own work. The culmination of Independent Track student’s studies results in a thesis production that (s)he creates and perform in.

Breast Cancer Prevention Diet - A nutritional plan developed by Dr. Bob Arnot to assist in the prevention of Breast Cancer. This diet should not be considered a cure and should be combined with other healthful practices, such as regular mammograms, low stress, and weight bearing exercise.

Block(ing) (ed) - Mapping the actor’s movement on the stage.

Saratoga International Theatre Institute - The SITI company was founded in 1992 by Anne Bogart and Tadashi Suzuki. SITI’s three ongoing components are: the creation of new work, training of young theater artists, and a commitment to forming partnerships with international collaborators. The company specializes in movement theatre.

P.A.S.T.O: Preparation - anything that happens to the character before the inciting incident in the play.

Attack - Moving into the action of the inciting incident.

Struggle - the central inner conflict for the character

Turn - The character’s decision that results in the outcome of the play.

Outcome - The repercussions of the character’s turn.

Given circumstances - All of the facts that can be taken from the script. This includes all historical references, the time, place, atmosphere, indicated physical and emotional traits of the characters, etcetera.
**Deputy** - the deputy is an elected member of the company of actors in a production who serves as a liaison between the producer and the company in relation to all working conditions governing the actor’s work. The Deputy may be called upon to advise the producer of rule infractions or complaints. It is the duty of the deputy to pursue the course that will best insure that the provisions of the actor’s rights to be upheld according to the rules.¹

**Units** - A break down of scenes. Each unit begins and ends upon a character’s entrance or exit or at a drastic change in the scenic intention.

**Viewpoints** - The Viewpoints are a philosophy of movement translated into a technique for training performers and creating movement on stage. The Viewpoints are points of awareness that a performer or creator has while working. Viewpoints of time include the manipulation of tempo, the duration of movement, kinesthetic response to other artists moving on stage, and the repetition of an internal or external action on stage. Viewpoints of space include a manipulation of the shape of one’s body, the performer’s movement through space, the physical relationship to the architecture on the stage, the behavioral and expressive gestures of the performer, the distance between things on stage, and the design performers create through movement on stage. “The Viewpoints function much as scales do for a pianist or working at the barre does for a ballet dancer.”²

**Line readings** - A director saying a line exactly the way he wants it to be performed. When a director gives a line reading he/she is not allowing for the actor to make his/her own interpretation and acting choices.

**Expression readings** - A director making a physical expression indicating the exact interpretation of an action. In an Expression reading, a director is showing the actor the exact facial expression or movement he/she should perform. (This is a term I coined.)

**Off book** - actors performing without the use of scripts.

**Superobjective** - the through line for a character based on his/her primary desire.

**Note** - a directorial piece of advice, usually given at the end of a scene or at the end of a rehearsal.

¹Definition is taken from the *Company Rules Handout* (see appendix I)

²Definition is taken from Dixon & Smith, *Anne Bogart Viewpoints*, 20-23.
APPENDIX B

ZANNI’S STORY; CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Cat Hurston (Singley): Cat Hurston-Gant is a theatre major at The Ohio State
University. She has studied commercial acting with Kevin Hayes, and studeied in
classes at John Casablancas Modeling & Career Center. Cat was a participant in
International Modeling and Talent Associations in Los Angeles, California and has
appeared in the movie A Love Affair. Cat recently completed a commercial for Road
Rage, and is currently employed by Creative Talent Agency.

Morgan Tyler Gant (Zanni): Morgan is the daughter of Reggie and Cat Hurston-Gant.
She has recently appeared in a commercial for Mt. Carmel hospital.

Ané Kidd (Jumoke): Ané has just completed her master’s degree in African-American
and African Studies at the Ohio State University. She is an alumnus of the University of
Illinois Urbana Champaign where she completed an undergraduate degree in English
Literature and Performance Studies. Ané made her Columbus debut at the King Arts
Complex in November, 1998. She performed the role of Ida, in James Baldwin’s Amen
Corner.

Marieli Beltrán (Julietta): Marieli is a senior majoring in Theatre and Art History at
Ohio State University. She was last seen as Solveig in The Ohio State Student
production of Ibsen’s Peer Gynt.

Ebony Wimbis (Sade): Ebony is a junior in the theater department at Ohio State
University. She is also currently performing in the Ohio State touring production of Rock
& Roll Shakespeare. Previously, Ebony performed in several productions in the greater
Cleveland area, including Purlie Victorious.

Anike (Rebecca): Anike is the playwright and director of Zanni’s Story as well as the
actress playing Rebecca.

Mary L. Tabor (Edna): Mary L. Tabor quit her job at age 49, after 16 years in corporate
America, to write. She is currently a student in the MFA Creative Writing Program at
Ohio State University, where she is also an associate fiction editor of The Journal, a
nationwide literary Magazine. Her first published short story won The Antietam Review’s
Literary Award for Short Fiction. Her personal essays have appeared in the New York
Jewish Week and the Washington Jewish Week. New work is forthcoming in The American Literary Review and Jewish Currents. Zanni's Story is her first acting experience.

Karibi Fubara (Michael): Karibi is a native of Nigeria, West Africa, pursuing a major in Chemical Engineering and a minor in Theatre at Ohio State University. He acted previously in The Fortunes of the Moor and looks to continue to have fun in future theatre productions.

Wakeso Peterson (Omar): Wakeso is a senior at Ohio State majoring in Theatre. The last show he was seen in was The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged). Wakeso enjoys playing basketball, tennis, laughing, making people laugh, and playing with his daughter Akia.

Jenso Soto (Christos): Christos is a second quarter freshman at The Ohio State University majoring in Theater and world history. This will be his first appearance on the stage at the collegiate level. He has been involved with theater throughout his high school career.

Shawn McKenna (Joshua): Shawn McKenna is a second year theatre major from Columbus, Ohio. Zanni's Story is his third production at Ohio State. He was in the Bacchae of Euripides a Communion Rite in the fall of '98 and last year played Romeo in The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged). Shawn is also an aspiring writer and has read his original poetry throughout the greater Columbus area. His life motto: "Leap and the net will appear."

Sheila Gregory (Mrs. Ola): Sheila is a native of Dyersburg, Tennessee and grew up in Toledo, Ohio. She received her BA from the Ohio State University and is currently employed by Anthem Midwest BCBS. Sheila enjoys theatre. She has performed in several community plays and traveling shows. The performances include Amen Corner, Don't You Dare Cry for Me, Gimmee Dat Old Time Religion, Long Time Since Yesterday, God What Colour is Trouble?, and 92 - 94 Black Nativity. Sheila's dream is to perform in a sitcom production.

Megan Mateer (Assistant Director): Megan is currently working towards her masters in theatre at Ohio State University. She received her BA in theater and classical studies at Wright State University. She has worked as a director, stage manager, and technical director for various community and professional theaters. Megan has also taught theatre classes to junior high, high school, and college students.

Christ Athanas (Stage Manager): Christ is from Cleveland Ohio. He is a sophomore majoring in theatre at Ohio State University. Christ also served as the assistant stage Manager for OSU production, Fortunes of the Moor. Christ ran the lights for OSU
production *Millers Point*, and was on the set crew for the *Bacchae of Euripides*. 
APPENDIX C

ORIGINAL THESIS PROPOSAL

The creative endeavor that has consistently brought me joy, enthusiasm, and encouragement this summer, has been working on my first full-length play, Zanni's Story. I have written several drafts and I expect that I will write several more. I am requesting the opportunity to work on the writing, the directing, and the acting in Zanni's Story as my Masters Thesis project.

Script Creation
There are several personal and professional reasons why I would like to present this piece. I have spent the past seven years of my life working on solo shows. I enjoy the work tremendously. It is also clearly something that I know how to do. Working on Zanni's Story would give me an opportunity to step into a new realm of theatrical experience. I could have the chance to bring to fruition an ensemble play that I created and a chance to go through an editing and a development process. I chose to write this script because I felt that "my people" were not being adequately represented. Now I have the chance to show audience members a sector of people and cultures they may not be familiar with. I also have the opportunity to show other audience members, who are a part of the cultures I am writing about, a chance to see themselves on stage. Most importantly, pursuing this thesis project will give me the opportunity to direct and act in my first self-generated full-length play.

Acting
I am interested in playing the role of Rebecca who is a primary character in the play. Playing this role would give me the opportunity to play an interracial character in a truthful, multi-dimensional, non-stereotypical way. Rebecca is the type of character I have always wished to see and to perform on stage. Rebecca also goes through a journey throughout the play.

Casting
There are several people within and outside of the department who have expressed interest in performing in Zanni's Story. I already have a cast in mind based on these discussions. With departmental permission, I plan to primarily use undergraduate actors, supplemented by some actors outside of the department. I would like to use as many Ohio State students as I can. Most of the cast is African-American. I may reach out to African-American organizations on campus to look for potential cast members.
I have also contacted professional actors in the Columbus community about the project. There are African American professional actors who are interested in performing in the show, particularly those actors who are frequently involved with King Arts Complex productions. I hope to draw as large an audition pool as possible so that I can essentially double cast. Double casting will be helpful in the event that someone has to pull out of the show for whatever reason.

There are a couple of roles that present casting challenges. Those roles are Zanni, the baby, and Mrs. Ola, the Nigerian mother. One of the parents at the King Arts Complex has agreed to allow her grandson or her niece to take part in the production in the role of Zanni. Dione, her grandson, is a 10-month-old baby. Tenequa, her niece, is a 4 year old little girl. I have also spoken to the children’s parents and they are very excited.

For the role of the Nigerian mother I have been spreading the word to the Nigerian community in Columbus. I have also spoken with Professor Ezekiel Kofoworla. He has indicated that his wife, who will be coming to the United States to join him, may be interested in taking the role.

**Funding**
I plan to apply for the Graduate Student Alumni Research Award offered by Ohio State. Award funds would go towards paying a small stipend to professional actors as well as to musicians who will be creating a taped soundtrack for the production.

**Research**
A great deal of my Project focus goes into the writing, directing, and acting in the piece. There are also several research possibilities:
- exploring the concept of multiracial identity in contemporary American culture;
- The notion, role, and influence of God;
- Defining personal empowerment, tracing the path to becoming empowered.

**Potential Thesis Committee Members**
Jeanine Thompson, Chair of Committee.
Dr. Tom Postlewait, Thesis committee member.

The impetus to work on this project came from Dr. Joy Reilly’s *New Work’s Class*. Joy Reilly has a great deal of experience writing, developing, directing, and producing new scripts. I am interested in asking Joy to come on to the committee in place of acting head Sue Ott Rowlands. Ideally, Sue will continue to serve as a significant resource through an independent study.
Classes Serving the Project

*Independent Study, Acting:* Sue Ott Rowlands would advise and offer suggestions as to how to direct and stage possible scenes. Sue could also “work” particular problem scenes.

*Independent Study, Voice:* Phil Thompson would advise the cast as a voice coach, as well as provide tapes/direction as to the approach of accents (i.e. Nigerian, Dominican, New York regional etc.) He would also advise the cast on using the vocal apparatus freely and in a hygienic way.

*MFA New Works Class:* This class can serve as a venue to show scenes “in progress” and as a place to receive feedback. This is also a place to discuss and demonstrate various staging techniques, as well as a place to share multiple written drafts, and to hear staged readings of a script in progress.

Rehearsal Schedule

I would like to hold short rehearsals during the last two weeks in November. These rehearsals would be worked around student exam schedules so as not take priority over student and departmental priorities. The play is primarily made up of two person scenes, which allows a lot of flexibility in the rehearsal process. These two weeks would also give the cast a chance to gel as a group, playing improvisational games, sharing ideas etcetera.

Over the winter break the cast would work on their roles privately and memorize their lines.

The cast would come together in January for a three-week intensive rehearsal period. The cast would perform in the Studio Theatre February 2 – February 6.

Costumes, Sets, & Props

The play takes place in Brooklyn, New York September 1998. Cast members will use most of their own clothes for costumes. The set and prop pieces can be pulled. Because the Studio space is small and the set will need to be struck easily, set pieces will be those that can suggest the space, (i.e. a hospital bed indicates a hospital, a couch indicates a living room.)

Stage Space

*Zanni’s Story* will be presented on either a thrust or an arena stage in the Studio theatre.

Stage Management, Lighting Design, Direction

I would be happy to work with the departmentally assigned stage manager and lighting designer/light board operator. MA student Megan Mateer has also expressed interest in assisting me with direction, as I will be acting in and directing the project.
I invite you to read the current draft of Zanni’s Story as you consider this proposal. I spend most of my days and nights thinking about, writing, and developing this project. I will continue to focus most of my energies in this direction even if I am not given the approval to work on Zanni’s Story as my Thesis Project. Your approval as a thesis project would give me a great deal of joy however. More than I ever could express to you.

**Potential Calendar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week of October 4</td>
<td>New Thesis Proposal, seeking approval, script draft writing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October – November Thesis Research, preparing dramturgical text</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 6</td>
<td>Departmental Auditions. I would sit in on these auditions to make</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Casting choices</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 13</td>
<td>Production Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 23 - 25</td>
<td>Begin Rehearsal Period</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 30-December 4</td>
<td>Rehearsal Period</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 5 – January 4</td>
<td>Cast works on scripts privately</td>
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<td>January 4 – January 28</td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
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<td>January 29</td>
<td>Technical Rehearsal</td>
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<td>January 30</td>
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<td>Final Dress &amp; Tech</td>
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APPENDIX D

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Name: Rebecca
Sex: Female
Age: Twenty-six

What is your character’s emotional/physical health like?
My health is considered “normal”, meaning I don’t have any major physical or emotional problems. I am often “stressed out”, bordering on neurotic. I inherited this trait of nervousness from my mother. I focus more on what I don’t want to happen in my life than what I do want to happen in my life.

How does your character walk?
I am not a centered person. The daily stress I carry around shows up in my physical actions. I walk quickly. My movements are also rather sharp, quick, and jagged. I move too quickly to allow for things to happen. I become intimate with Josh, and then I quickly pull away.

What is your character’s voice like? What is your character’s speech pattern?
My voice jumps a lot. It is at times high pitched, whiny, and demanding. My speech pattern is staccato as opposed to smooth or relaxed.

What are your character’s familial, romantic, platonic relationships? Describe them:

Edna: I am close with my mother. We talk about once a week and do things together; such as go shopping, go out for bagels, and attend temple. I love my mother deeply and am aware that she knows me better than anyone else. She is compassionate and I have inherited a sense of compassion from her. My mother also has neurotic tendencies. I am frustrated by this as I feel I have inherited this from her. I roically, I am equally frustrated that she is now in the process of coming to terms with the joys and limitations in her life, accepting people and events for who and what they are. My mother is nosy, and is demanding about my personal business. This is another frustrating issue in our relationship.
Josh: I am passionately in love with Josh. I am drawn to him because of his kind, straightforward, honest “farm boy” nature. Josh is also a peaceful person who has come from a peaceful environment, a farm in Indiana. I am attracted to him and grow to love him because of his no nonsense approach to and understanding of life. Josh accepts people for who they are as opposed to where they come from or who they appear to be superficially. Secretly, I would like to move away with him to his farm in Indiana, away from all of the pressures of the city, away from my own self loathing of my diverse nature, away from my judgements of myself and other people. I fantasize that at his farm there would be peace, quiet, and only few people. People who would be interested in each other for who they really are. At the same time, New York City, the multiculturalism, and my African-American, Jewish outlook on life is important to me and integral to who I am. I am afraid that if I stay with Josh, I will lose what defines me to myself and to others. Within my relationship with Josh lies the paradoxical fear that I am in love, and will stay with a person who will not be able to fit into the life that I created, or that I will let “the right one get away”, and never find such rare love again.

Jumoke: Jumoke has been my roommate for six years, four years in college and two years out of college. I am now in my first year of graduate school, and she is a public elementary school teacher. Jumoke is decisive and demanding by nature. We immediately become friends because I was attracted by her decisiveness. I also appreciate her sense of humor. Jumoke is a friend who requires total emotional disclosure, meaning that she expects that I will tell her everything that happens in my life. She becomes extremely angry if I am not totally open with her. Jumoke does not understand or sympathize with my indecisive nature. As a result, I avoid talking with her about my issues concerning my relationship with Josh.

Folasade: Sade is Jumoke's childhood friend, they grew up together. I like Sade a lot and find her very funny. We don't do a whole lot without other people around. Most of the time when we do do things together, Jumoke is present, such as going to night clubs, the movies, etcetera.

Julietta: I have a lot of respect for Julietta since she has made the decision to move out of her mother's house, and in with all of us to Brooklyn. I know and understand her struggles of wanting to separate from her mother as I have mixed feelings concerning my identity as a part of my mother's identity. I wish I had more separation in this regard from my mother. Julietta is a roommate, she is not someone I spend time with outside of the apartment.

Singley: I respect Singley in her attempts at raising Zanni on her own. I can also appreciate her struggle with Omar in that he is not exactly who she wants or expected to come into her life, and yet she love him all the same. I am going through a similar struggle with Josh.

Describe your character's clothing:
I have been spoiled growing up. For the most part I’ve grown up getting everything I want, including clothes. My mother is extremely fashionable and I got my fashion sense from her. I have so many clothes. I change clothes frequently, for different occasions. That’s another issue I have with Josh, he can’t dress - certainly not like the attractive black men that I’ve been dating. I wear a lot of name brand clothing, and yet maintain my own unique style.

Dispositional Traits:
What is your character’s general mood? Specific moods?
I am a moody person. Often stressed out and somewhat neurotic. I have a good sense of humor, and I am compassionate.

How does your character get along with others?
I get along well with people provided that I am the center of attention. I also do best with people who have relaxed dispositions like Josh. I am a good roommate, clean organized etcetera.

Motivational Traits
What does your character want?
I want to be able to be in love with Josh, and also maintain my sense of identity. I want our relationship issues to be resolved.

What is her secret wish?
My wish is that Josh and I will somehow resolve our differences, and that I will still feel a part of my religious, and cultural communities. I wish to come to terms with self acceptance.

Where will your character be five years from now? Fifteen years from now?
Five years from now I will have published my first best selling novel and will tour the lecture circuit. The book will contain short stories focusing on racial issues. Fifteen years from now I will have international recognition as a writer, be considered a “star” in the literary field, have published several books, be married, and be the mother of three children. I will also begin the pursuit of my PH.D.

What does your character believe in?
I believe in racial and religious identity, God, true love, loyalty to those you love, honoring my relationship, community acceptance, speaking out.

Deliberative Traits
What is your characters job?
I am a graduate student at Columbia University. I am fully supported by my parents. I work in publishing twenty hours per week. My parents pay my tuition and also give me some personal money.
APPENDIX E:

ADDITIONAL SCRIPT MATERIAL

(Sounds are heard indicating a cafe. Lights up. Josh is sitting at a round table (big enough to seat two people.) He is drinking coffee and writing in a small book. Josh stops periodically to check the time. Rebecca enters through the front door frantically.)

REBECCA

Hi. Sorry I'm late.

JOSH

Hmm hm.

REBECCA

No really I am, I had subway problems.

JOSH

Sure. Let's get started.

REBECCA

We're supposed to write the piece together right?

JOSH

Yup.

REBECCA

I thought as writers we're supposed to be getting used to working alone. When do writers ever have to write something together?

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JOSH

When they're assigned to. I'd really like to get home.

REBECCA

Right. Ok. How about you write a line, I write a line?

JOSH

Sounds good. You start.

(Josh rips out a page from his notebook and they begin writing. They each alternate writing a line on the page.)

REBECCA

"She was laying on the ground when I found her."

JOSH

"Shaking. Alone."

REBECCA

"I gathered my sister in my arms."

JOSH

"And asked her about the alien abduction."

REBECCA

That really wasn't where I was going...

JOSH

You write a line, I write a line remember?
REBECCA

Why don’t we try another tactic. We write for 2 minutes straight no stopping, and see what we come up with.

JOSH

Fine. Go.

(They write silently for one minute)

REBECCA

Ok.

(Josh continues to write)

I think that’s two minutes.

JOSH

Hold on...

(He finishes writing.)

Ok.

(They exchange papers.)

REBECCA

(Reading Josh’s paper aloud)

“When I opened the can of tomato soup, the label slipped off, revealing a microscopically small typed letter. After massive amounts of enlargement photocopying I was able to read: WARNING: THE GOVERNMENT IS USING TOMATOES TO CONTROL THE BRAINS OF FARMERS AND CONSUMERS. THERE IS A FEDERAL ATTEMPT TO TURN PEOPLE INTO ASSASSINS IN THE SAME WAY THAT THE CIA SPRAYED INNOCENT VICTIMS WITH LSD IN THE 1950’S. BEWARE: SEE OMNIBRAN” Omni what?

JOSH

Omni- bran, like the muffin.

REBECCA

Interesting.

(Josh takes her paper and reads aloud.)
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JOSH

"The biggest problem of humankind is not knowing who you are. The last time I faced this many people was at my batmitzvah. There were more white people than black people there, I remember that. I worked for a long time on the guest list trying to balance it out. It didn't work, there are just more white Jewish people. At least in this country. And my father's side of the family, they didn't really get it. My grandmother asked me if having a batmitzvah meant I didn't know Jesus. My cousin's sort of understood when I told them about all the free money I was going to get. It was enough just to get them all there. That morning, I wasn't nervous at all. I was happy, because I was prepared. Rabbi Lebowitz smiled big when I walked in the synagogue. Well Rebecca, "it's good to be a Jew this morning." I looked out at all the people, the kids from my school, and my parents. They were together then. And my family. And spoke in Hebrew. And for about 30 minutes or so I knew exactly who I was. Everybody was so proud of me, even my aunt Martha, who hated my mother, and had no idea what the hell I was saying, there she was smiling away. At the reception we had soul food and a Jamaican steel band. I danced with my great grandfather, who was doing Jewish folk dances to black music. I laughed a lot. But on Monday when I went back to school the uncertainty returned and my identity fell away."

REBECCA

What?

JOSH

At the beginning you said "the last time I faced this many people was at my batmitzvah." That indicates that you're facing people now. What people are you talking about? Who are you facing now?

REBECCA

I don't know. I was just writing for 2 minutes straight.

JOSH

"The biggest problem of humankind is not knowing who you are?" What about hunger, murder, exploitation of third world countries-

REBECCA

What would you know about the exploitation of developing nations?
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What’s that supposed to mean?

REBECCA

Nothing. I really don’t think this is going to work Josh.

JOSH

We have an assignment Rebecca. An assignment, we need to get this done.

REBECCA

Fine. Why don’t you come up with a writing technique.

JOSH

Close your eyes.

REBECCA

What?

JOSH

Just close your eyes.

(She closes her eyes.)

Now imagine the most relaxing place on earth.

REBECCA

Ok I’m imagining.

JOSH

What do you see?

REBECCA

Lots of, hmnn... It’s really warm out. I mean it’s cold and grey, it’s...
JOSH

What do you want to see?

REBECCA

The sun is shining. Bright. A different kind of sun than in the city. And it’s rising slowly. The grass is really, really, really green. Like crayola green.

JOSH

What else?

REBECCA

Ok, ok. There are a few cows, grazing. Quiet. And there is a little boy. He’s running around

What’s he doing?

REBECCA

He’s feeding chickens. He’s very cute. And there is a big, old farmhouse. It looks like it would probably be drafty.

JOSH

Is it still sunny?

REBECCA

No it’s night time now. There are about a million stars. Many many more than you can see in the city. It’s still warm. And we’re walking along, talking. Looking at all that space.

JOSH

We’re walking together?

REBECCA

(her eyes flip open.) Yes.

JOSH
That’s great!

REBECCA

I’m assuming there’s a point to all of this.

JOSH

I was just trying to get you to relax. You picked a farm instead of a beach or something?

REBECCA

In undergrad I took this course about writers who are also farmers. There a lot of people who write who make references to gardens, land -

JOSH

Yes. I know.

REBECCA

We read all these texts, kept a journal, and visited farms in upstate New York.

JOSH

Did you like it?

REBECCA

I went to a rabbit auction. That was surprisingly fun. $2 for a cute little bunny. I don’t remember much else. Except that I went to my professor’s farm a few times. A lot of times. I’d get there at 4:00 in the morning and wash the cows udders before he hooked up the milk machine. Shovel manure, put feed in the stantions, hand feed the calves with a bottle. My mom and my friends thought I was crazy. I know it sounds strange but doing these basic, monotonous chores, in the middle of nowhere, felt peaceful. Being there was the only time in my life I ever felt like I was in the right place at the right time.

JOSH

I grew up on a farm.

REBECCA
Oh. Well I need to go.  

(Starting to get her things together to leave)  

JOSH  

Rebecca what about the paper?  

REBECCA  

Can we get together on Sunday?  

JOSH  

You want to get together all over again just to write this thing?  

REBECCA  

What you don’t want to see me again?  

(both are surprised at this flirtation)  

JOSH  

Let’s just get this over with now. And yes. I do want to see you again.  

(Lights fade. End of scene)
APPENDIX F (CONTINUED)

ADDITIONAL SCRIPT MATERIAL

(Lights up. Josh and Rebecca are sitting at a long table. There are book shelves around them to indicate a library.)

REBECCA

Do we do anything else but write?

JOSH

Yes. We go to classes.

REBECCA

This grad school thing is getting a little old. Work, work, work, work, work, work, work, work some more, work, work, work, work, work, work, blah blah blah

JOSH

Ok Rebecca I get the point. You’re pretty cute when you’re stressed out.

REBECCA

That must mean I’m pretty cute most of the time.

JOSH

That’s true.

REBECCA

I’m bored Josh. Let’s go do something.

JOSH

What do you want to do?

REBECCA

We could go rock climbing?
JOSH
Rock climbing? What made you think of that?

REBECCA
You mentioned it in your last story. It was nice to get a break from the invasions, and abductions, and -

farming.

JOSH

REBECCA
Josh let's go rock climbing.

JOSH
It's hard. It takes a lot of physical work.

REBECCA
Yeah I know.

JOSH
Oh you know miss city girl?

REBECCA
I am not defined by my city.

JOSH
I am not defined by my farm

REBECCA
Yes you are.

JOSH
No I'm not.

REBECCA
Whatever. Are you going to take me rock climbing or what?

JOSH
Yes. Just don't complain the whole time.

REBECCA

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I’m not going to complain.

JOSH

Oh yes you are. “I’m too tired.” “I have no upper arm strength,” “I broke a nail.”

REBECCA

When do I complain?

JOSH

“All we do is work in graduate school, work, work, work.”

REBECCA

Fine I am officially changing my attitude now.

Good

JOSH

So let’s go.

REBECCA

Rebecca we’re not going rock climbing now. That’s an all day thing and we have a lecture to go to in a few hours.

Oh right, I forgot.

REBECCA

(Rebecca begins to look through her bag.)

Oh know....

REBECCA

What?

JOSH

I left my notebook at home.

REBECCA

So I’ll give you some paper.

JOSH

REBECCA

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No, I hate that. Then everything you need is in different places. I’ll just run home and get it.

JOSH

You’re going all the way back to Brooklyn to get a notebook?

REBECCA

I’ll take a shower too. And eat something.

(He begins to gather his things together to leave.)

You don’t need to leave just because I’m leaving.

JOSH

I want to go with you.

REBECCA

You don’t need to do that.

JOSH

I don’t mind. I’d like to see where you live anyway.

REBECCA

I’m pretty tired. I think I’d like to take a nap.

JOSH

A minute ago you were ready to go rock climbing.

REBECCA

(Teasing)

You’re going to pay an extra $1.50 just cause you can’t be away from me for a couple of hours?

JOSH

Do you not want me to go with you?

REBECCA

I didn’t say that.

JOSH

What are you saying?

REBECCA

I’m saying that if you want to come with me you can come with me but it’s not necessary since we’ll see each other soon and if you want I’ll sleep at your apartment tonight.
JOSH
That sounds like a consolation prize. Why don’t you want to bring me home Rebecca?

REBECCA
You make it sound so dramatic.

JOSH
just answer the question.

REBECCA
This is ridiculous. I don’t care if you come with me or not. Let’s just go already.

JOSH
Are you sure?

REBECCA
Yes Josh. Come on let’s go.

(They exit. End of scene)
APPENDIX G (CONTINUED)

ADDITIONAL SCRIPT MATERIAL

(Rebecca and Josh are walking outside towards the subway station. Rebecca walks ahead of him)

**JOSH**

Rebecca what was that all about?

**REBECCA**

Welcome to the wonderful world of black people. Everybody’s business becomes your business.

**JOSH**

Nobody even knew who I was.

**REBECCA**

Yes they did.

**JOSH**

No they didn’t. Why are you lying?

**REBECCA**

I’m not lying. You called yesterday and said to Sade on the phone “this is Josh.”

**JOSH**

So you sound annoyed about that.

**REBECCA**

I’m not annoyed, I’m just saying that people knew who you were. How can you have been in New York for over a year and never eaten plantain?

**JOSH**

Is that a problem? You want to add that to your little book?
REBECCA

My little book?

JOSH

Your book of test questions, the one’s I pass or don’t pass, the answers you keep and record in your head. So how am I doing today? Am I passing or failing?

REBECCA

Why are you getting angry? We’re on our way to school; you just met my friends. So it was a little awkward so what?

JOSH

A little awkward? They taught me to eat a meal like I was a child. This is bullshit. Forget this, I’m going home.

(He turns to walk away)

REBECCA

(Stepping in front of him)

Why?

JOSH

I’m not going to play this little game with you Rebecca. If you want to talk to me about something real TALK. This conversation is wasting my time.

Josh-

JOSH

What?

REBECCA

You’re white.

JOSH

Yes, Rebecca. I am

REBECCA

And you’re not Jewish.
This is new news.

JOSH

REBECCA
You’re not even religious. You’re just not the person I was expecting to end up with.

JOSH
Who were you expecting to end up with?

REBECCA
I thought I would be with someone black. Or Jewish, or both... Josh all my time outside of you is spent with black people, doing black things, going to places where everyone is black. The only time I am with white people is when I am in a synagogue, or with my family. Being interracial is who I am. I wouldn’t change that. But I spent a long time trying to prove that I was black enough. Jewish enough. I just can’t go through that all over again with kids.

JOSH
Kids? How did we get there?

REBECCA
Are we supposed to raise kids on a farm in the middle of nowhere? So that they can grow up around no Jews and no Black folks and go to an all white school and learn everything there is to know about George Washington and his stupid cherry tree thing, or John F. Kennedy, and maybe if they’re lucky they’ll talk about Martin Luther King once a year, because after all he’s the only black person that’s ever done anything in the world -

JOSH
What?

REBECCA
Did you learn about any other African Americans in school? What about Malcolm X? Did you know who Malcolm X was growing up?

JOSH
Growing up - Malcolm X was all over the place, you couldn’t escape him for awhile. X Hats. X t-shirts - a big fashion statement. It was pretty disgraceful if you ask me.

REBECCA
What about culture, and heritage. And God. God Josh. Do you know what your name means Josh?
I was named after my grandfather.

REBECCA
It means "The Lord’s help." The night after we wrote that piece for class together in the cafe, I went home and read the story of Joshua in the Torah. Joshua was second in command under Moses did you know that? He continued Moses’ battle for a religious homeland for the Jewish people. I read about Joshua’s faith and obedience to God, and stayed up all night thinking about you.

JOSH
I know all about Joshua the religious warrior. What is a holy war anyway? Listen to the hypocrisy in that statement.

REBECCA
Jews have been persecuted all over the world. Israel is a place for the Jewish people to go, a homeland. Joshua fought for that. But you don’t care about that because it’s not your story. Joshua is your name and it has no meaning for you. History, culture, it doesn’t mean anything to you because you’ve never been separated or denied anything.

JOSH
You don’t know me Rebecca

REBECCA
What’s there to know Josh? You were raised in a very nice white family. All your friends were nice white kids who also came from nice white families. You went to a nice, Lilly white school

JOSH
You don’t know anything about how I grew up. I went to school two towns over, a school with black kids and white kids. I was jumped by six black guys in the locker room. Why do you think that was? Do you think it was because I was smart? Or maybe because I had money. They didn’t take any money. What do you think it was about Rebecca? Or what about my brother who had been playing basketball since the age of 8. Who got up every day and spent 4 hours in the gym shooting hoops? Who could dribble like a madman and get every three pointer. And when he got to high school, and made the varsity team freshman year, he quit after 3 months. Quit a game he was meant to play.

REBECCA
So every experience you’ve ever had with black people has been negative?
JOSH
My best friend named Curtis, who was mixed like you. He had a black father and a white mother. Like you. And all the black kids gave him shit, called him “whitey,” and oreo, and made him-

REBECCA
prove to all them that he was ok, that he was just as good as them. That he was just as cool, and funny, and interesting. Only you can’t help who you are. You can’t help that part of you isn’t that, no matter how much you wish it was. You can’t help that so much of your time is not spent with black people because you didn’t choose your religious faith, or where you were going to go to school.

JOSH
Curtis chose to hang with the white kids, because they accepted him, and they didn’t judge him, and they didn’t make him feel like he was wrong for who he was.

REBECCA
Do you know what my father asked me when I was 8 years old? He asked me, in front of my mother, “Rebecca, if you had to choose to be only black or only white what would you choose?” It was a trick question because, my father had told me so many, many, times. There is no such thing as “mixed” Rebecca. You are black, that is how the world sees you, and that is who you are. I thought about how all the kids at school would ask me if I was adopted when they saw my mother walk through the door. These are the kids that saw my mother take me to kindergarten, first grade, second grade. And nobody thought anything except perhaps “that’s Rebecca and her mother.” Until third grade - that’s when everything changed. Kids could start to see things. I could see myself. Eventually I just asked my mother to drop me outside, further off from the door. I told my father, “I wish I was only black.”

JOSH
I’m sorry that happened to you Rebecca. But if this is how you feel - like you have to make some kind of choice, then I don’t know what you want from me.

REBECCA
I’m trying to get you to understand where I’m coming from.

JOSH
You want to tell me that we’re different? I heard you. I want to know what we’re going to do?

REBECCA
How am I supposed to know?
It just sounds like I’m a bunch of things that you don’t want.

I never said that.

You didn’t have too. I’m going home.

Josh, come on. What about this lecture?

I’ll see you later.

Josh-

I’ll see you later.
APPENDIX H

CHARACTER JOURNAL ENTRIES

I saw Joshua around school. Several times in fact. He was always looking at the bulletin board for publishing opportunities, poetry readings, editing gigs. I didn’t think much of him. He was just that dude who I always saw looking at the boards with those corny glasses. One day I passed him in the hall and said “man you are always at these boards.” He laughed and turned around “Always is a pretty big word.” he answered. Beautiful smile. And those eyes. Soft brown, long lashes. He winked and turned back around to scrutinize the bulletin board. I kept walking. “Now that’s the cutest white boy I’ve seen in a long time.” You can see people several times and they never really matter to you.

A couple of days later he showed up in my 360 class - writing seminar. This is my favorite class because it’s impossible to get into - only 8 people are allowed in. I’ve tried every semester and finally last spring I got in. And there he was glasses and all. He winked again and I looked away because I didn’t want him to think I was flirting with him. “The last thing I need is to have feelings for this white dude.” I was surprised to have said such a thing to myself.

We were supposed to have brought a piece of writing with us - prepared. So I read aloud first in Professor Kurlick’s class. I love Professor Kurlick. Not only does he keep his classes small but he encourages you to write in your own style. He’s the only professor I’ve ever known who can really teach you to teach yourself. He offers constructive criticism of your work, is very supportive, and helps you to build your skills. He never brings up all of the established writers we study in other classes or had in undergrad. Instead he’ll say things like; “it’s good Rebecca but you don’t want to settle for good. You’re not getting at the essence of what you’re trying to say. When you talk about your culture you are so specific. When Carla (another student in the class) uses color imagery you actually feel, taste, smell the blue of the ocean she discusses. What color is this piece? What does it feel like? Perhaps you can find a place to put it in your writing.” Isn’t that the bomb?

Ok so getting back to how Josh and I met or got together or whatever. He was so into the class. So into it, that he didn’t particularly notice me and he never read aloud. It was three classes of him not looking at me and not reading his work until Dr. Kurlick finally said “well Josh, perhaps you may want to read some of your work today?” He smiled, opened his notebook, to what looked like a thesis body of work. My eyes got big looking at all that type written work. That’s a hell of a lot of discipline - that much work
when no one is ever bothering to collect anything. And then he read. Some science fiction piece with tomatoes and cheese and how it ties in with a take over of the world. BIZARRE, but it was really funny. And then he looked so cute because he was so impassioned about it. I took note then - if you want someone to feel passionate about your writing, it doesn’t matter all that much what you write about because it’s the ride that everybody wants, the cocaine rush they can feel vicariously through you, through your passion. I hate science fiction and suddenly there I was loving it. Yes, definitely a white boy, but damn - I was feeling him.

Josh, however, was not feeling me. At least he was acting like he wasn’t feeling me. I started to actually try and look cute for class. He didn’t. He wore baggy clothes, sometimes with holes in them. “Maybe he has a girlfriend” I thought. Why I was going after him I don’t know. This man... the more he read his work, and listened to his comments about other people’s work, the more interested I became. I read a piece about my aunt Sara and I as a little girl. I had never shared this piece with anyone, but I was desperate. Jumoke had talked me into going out the other night and I didn’t get anything new written so I pulled this out. This piece means a lot to me, there is a lot of vulnerability tied up in it, particularly because of the strained relationship between my mother and my aunt. Immediately afterward Josh spoke up “the little girl in this piece - it’s as if she trusts herself and doesn’t trust herself at the same time due to the uncertainty in the adult’s relationship. The story would be stronger if she could make up her mind.” This was true, but it was me he was talking about and not the story. I glared at him, he smiled back. Class ended right then so we didn’t get a chance to discuss the story further. I bolted out of there. Josh called after me “Hey Rebecca wait!” I stopped. “I liked your story.” I mumbled a thank you and started to walk away. “Would you like to get some coffee Rebecca?” My stomach did flip flops just hearing him say my name. “No I can’t, I have to go.” I didn’t but I was melting on the spot and I couldn’t let him see it.

“Ok...” He said and started to turn around “But I could meet you for drinks later,” I said. I could not believe I said that, it just came flying out of my mouth.

We met at 109th Street a bar right by school at 10:00. We stayed until 2 am talking. I think I fell in love with him by 10:30. I had never heard so many bright things come from such an adorable person. It was pretty hard not to leap over the table and jump him. It was late - too late for me to go back to Brooklyn. So he told me I could stay with him in his room. He told me I could sleep in his bed and he’d take the couch. And he did, he didn’t kiss me - nothing. Ask me how much I slept that night?

I left early the next morning to go home to change. Everybody was still sleeping when I got home so nobody knew I was out all night. I changed quickly and went to class.

That day in class Josh noticed me. He stared at me during the whole class. “Where did you go this morning?” He asked after class. “I had to go home and change.” “Well you left your journal, the book with the heart on the cover right?” “Why didn’t you bring it with you to class?” I asked him “Because it’s with something else you forgot and I couldn’t bring that out here.” He looked right into my eyes.
As we got closer to the dorm room, up the stairs, I felt his hand on the small of my back and he opened the door with one arm slipped around me. When we walked in he didn’t let go, and he pulled me towards him. The kisses melted my breath away and I fell limp into his arms. I wanted every part of him as my clothes slipped off, his hands reaching around my sides, stroking my back... “Rebecca...” he whispered. “You are so beautiful. So beautiful.”

*****

Joshua was the most intoxicating thing. I just needed to be near him as much as possible, except for class. In class I sat across the room. I suggested we sit apart so that we could maintain objectivity for our writing as professionals. Really it was so I could watch him every day in class. I’ve never seen anyone quite so focused and impassioned about his work. It was - is the most erotic thing I’ve ever seen. His words fall out like honey and I imagine licking them off of his mouth afterward. His voice, and eyes, and passion. Always the passion.

*****

Being with Joshua is like being in fantasy land. We spend days together talking - long talks about great writers. We read and write together - we can be together for hours, not talking in silence. Creating. We take walks late at night, or very early in the morning and notice the minute details of the city, New York’s people, and the sunrise. I am reminded every moment we walk through the city how much I love it here, how much it is my place and these are my people. I know he doesn’t feel the same way about New York that I do. He talks about the farm, about home. About where he is from and who he is. I listen and try to ignore it at the same time. Talking about home is the only time, aside from when he is writing, or reading what he has written that he just lights up.

Josh and I talk aimlessly about a future, a life together - kids. I get swept away, caught up in it. Believe in it. When I am with Josh I feel secure. I feel happy. I am in love. And God wants it to be. But I know it won’t last forever.

*****

When we first started out, I gave Josh my pager number. I told him I was never home, which is true. He finally asked me for my home number. I gave it to him. My hands were trembling when I wrote the number down. I wonder if he noticed. Things with Josh have felt so perfect. I just can’t handle him meeting everyone yet. There are so many things to deal with that I haven’t yet. What is the point of starting a relationship if you’re just going to let it go? Haven’t I learned enough lessons? What the hell am I doing?
APPENDIX I

COMPANY RULES #1 - ACTORS

WELCOME to the cast of *Zanni's Story*. A copy of the company rules will be posted on the call board for this theatre. You will be notified of all updates. All other information about this production, such as rehearsal schedules, performances, costume fittings, photo and publicity sessions, will be posted there as well. Check the call board daily. Also, here is a copy of the contact sheet. Take a moment right now to verify that your name and phone number(s) are correct. Are there any corrections? Should this information change, you will be provided with an updated contact sheet.

1. Messages may be left for stage management on the production call board or in the stage manager's mail slot for this theatre, located in the GTA Corridor, room 0128, Drake Union. Does anyone NOT know where this is located?

2. Rest rooms are located on the ground floor, just down the hall to your right, and on the first floor, adjacent to Stadium II Theatre. Public phones are located on the first floor, adjacent to the Theatre Department Office, rm. 1089 Drake Union. The phone in the GTA Office is not for your use, except for emergencies.

4. The first working rehearsal for this production will be in room 78. Normally rehearsals will take place in room 78. If and when we rehearse in room 78, you will be required to wear clean, soft soled shoes. Typical rehearsal times will be Monday-Friday evenings, 6:30 to 10:30, and on Saturdays 12:30 to 5:30. You will receive weekly rehearsal schedules. Always bring your script, a pencil and paper to rehearsals.

5. The movement for this production is such that you will need to wear comfortable type of clothing. Please bring this clothing to rehearsals. For some of you, rehearsal clothing will be provided. Stage management will take care of providing you with rehearsal clothing.

6. The technical and dress rehearsals are listed on this sheet as well as actor call times. We may discover that intricate costumes or makeup necessitates moving your call earlier. Please be prepared for this to happen.

7. Here is the performance schedule for this production. Matinee performances will be held on the following dates: 2/2/99.
8. From this day forward, do not change your hair color or hair style until you have spoken with the director Anike.

9. No food is allowed in the rehearsal space or in the theatre. If you require liquids, make sure they are in closed containers. In addition, it is your responsibility to remove drink containers and personal items at the end of each rehearsal. No smoking is allowed in or near the performance or rehearsal areas of Drake Union.

10. Do not be late for rehearsal. Lateness disrupts the evening’s rehearsal and ultimately the overall quality of the show. If rehearsal begins at 6:30 p.m., you must be ready to BEGIN at 6:30 p.m. We have, in the past, enforced a policy of fines for lateness. Stage management does not have its own phone line or answering machine. If you have an emergency, my pager number is 242-1568. Don’t be late for rehearsal.

11. You will be scheduled by the stage manager for appointments in the costume studio, and it is imperative that you keep these appointments and that you arrive at them promptly. If you know you are going to be late for a fitting, contact the costume studio, 292-0883, immediately.

12. The departmental complimentary ticket policy is as follows: for Studio Theatre, there are no complimentary tickets. For Stadium II and Thurber Theatres, each undergraduate performer is entitled to two complimentary tickets for a performance any night except Friday or Saturday. Graduate student performers are entitled to two complimentary tickets for any night of the performance run.

13. Safety. If you walk across campus to and from rehearsals, be careful and protect yourself. Travel in groups and/or use the OSU Escort Service, 2-3322. If you drive, you are strongly advised to get a C-sticker, which will enable you to park in the lot directly across from Drake Union after 4:00 p.m. To purchase a sticker, go to 160 Bevis Hall, 1089 Carmack Rd. The office is open 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m., M-F. The cost (Sept 98) for a sticker is $42 (West campus parking only); or $99 (central campus, restricted). If you are not an OSU student, see me during a break and I’ll provide information about a guest sticker.

14. Please take a moment to fill out these forms. If your class/work schedule is not yet confirmed, write “to be confirmed” on the top of your schedule sheet. Be specific as to your schedule, include class name and length of time it meets; also your work schedule and any other conflicts. I will need a confirmed schedule sheet within one week. Any conflict dates over the course of the rehearsal period are be included at this time.

15. A note of courtesy: my role is the stage manager for this production. That means when I or a designated assistant call places, or breaks, or have any kind of announcement, there are only two responses that are acceptable. They are either "thank you" or "I have a problem". This is required of EVERYONE. This is the only way we can know you have heard us. We do not treat this as a joke; this is the best way to ensure that your time and my time is not wasted.
16. Next order of business is the election of the deputy. "The deputy is an elected member of the company of Actors in production who serves as a liaison between OSU/Producer and the company in relation to all working conditions governing your work as an Actor. The Deputy may be called upon to advise OSU/Producer of rule infractions or complaints. It is the duty of the Deputy to pursue the course that will best insure that the provisions of the Actor's rights be upheld according to the rules. No member may change or modify any rule without written authorization from OSU/producer." The Deputy is depended upon to promote harmony in the company and to inspire respect and confidence in the production. It is not any easy job; but it is a position that brings the satisfaction of insuring the dignity of the Actor. Tact and diplomacy are part of the job. The Deputy is elected by a majority of the cast members. The elections are run by the stage manager. Nominations are proposed and then a vote by hand is taken.

[elect the Deputy, and provide him/her with deputy guidelines]
[any final questions?]

If you have any questions during the process, do not hesitate to call us - we are here to make your theatre experience as productive and rewarding as possible. Thank you, and WELCOME!

Sincerely,

________________________________________
Stage Manager
APPENDIX J

ZANNI’S STORY; REHEARSAL GUIDELINES

Stage Manager

Please refer to the stage manager’s “Company Rules”. The stage manager is the chief authority for running the production through rehearsals and performances. We are fortunate to have Christ Athanas for our stage manager. His major responsibilities will include:

- Scheduling rehearsals
- Conducting rehearsal business
- Handling the prompt book
- Enforcing rehearsal discipline
- Assistance with line memorization

Please see the stage manager when:

- You have a question regarding rehearsal business or rehearsal schedules
- You are leaving the rehearsal room outside of breaks
- You need a pencil, band aid etcetera
- Anything about the flow of the performance that relates to your work that he needs to know

The Stage Manager is here to help you. The Stage Manager is also BUSY. Please do your best not to interrupt him while he is working. Wait for a break in the rehearsal. Please be efficient in your use of his time, be courteous, cooperative and business like in your exchanges. Most importantly respect his rules.

Director

The Director is responsible for the “artistic” standards of the production. Scene work may involve a variety of tactics including improvisation, runthroughs, side coaching etcetera. There will always be designated times throughout each rehearsal for you to offer your feed back and suggestions. It is my goal to run rehearsals collaboratively while maintaining a unifying vision for the play.

Before Rehearsal

- Know what is to be rehearsed (check the call board)
- Work on that particular segment on your own. Come to rehearsal with your lines, business, actions, images, and recalls in order.
- Go over the scene again in your head
- Set yourself a rehearsal goal
- Do your warm ups
- Be on Stage ready to begin when your stage manager calls places

During Rehearsal:
- Brief cast warm up
- Please be open to new techniques and different character choices
- Execute your lines as they are written
- When asking for a prompt ask for “line”
- When contributing ideas make sure they are concise, clear, sensible, and workable
- Write down all notes that affect you. Remember your notes.

After Rehearsal:
- Be certain you know everything you need to know about the following rehearsal
- Reflect on your rehearsal goal - did you accomplish it?
- It is useful to know your colleagues on a social level. Consider getting together with scene partners socially.

If you Have Free Time
- Read through the Dramaturgical text
- Go over lines and stage business alone or with scene partners

If you Have a Problem
- Speak with the Stage Manager
- Speak with the Director
- Speak with the Deputy if the Stage Manager and Director are not responding
- If you have a problem with or a suggestion for another actor please bring it to the Stage Manager’s or Director’s attention. We will pass it on.
APPENDIX K

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Monday, November 16
WHO: Full Cast
WHERE: Room 107, Drake Union
TIME: 6:30 P.M.
TOPIC: General Expectations, Script Read-thru

Wednesday, November 18
WHO: Full Cast
WHERE: TBA (check the call board)
TIME: 6:30 P.M.
TOPIC: Table work

Monday, November 30
WHO: Full Cast
WHERE: TBA (check the call board)
TIME: 6:30 P.M.
TOPIC: Rehearse Staged Reading

Week of November 30
WHO: Full Cast
WHERE: TBA (check the call board)
TIME: 6:30 P.M.
TOPIC: Show Staged Reading to Thesis Committee

Week of January 4, 6:30 - 10:30 P.M.
EVERYONE MUST BE OFF BOOK BY MONDAY, 1/4/98 - LINES 100%
MEMORIZED
Improvisational Work, Staging scenes

Week of January 11 - January 15, 6:30 - 10:30 P.M.
Staging Scenes

Week of January 19 - January 22, 6:30 - 10:30 P.M.
Moving into the Studio Theater, completion of staging scenes
*There will be a Saturday Rehearsal on January 23 from 12-5

**Week of January 25 - January 29, 6:30 - 10:30 P.M.**
Tech Week
*Absolutely no rehearsals may be missed during tech week

**February 1st, 6:30 - 10:30 P.M.**
Final Dress and Tech

**February 2 - February 6, 6:30 P.M., 1 P.M.**
Performances: 2/2 - 2/6 7:30 P.M. and 2/6 2 P.M.

With the exception of the first week and performance week you will generally **not** be called for all rehearsals or for the full rehearsal time. **You must attend the dress and tech rehearsals you are called for.** I will do my utmost to be conscientious and respectful so as to not waste your time. In exchange I ask that you do the same.
APPENDIX L

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE (CONTINUED)

* = Optional Rehearsal

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/10/99 (Sun)</td>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>Rehearsal Business (Calendars, Publicity, Daytime Rehearsals, Costume sheets)</td>
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<td>7:15</td>
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<td>Scenes TBA (Michael, Julietta, Singley, Sade, Jumoke, Omar, Mrs. Ola)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/11/99 (Mon)</td>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>FULL CAST CALL FOR CHARACTER REHEARSAL WITH PROFESSOR JEANINE THOMPSON</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/12/99 (tues)</td>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>Daytime Rehearsals (Edna, Josh, Rebecca)</td>
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<td>6:30</td>
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<td>Act 1, Scene I (Edna come at 6:45)</td>
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<td>Act 1, Scene II</td>
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<td>Act 1, Scene IV</td>
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<td>9:30</td>
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<td>Run Act 1 (Full Cast except Christos)</td>
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<td>1/13/99 (Wed)</td>
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<td>Daytime Rehearsals (Edna, Josh, Rebecca)</td>
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<td>Blocking Scenes TBA (Actors called: Sade, Mrs. Ola, Singley, Jumoke, Omar, Michael)</td>
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<td>1/14/99 (Thurs)</td>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>Daytime Rehearsal (Edna, Josh, Rebecca)</td>
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<td>6:30</td>
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<td>Act II, Scene 2</td>
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<td>Act II, Scene V, Unit 4</td>
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<td>Act II, Scene VI</td>
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<td>Act II, Scene 9</td>
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<td>9:30</td>
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<td>Run Act II (through scene 9)</td>
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<td>1/15/99 (Fri)</td>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>Act II, Scene 10</td>
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<td>7:30</td>
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<td>Run Show</td>
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<td>Work Challenge Scenes TBA</td>
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<td>1/16/99 (Sat)</td>
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<td>Alternative Rehearsals - See Calendar (Actors Called; Josh, Roommates)</td>
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<td>1/17/99 (Sun)</td>
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<td>1/18/99 (Mon)</td>
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ALL RUNTHROUGHS FROM 1/19/99 ONWARD ARE HELD IN STUDIO THEATRE

(Some daytime Rehearsals with Sue Ott Rowlands or Joy Reilly: Josh, Rebecca, Edna)
1/19/99 (Tues) 6:30 Full Cast, Rehearsal in STUDIO THEATRE (INTRO)
  7:00 Run Show
  8:30 Notes
  9:00 Work Challenge Scenes TBA
1/20/99 (Wed) 6:30 Work Challenge Scenes TBA
  8:30 Run Show
  10:00 Notes
1/21/99 (Thurs) 6:30 COSTUME PARADE - FULL CAST CALLED
  8:00 Scene Work TBA
1/22/99 (Fri) LAST DAY FOR MAJOR LINE CHANGES
  6:30 Warm Up
  6:45 Run
  8:15 Notes
  8:45 Work Challenge Scenes TBA
1/23/99 (Sat) 1:00 - 6:00 2 Runthroughs followed By notes
*7:00 Nigerian Dinner - Full Cast Invited $6 donation required
  1/24/99 (Sun) OFF
1/25/99 (Mon) TECH WEEK, ALL WORK SHOULD BE SET BY TODAY!!!
  6:30 - 8:30 TBA
  8:45 RUN SHOW
  10:00 Notes
1/26/99 (Tues) 6:30 Meet the Crew
  6:50 Crew Watch (Run Show)
  8:30 Notes
  9:00 TBA
1/27/99 (Wed) 6:30 - 10:30 TBA
1/28/99 (Thurs) 6:30 - 11:00 TECHNICAL REHEARSAL, FULL CAST - FULL
  TIME (We will also work on the curtain call tonight)
1/29/99 (Fri) 6:00 Call
  7:30 Run Zanni's Story
  9:00 Run Whu is One
  10:15 Notes
1/30/99 (Sat) FIRST DRESS REHEARSAL
  12:15 Call
  2:00 Run
  4:00 Notes
1/31/99 (Sun) OFF
2/1/99 (Mon)  6:00 Call
              6:45 Company Warm Up
              7:30 Run
              9:00 Notes
2/2/99 - 2/5 (Tues - Fri)  6:00 Call
                          6:45 Company Warm Up
                          7:30 Run
2/6/99 (Sat)  12:30 Call
                1:15 Company Warm Up
                2:00 Run

              6:00 Call
              6:45 Company Warm Up
              7:30 Run
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<td>Readthrough</td>
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<td>Show Staged Reading to Thesis Committee sometime this week</td>
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January 1999

Zanni's Story: Rehearsal Calendar
APPENDIX N

COSTUME SHEET

Act 1, Scene 1
Singly - jeans, sweater/shirt
Zanni - pajamas, “outfit” for the park
Jumoke - sweat pants, and sweat shirt
Julietta - church outfit - somewhat conservative (should include a dress, or a skirt), nice outfit to change into, jacket
Sade - running suit
Rebecca - club dress, bathrobe, outfit for baby shower, jacket
Edna - nice outfit for baby shower, shawl
Omar - clothes for playing basketball
Michael - clothes for playing basketball - ideally basketball shorts

Act 1, Scene 2
Edna & Rebecca - Same as Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 3
Singly & Omar - Same as Act 1, Scene 1

Act 1, Scene 4
Josh - Pants and long sleeve shirt
Rebecca - same as Act 1, Scene 2

Act 1, Scene 5
Sade - nice outfit
Jumoke - afrocentric outfit, jacket *
Julietta - blue “sweats” and top, jacket *
Singly - Pants and shirt
Mrs. Ola - African material outfit, jacket/sweater*
Rebecca - overalls and black shirt, jacket
Josh - sweater, pants, jacket
Omar - baggy pants, name brand shirt, jacket *

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Act II, Scene 1
Rebecca - changes into purple pants, black top, jacket
Michael - furry sweater, pants, jacket
rest of characters in scene (from Act I, Scene 5) - same as previous scene

Act II, Scene 2
Rebecca & Josh: Same as previous scene

Act II, Scene 3
Christos - baggy pants, Christos nice top
Julietta - nice outfit for restaurant, jacket

Act II, Scene 4
Mrs. Ola - nightgown
Sade - blue shirt, and jeans, and black leather jacket *
Jumoke - jeans and black turtleneck, jacket

Act II, Scene 5
Sade - same as previous scene
Jumoke - same as previous scene
Singly - sweat shirt and jeans
Julietta - same as Act II. Scene 3
Rebecca - nice outfit, jacket

Act II, Scene 6
Rebecca - same as previous scene
Josh - jeans and sweater/long sleeve shirt, jacket

Act II, Scene 7
Sade - same as Act II, scene 5
Singly - nightgown/pajamas, robe

Act II, Scene 8
Jumoke - sweat pants, sweat shirt
Michael - athletic pants and top

Act II, Scene 9
Edna - Dress, shawl or jacket
Rebecca - pajamas/nightgown, robe

Act II, Scene 10
Omar - athletic clothes
Singley - pants and sweater/shirt
Sade - African outfit *
Jumoke - afrocentric outfit
Julietta - casual pants and top
Rebecca - dress
APPENDIX O

PROPERTY AND SET REQUEST LIST

Act 1, Scene 1: Living Room & Kitchen
Props: small paper bag of bagels
       silk flower bouquet with vase
       telephone
       basket ball
       silk plant
       magazines, books
       kids toys
       throw for "couch"
       food containers for refrigerator
       coffee maker
Furniture: refrigerator
           stove or blocks to serve for stove
           blocks to serve for couch
           blocks to serve for small table
           chair
Sound: buzzer for apartment door
       telephone ringing

Act 1, Scene 2: Outside Waiting for Taxi
Props: None
Furniture: None

Act 1, Scene 3: Walk in the Park
Props: Actor will provide
Furniture: None
Sound: Park sounds (bus, kids playing, etcetera)

Act 1, Scene 4: Dorm Room
Props: books, paper, pencils, small rug, different throw for "couch"
Furniture: set for living room in scene one rearranged
Act I, Scene 5: Kitchen & Living Room

Props:
big cooking pot, small cooking pot
cutting board
nine plates, nine sets of forks & knives, nine glasses, nine cloth napkins
two serving bowls with serving spoons
rehearsal food (fruit, crackers, water)
telephone
silk plant
food containers for refrigerator
table cloth

Furniture:
Same as in scene one
sheet of ply wood to serve as table top
cube for ply wood to rest on (table must reach height of 27 - 30 inches)

Act II, Scene 1: Kitchen & Living Room

Props:
Same as Act I, Scene 5

Furniture:
Same as Act I, Scene 5

Act II, Scene : Outside Waiting for the Subway

Props:
None

Furniture:
None

Act II, Scene III Bar Scene

Props:
shot glass, water glass

Furniture:
two chairs

Act II, Scene 4: Living Room & Kitchen

Props:
television remote control
blanket
pillow
brown paper bag
food containers (milk, crackers etcetera)

Furniture:
Same as Act I, Scene 1

Act II, Scene 5: Living Room & Kitchen

Props:
pint of ice cream container
two spoons
silk plant
kids toys
telephone
food containers
Furniture: Same as Act I, Scene 1

Act II, Scene 6: Living Room & Kitchen
Props: Same as previous scene
Furniture: Same as previous scene

Act II, Scene 7: Living Room & Kitchen
Props: children’s toys
telephone
Silk plant
throw for couch
Furniture: Same as Act I, Scene 1

Act II, Scene 8: Living Room & Kitchen
Props: Same as previous scene
Furniture: Same as previous scene

Act II, Scene 9: Living Room & Kitchen
Props: Same as previous scene
Furniture: Same as previous scene

Act II, Scene X: Living Room & Kitchen
Props: Same as previous scene
suitcase
African clothes and material
3 plastic containers
plastic bag to hold containers
Furniture: Same as previous scene
APPENDIX P

DIRECTOR’S CONCEPT

_Zanni’s Story_ is an original, full length play revolving around five twenty-something African-American women who live together in Brooklyn, New York. The time of the play is set in September, 1998. The characters are faced with challenges in their interpersonal relationships and come to discover the potential and limitations of love, companionship, commitment, and loyalty. The play will be presented in a “realistic” format. Periodically during the play, an African folktale, will be told. In those moments the realism will be broken.

The cast has been informed that this should be considered a workshop production. I will be using less props, sets, and lighting changes than the script indicates. I am hoping to have the play flow as smoothly as possible, which may mean some script cutting, overlapping of dialogue, or quick lighting cues. I have attached a preliminary rehearsal schedule. I am holding approximately one week of rehearsals this quarter as the rehearsal period next quarter is so short.

I have attached preliminary rehearsal prop and furniture lists as well. These lists include items that an actor must manipulate, or learn to use. For the most part the actors will be providing their own costumes. We will be pulling some costume pieces if we need them and they are available. I am also looking for a Gorilla costume that I am expecting to provide.

The lighting needs are relatively simple:
- Light that indicates daytime or night time
- Light that indicates indoors or outdoors (IE apartment, subway station, dorm room, park, hospital room)
- Light that can reflect mood (if possible)
- Light that indicates “a cloud with a silver lining” that the actors will see through an imagined window
- A few scenes where only part of the stage space is lit.

I am working with a band that will be providing the music for some of the transitions between scenes, intermission, opening, and closing. I would also like to record certain city sounds to place on a tape (ie. sirens, subways, children in the park, etc.). I am looking for the sound of a door buzzer, car horn. Any direction as to where I could find
these sounds for recording would be greatly appreciated. Tapes of all music and sounds will ideally be given to the stage manager. The stage manager can press these tapes on and off during the show as required.

The play will be set on a thrust stage, with the audience on three sides. A thrust stage will provide the maximum space for the actors and the audience.

I would prefer that Zani's Story be performed first on the evening's bill. This is so that all furniture and props can be set. Upon the conclusion of the show the cast will be available to remove the set pieces and to rearrange the seating (if required) during the intermission.
APPENDIX Q

SAMPLE PUBLICITY LETTER

January 28, 1998

Michael Grossberg
The Columbus Dispatch
34 South Third Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Mr. Grossberg,

Dr. Joy Reilly suggested that I write to invite you to the opening of Zanni's Story, an original play showing at the Mount Hall Studio Theater February 2 - 6. You have given me positive reviews on my acting in the past, and it would mean a great deal to me if you would attend the opening of this show. I wrote, directed, and will also be performing in Zanni's Story.

Zanni's Story revolves around five 20-something African-American women who live together in Brooklyn, New York. The characters are faced with challenges in their relationships with romantic partners, mothers, children, and each other. They travel through an emotional journey, discovering both the potential and limitations of love, companionship, commitment, and loyalty.

Zanni's Story will be presented at 7:30 p.m. February 2 -6, and at 2 p.m. February 6 in Mount Hall Studio Theater. Tickets are $12 general public, $9 OSU faculty, staff, Alumni Association members and senior citizens; and $6.50 students. For tickets, call the theater box office at 292-2295.

Two complimentary tickets will be available for you at the box office. I realize you are busy, and appreciate your time.

Hope to see you on February 2.

Sincerely,

Anike
New Works
CREATED BY M.F.A.
STUDENTS ANIKE TOURSE
AND GILES DAVIS

DARIO FO &
FRANCA RAMI
Female Parts:
One Women Plays

NEW WORKS
Museum Hall Studio Theatre
Feb. 2-6 at 7:30 pm
Feb. 6 at 8 pm
Two semi-professional M.F.A. students present original new works for their degrees.
Don't miss the opportunity to see young
inventivity! Dario Fo and Franca
Ramis let you count on their new
gifts on the stage.

Dario Fo and Franca Ramis
ORIGINAL WORK.
MTF WOMEN PLAY
Museum Hall Studio Theatre
Mar. 2 at 9 pm
Mar. 3-5 at 7 pm; Mar. 6 at 8 pm
Three hilarious monologues common
a look at the role of women is examined by
the author, by the State, and by the
civilization! A rare opportunity to see the
original work on the stage.

Tickets Information: 857-353-3996

College of the Arts
Department of Theatre
1580 Eastwood Dr.
Columbus, OH 43210-1204

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APPENDIX S: PRODUCTION PROGRAM

The Ohio State University
Department of Theatre

M.F.A. New Works

Zanni's Story
By
Anike

Wôô is Ọnê
By
Aden Toyesi

Studio Theatre
February 2-6 at 7:30 P.M.
February 6 at 2:00 P.M.

Upcoming Events

Focal Music
Stadium II Theatre
February 18 at 7:30 PM
February 19 at 2:00 PM
February 20 at 8:00 PM

Female Parts: One Woman Plays
Milani Hall Studio Theatre
March 2 at 7:30 PM
March 3 at 2:00 PM
March 4 at 8:00 PM

Breaking the Current
Stadium II Theatre
April 11 at 7:30 PM
April 12 at 2:00 PM
April 13 at 8:00 PM

Angels in America: Part One, Millenium Approaches
Thurber Theatre
May 18-20, 25-26 at 7:30 PM
May 21 at 2:00 PM

The MountFlopee
Thurber Theatre
February 24 at 7:30 PM
February 25 at 2:00 PM
February 26 at 8:00 PM

Rock 'N' Rolla from William Shakespeare
Studio Theatre
March 7 at 7:30 PM
March 8 at 2:00 PM

THE LOVE OF THE NIGTHINGALE
Stadium II Theatre
May 10 at 7:30 PM
May 11 at 2:00 PM
May 12 at 8:00 PM

Pan
Mount Hall Studio Theatre
May 24 at 7:30 PM
May 25 at 2:00 PM
May 26 at 8:00 PM

In Conversation With...Tanya Kushner
Thurber Theatre
Tuesday April 20, 8:00 PM

For more information about the Department of Theatre, visit our Ohio State page at:
www.theater.osu.edu

Also see the Ohio State and OSU Theatre Facebook/Instagram:
www.facebook.com/OhioStateTheatre
www.instagram.com/OhioStateTheatre

For the most current information, visit our new Theatre Unofficial web page at:
www.theatre.unofficial.org
Zanni's Story
Written by: Anike

CAST

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<td>Anna</td>
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<td>Michael</td>
<td>John</td>
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<td>John</td>
<td>Tom</td>
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<td>India</td>
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Tour Dates

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Zanni's Story is a collaborative adaptive project. There were no actors who contributed artistically to the project and consequently we did not appear in the production. The cast: Chris Black, Lindsey Breznik, and Ariadne Mafi.

Annie, the playwright, directed Zanni's Story. Annie's sensibility and performance style was different and unique. Though Annie was well known by the cast, her presence was not apparent in the production.

Annie also directed the first scenes of the production, but due to her illness and the demands of the role, she had to withdraw from the project. Annie was replaced by our director, Lisa Thompson.

This is an interdisciplinary project with cast and crew from several disciplines, including Theatre, Dance, Film, and Music.

Whu is One

Written and Performed by Giles Davies

Lighting Designer: Jodie Wood
Sound Designer: Bethany Rawson
Special Effects: Emily Thompson, Dan, and Pat Thompson
Stage Manager: Ann Shaffer, Ann Williams, and John
Music by Mary Thompson, Mike, and Emily Thompson

Giles Davies is currently a BFA student at The Ohio State University. After growing up in Hong Kong, he moved to the U.S. and completed his undergraduate degree at The Ohio State University in Lima. While there, he traveled the globe, performing with various groups. He now lives in Lima, where he performs in The Ohio State University's Theatre Department and is currently working on a new production titled "Whu is One."
APPENDIX T: PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPH
APPENDIX T: PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPH (CONTINUED)
APPENDIX T: PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPH (CONTINUED)
APPENDIX H: SCRIPT

Zanni's Story
A play in two acts
Written by Anike L. Tourse
© September 1991
Zanni's Story Character List

Roommates

Singly

Singly

Jumoke

Jumoke

Sade

Sade

Rebecca

Rebecca

Julietta

Julietta

She is Zanni's mother, Omar's lover, African-American. She is 27 years old.

She is Michael's sister. Jumoke and Rebecca were roommates in college. She is an elementary school teacher. She is first generation American (parents are from Nigeria). She and Sade grew up together; their mothers are close friends. She is 25 years old.

She is from Washington Heights, NY, originally from Dominican Republic. She is 21, the youngest person in the group.

She is Mrs. Ola's daughter. Sade is first generation American (parents are from Nigeria). She grew up with Jumoke; their mothers are close friends. She is 25 years old.

She is Edna's daughter and Joshua's girlfriend. Rebecca is a graduate student. She is interracial, and Jewish. She was roommates with Jumoke in college.

She is Rebecca's mother. Edna is a Jewish affluent woman. She is 50 years old.

He is Jumoke's brother. He is a friend and mentor to Omar. Michael is first generation American (parents are from Nigeria). He is 29 years old.

He is Singley's lover and Zanni's father. Omar is a friend and apprentice to Michael. He is 27 years old and African-American.

He is Rebecca's boyfriend to Rebecca. Josh is a graduate Student. He is Caucasian and from the Midwest.

Mrs. Ola: She is Sade's mother. Mrs. Ola is Nigerian and 49 years old.

Christos: He is Julietta's boyfriend. Christos lives in Washington Heights. He is Dominican and 23 years old.
Zanni's Story
By Anike L. Tourse

Act I

(Act I Scene I: Sunday morning, September 1998. We are in an apartment in Fort Greene, Brooklyn. Singley enters, holding her daughter Zanni on her hip. She picks up toys off of the floor, sorts through mail and magazines, and draws the window blinds. Sunshine pours through the kitchen window. After a few moments of this stage business, Singley takes Zanni over to the fish tank by the window.)


(Jumoke enters from her bedroom)

Singley: 'Morning Jumoke.

Jumoke: Good morning. (Searching the kitchen anxiously)

Singley: Why don't you just get a lighter?

Jumoke: I don't believe in lighters.

Singley: That makes sense.

Jumoke: Why buy something that you can get for free? Why waste more stuff? (She stops to pick up Zanni) Hello sweet baby girl. How's my baby doing? Has she eaten yet?

Singley: Breakfast. You want to give her lunch?

Jumoke: (handing her back) Addiction calls - ah ha! Matches.

Singley: Those are wet. I spilled water on them yesterday when I was doing dishes.

Jumoke: But you didn't throw them away, right? You put them on top of the refrigerator because..? Never mind!

(Julietta enters)

Julietta: (leaning against the door with a satisfied grin) The day is blessed, the day is blessed.

Jumoke: Oh Lord, please do not start with all that this morning.

Singley: It's Sunday morning Jumoke.

Jumoke: So what? "Julietta for Jesus" is a 24-hour station.

Julietta: Jesus is all.

Jumoke: See what I'm talking about?

Julietta: Jesus is-
Jumoke: I mean it Julietta. Damn! Where the fuck are matches? I'm sorry, didn't mean to curse in front of Zanni. Damn!

(Sade enters from the front door.)

Sade: Hey.

Singley: Hi.
Julietta: Good morning.
Jumoke: Do you have any matches?

Sade: (going to the refrigerator for a glass of orange juice) Try the bottom drawer where the tools are. Did anybody call?

(Jumoke searches)

Singley: No.

Sade: Maybe I should call him.

Jumoke: (To Sade) That dude you met the other night? Call him for what?

Julietta: He seemed like a nice guy. Just be patient Sade.

Jumoke: It's been three days girl. I keep trying to tell you you can't meet nobody at a club.

(Rebecca enters. She is dressed for going out and clearly has been out all night. Rebecca walks in lazily with a big languid smile on her face. She is carrying a bag of bagels and a small bouquet of flowers she bought from a local Bodega with her. She moves flamboyantly dropping her items on the table.)

Rebecca: Good morning. I got breakfast. (Rebecca smiles and exits to the bedroom)

Sade: Now that was a look of some good fucking if I ever saw one.

Julietta: You are so ghetto.

Sade: You're right. She probably came from church.

Singley: (Putting the flowers in water) Why don't you all just ask her if you want to know where she was?

Julietta: You should ask her Jumoke - she's your best friend.

Jumoke: Right - I'm her best friend #1, and you're her second best friend, and Singley's her third so I should ask her.

Julietta: You were the one who was with her last.

Jumoke: And she's the one who disappeared from the club last night. I'm not asking her nothing.

(Rebecca enters again wearing a bathrobe. She goes for a glass of water. Everyone silently watches her while she drinks. Just before Rebecca exits, Sade speaks.)

Sade: Rebecca are you having sex?

Rebecca: Yes, I am.
(Rebecca exits)

Sade: OK, what was that?

Jumoke: I don't know and I am not worrying about it.

(The phone rings. Sade races to pick it up)

Sade: Hello? (Disappointed but not surprised) Hi mom. I just got up - I was going to call you. What? No I didn't know Pier One was having a sale on Papasan chairs. Hmmm? And water glasses too, WOW. Oh they are going back to Nigeria to get married? No, I don't have that kind of money. Yes ma I want to go but I have some other things on my agenda right now. Does this all have to be decided now? Ok, Ok. Rebecca just brought breakfast home so can I call you back? Ok, Bye. (Says under her breath) Like I'm trying to go to that wedding.

Julietta: Who's getting married?

Sade: My cousin. The last thing I feel like doing is going to the other side of the world just so I can say to myself "Don't worry Sade, one day you'll have a wedding." Not to mention all my aunts: "Yes, Sade, you look lovely. Now where's the man?" I could be rolling in so much money because of the new book Iyanla Vanzant and I are co-writing, driving a super live 17 thousand VW Bug carrying the honorary doctorate from Harvard that I picked up along the way and those women would still be sniffing around me smelling no man. Yeah, I'm going to find the money for that.

Singley: (calling from her bedroom) I'm gonna go take Zanni to the park. Anyone want to come?

(The doorbell rings. Jumoke opens the door for Edna, Rebecca's mother)

Edna: Hi sweetheart (kisses Jumoke.) Hello kids how are you? Where's my daughter?

Julietta: She's upstairs.

Edna: It's almost 1:00 (checking her watch) she should be up.

Sade: Oh she's up.

Julietta: I'll get her Edna. (She exits)

Edna: Oy this city! (Finding a seat in the living room. The girls follow her) Catching a cab here... Wouldn't you girls rather live in Manhattan?

Rebecca: (entering, wearing a bathrobe) No Ma we like Brooklyn. There are a lot of Blacks and Jews in Brooklyn remember?

Edna: Oh right I see you in the Hassidic bakeries all the time. I don't think there are a lot of Jews walking around Fort Greene darling. Well the building is OK.

Rebecca: Mom this apartment is great-

Edna: 2500 dollars for a 5 bedroom I know, I know, yes, yes. So what are you girls up to today?

Sade: (grabbing the paper off of the table) I'm finding a job.

Jumoke: And I'm grading papers. Lesson planning.

Edna: Where are Singley and Zanita? (They enter. Zanni is into a bright baby outfit for the day. Edna takes Zanni in her arms) My Shanasad. (Edna sings:)

Simi yah-day-ach
Bay-yah-di
Ani-sha-lach
Vay acht shei

Do you think it's really safe to have Baby here?

Rebecca: Mom! Zanni is fine.

Edna: OK, OK I'm just concerned. What's the matter with you? You look like you're about to take a shower.

Rebecca: That was the plan.

Edna: All made up already? (Looking at her) Did you sleep here last night?

Rebecca: Mom!

Edna: What?

Rebecca: Do we really need to have this conversation?

Edna: What conversation? You want to be a little slut and go out shtuping everybody like Rabbi Lebowitz's girls, who's your mother to stop you?

Rebecca: Mom did you come over for something specific?

Edna: As a matter of fact I did. Stephanie's baby shower starts in an hour did you forget that?

Rebecca: Ohhh right. Ok, I'll be 15 minutes. (Exits)

Edna: (calling after her) Real time not CP time please.

(Juliette goes to the refrigerator and takes out a cake)

Sade: Edna here is the rest of my paper (handing her the newspaper)

Edna: Thank you honey.

Jumoke: Would you like a bagel Edna?

Edna: Bodega bagels? No thank you honey. There will be plenty of food at the shower. (Seeing the cake) Oh Julietta, what a beautiful cake.

Julietta: I made it for my boyfriend Christos' mother. I'm going to her birthday party now.

Edna: Oh you sweet girl. Have fun!

(Julietta exits, as she exits Michael and Omar enter at the same time)

Julietta: Hey, MikeyMike! Hi Omar!

Michael: Hi.

Omar: Hey girl

(Michael and Omar enter holding a ball. They are sweaty from playing basketball.)

Michael: what's up ladies?
Sade: Beautiful Negroes. Welcome.

Omar: See that's what I'm trying to hear. (Walking over to Singley and Zanni) Singley how come you never talk to me like that? (Taking Zanni)

Singley: Because too many other people talk to you like that.

Michael: Hello Mrs. Goldfetter.

Edna: Edna, Michael, and Edna. How's my favorite entrepreneur? (To Omar) And you are?

Omar: Omar, ma'am.

(A beat)

I'm Zanni's father.

Edna: Oh (Scarily) Hello.

Omar: Nice to meet you

Edna: (Going back to her paper) Singley never mentioned you.

Omar: That's unfortunate.

Singley: (changing the subject) I'm taking Zanni to the park. Would you like to come?

Omar: (annoyed) I just came from the park. Yeah, yeah, cool.

(Rebecca enters from her room dressed for the baby shower.)

Rebecca: Ok Mom I'm ready.

(Phone rings. Rebecca goes to answer it but Sade gets it first.)


(The women all exchange looks, Rebecca takes the phone.)

Rebecca: Hi. I'm on my way out the door. Can I call you later? Hmmhm. I love you too. Bye.

Jumoke: Oh I know ole girl didn't just say love and we don't even know who he is.

Rebecca: Mom let's go.

Edna: You need to call a cab. (She heads for the phone) Who's Josh?

Rebecca: I go to school with him. (Ushering her mother through the kitchen and out the door) Let's go Ma, there will be a cab on the street.

Edna: Goodbye girls, (they exit.)

Singley: I'm ready to go too. Are you coming or what?

Omar: Yeah, yeah I'm coming. Bye ya'll. (Michael passes him the basketball.)
Michael: So Sade what's going on? (Getting a bagel. Sade, Michael, and Jumoke sit on stools in the kitchen)

Sade: My mother's been acting weird. She calls three, four times a day and usually talks about NOTHING. Not complaining or lecturing, but supermarket prices, and weather - nonsense like that.

Michael: Why don't you call her?

Sade: Mike she's going to call within the next 10 minutes.

Michael: Call her and ask her what's wrong.

Sade: You all know my mother. If I ask her what's wrong, she won't tell me. I asked my father what was going on and he said my mother hasn't talked to him in twenty years so find out for myself. I was thinking I would invite her over here.

Jumoke: For what?

Sade: Dinner.

Jumoke: You're going to do all that cooking? (Realizing that Sade is asking for help) Oh come on Sade.


Michael: It wouldn't kill you to help her cook Jumoke.

Jumoke: Thank you for your input Michael.

Sade: We could invite your mom too.

Jumoke: If my mother comes your mother won't talk to you at all. It will be like we're kids and have to go play in the next room

Sade: Fine, I'll just tell my mom I want her to see the apartment.

Michael: I'll stop by to eat. (to Sade) You know my wife doesn't make Nigerian food.

Jumoke: You could make it for her.

Sade: Michael why don't you bring Omar over here.

Michael: I'm sure he will have no problems with that. I gotta go. I promised I'd help paint Little Mike's room. Which reminds me you owe us some baby-sitting time.

Jumoke: Ok, ok, I'll be over later. I gotta grade these papers. Sade what you gon' do?

Sade: I'll tell you what I'm not gon' do. I'm not baby-sitting. I gotta look for a job.

Michael: (exiting) Bye!

Sade & Jumoke: Bye.

(Act I, Scene II: The lights rise down stage where we see Rebecca and her mother waiting for a taxi.)

Edna: This whole gypsy cab thing makes me nervous. If we get into an accident who is going to pay for it?
Rebecca: Gypsy cabs are insured ma.

Edna: I thought you said there would be a taxi on the street? And you didn’t answer my question. Who is Josh?

Rebecca: He is a guy that I’m seeing.

Edna: He’s a guy that you’re seeing. And you’re in love already?

Rebecca: I’ve been seeing him for six months.

Edna: You have a boyfriend and you don’t say anything about it? Don’t you think that’s a bit strange?

Rebecca: This is different.

Edna: Really?

Rebecca: This guy - Joshua, could be the one.

Edna: The ONE? Well, he’s got a Jewish name how bad could it be?

Rebecca: Mom he’s not Jewish - he’s so far from being Jewish.

Edna: You think after all these years I was expecting you to marry a Jewish man? We had a Jamaican steel band play for your Batmitzvah give me a break.

Rebecca: I’m not talking about that.

Edna: Well what are you talking about?

Rebecca: The problem is not that he isn’t Jewish.

Edna: Is he good to you?

Rebecca: Yes.

Edna: Do you have fun together?

Rebecca: Yes.

Edna: Does he like to listen as much as you like to talk?

Rebecca: Mom! He is white ok? The problem is that he’s white!

Edna: Rebecca, the person that you are closest to in the world is a white person - don’t forget that.

Rebecca: Mom are we really going to have this conversation?

Edna: You are also a Jew!

Rebecca: I know ma.

Edna: Part of you is white.

Rebecca: I spent my whole life doing this interracial thing - I’m not doing it again.

Edna: What is that supposed to mean?
Rebecca: You know what that means. I didn't want you to drop me off at school because all the kids would ask me if I was adopted.

Edna: Your father never should have asked you to make a choice.

Sade: Well he did, and I live my life and identify as a black person.

Edna: So because you identify as a black person, you're going to let this boy go? For an incredibly brilliant girl you don't think sometimes. Fourteen years I was married to your father - fourteen years. We did not divorce because he is black and I am white. We broke up because we could not communicate. You tell me you're worried because you want to marry someone after six months? You don't even know that boy. I guarantee you honey if you think that being of two different races is the biggest issue in your relationship that you don't know him well enough.

Rebecca: Mom this is why I didn't want to talk about it.

Edna: I want to support you honey but you is going to have to let me in. Six months is a long time.

Rebecca: I thought you said that six months wasn't long at all? I know that his being white should not be such a big issue, but it is.

Edna: Rebecca why not give it some time before making decisions? Why agonize over something when you're not even sure what it is?

Rebecca: I wonder where I learned that from? (She exits)

(Scene III) Sounds from a park are heard – children playing, a bus rolling by, etc. The lights rise on another part of the stage where Singley and Omar enter “the park”. They walk the perimeter of the stage to indicate walking through a park.

Omar: You haven't said anything since we left.

Singley: What would you like me to say?

Omar: "Hello", "how you doing?"

Singley: "Hello-

Omar: Never mind.

Singley: Zanni is glad you came to visit.

Omar: What about her mommy?

Singley: I'm glad too.

Omar: Michael is talking to me about working at his job - a messenger or something to start.

Singley: That's nice.

Omar: But when I finish with school I can probably move up in the company.

Singley: When you finish you'll just have an Associates degree.

Omar: So what?
Singley: I'm just saying.

Omar: If you have something to say to me then fucking say it.

Singley: Please don't curse around Zanni.

Omar: Why not? She can't understand it.

Singley: I don't want her to grow up hearing it.

Omar: Singley, Zanni is my child too. If I want to fucking curse I'll fucking curse.

Singley: Fine.

Omar: Look - can we just talk?

Singley: If we talk we fight. I'm a little tired of that, aren't you?

Omar: So things are gonna get better with some polite bullshit? That's going to make all our problems go away? I want to talk about you and Zanni moving in with me.

Singley: Move in with you? Why in the world would I move in with you? You lied to me. Ok? I had your child, based on a lie.

Omar: I wanted to tell you. There were so many times I wanted to tell you.

Singley: First Degree Murder, is not a detail you wait on telling your girl friend. Excuse me, mother of your child.

Omar: Do you think I'm proud of this shit? Do you think I planned my life like this?

Singley: If I had known I never would have slept with you.

Omar: That's bullshit! What kind of research were you doing?

Singley: Look, I need someone who is grown. Someone who can support me and my daughter, who understands the value of the truth.

Omar: You want the truth Singley? I stole cars, robbed houses, beat people for disrespecting me, and dealt drugs. It all happened before you came along Singley, before you. And I had five years to battle that shit out. 5 years to face every nigghah in the yard just like me. I knew I wasn't going back long before I met you. I decided that all on my own and you had nothing to do with that. Then you fall in love with me. I didn't make you come to me. I didn't force you down and beg to fuck you. If I told you I had done time you would have turned right on your ass and walked away.

Singley: So I'm supposed to open my arms and say I accept that you used to be a monster, and even though you lied to me about it, I accept your past.

Omar: I was afraid I would lose you.

Singley: If you love Zanni like you say you do, I would suggest that you start giving me money to take care of her REGULARLY. Not just when you have it.

Omar: One day, When I was 11, my mother came into my room and announced that my father was coming to take me out for ice cream. 11 years and I had never even heard my father's name mentioned. And then there he was. He asked me about school, what sports I liked. When he brought me home he said to me "Did you have a good time?" I nodded. Well whatever you do, he told me, "Keep our business, our business. Don't talk to nobody." And that was it. That was his idea of pressing upon me that he was my father. I went to school the next day and told everybody
how great my father was. But he never came around again, never called. Nothing. I want Zanni to know me.

(The lights dim. **Act I, Scene IV:** Josh's dorm room. This is in the same room as the living room of the women's apartment, only the furniture is rearranged. The lights rise on Josh writing in his notebook while eating his lunch; tomato soup and grilled cheese sandwich. Rebecca rings the buzzer)

**Josh:** Who is it?

**Rebecca:** It's me.

**Josh:** (he opens the door) Hey, didn't you just leave here?

**Rebecca:** Yeah.

**Josh:** What's wrong?

**Rebecca:** My mother. What are you doing?

**Josh:** I was writing a paper for class.

(He kisses her)

**Rebecca:** Umm. Tomato soup.

**Josh:** Maybe I could quit school and you could move in here. And we'll just order pizza until I run out of money, and we'll-

**Rebecca:** Make love all day.

**Josh:** That's a given.

**Rebecca:** And play *Road Rash*

**Josh:** and *Command and Conquer* (he begins getting up and shooting, running around the house.)

**Rebecca:** You are so stupid.

**Josh:** Yeah but you're over here. (He kisses her cheeks and neck, starting to take off her sweater)

**Rebecca:** (Putting her sweater back on) Don't we have a lecture tonight?

**Josh:** No it was moved to Tuesday night remember? Why are you acting weird?

**Rebecca:** I'm not acting weird.

**Josh:** Yes you are, what's up?

**Rebecca:** Nothing

**Josh:** You know I know it isn't nothing.

**Rebecca:** Do we have to talk about everything all the time?

**Josh:** That's my line.

**Rebecca:** Why don't we just chill for awhile.
Josh: I thought that's what we were doing? Ok that's cool. You want to go for a walk?

Rebecca: I want you to teach me how to rock climb.

Josh: Ok... I'm sure we can take a bus upstate in the next 35 seconds.

Rebecca: I'm serious. I'm tired of always doing the same things. You go all the time and you never invite me.

Josh: That's because Miss City Girl I was assuming you weren't interested. Ok. We'll go next weekend. But are you going to complain the whole time?

Rebecca: What?

Josh: "I'm too tired," "I have no upper arm strength," "I broke my nail."

Rebecca: I won't complain. I want to go.

Josh: (seducing her) It's not that difficult, as long as you're not afraid to stick your hands in the crevices, climbing the cracks. (Taking off his shirt) Our muscles will be pumped (flexing his chest muscles,) rippling in the sunlight, the sweat dripping down our backs. You know I'll have to help you into the harness and I'll ... belay you.

Rebecca: (Momentarily swayed) Oh yeah?

Josh: He nods, followed by a long slow kiss) Why don't we go to your place?

Rebecca: What?

Josh: You want to do something different. Let's go to your apartment.

Rebecca: My place?

Josh: Yes

Rebecca: Yeah, ok. I mean why do you want to go to my apartment?

Josh: You talk about everybody so much. I want to meet them.

Rebecca: You want to meet them?

Josh: Do you like repeating after me? Yes I want to meet them.

Rebecca: We'll go sometime this week.

Josh: Good (picks her up) Now I'm going to show you the first steps of rock climbing (he puts her on the wall)

Rebecca: (squirming) Josh put me down.

Josh: Just relax. (He kisses her. She relaxes just long enough for him to think that she is seduced. She squirms and wrestles him to the floor, pinning him for a brief moment)

Rebecca: I guess I don't have any upper body strength huh?

(Act I, Scene V Two days later. Sade is in the kitchen. There is plantain, rice, and stew present)

(Jumoke and Singley enter in from the front door)
Jumoke: (holding up a box of yam powder) All of the yams looked busted.

Sade: Perfect, I'm sure my mom will love that.

Jumoke: Don't tell her. Look what I got. (she holds up a shirt) $2.99 girl. Thrift store girl.

Sade: Are you gon' help me or what?

Jumoke: Yeah, yeah, yeah. (Putting her stuff away. Jumoke and Julietta begin setting the table.)

Julietta: Ask how crazy your friend was in the store (hanging up her coat)

Jumoke: I am a prudent shopper.

Julietta: Your girl tries on 17 shirts, picks one, then drags me back to the rack, to pull out the same shirt off the rack.

Jumoke: You never buy the shirt you tried on.

(Singley enters)

Sade: Where is Zanni?

Singley: I just put her down for a nap.

Sade: We're going to eat soon. And Omar's coming over.

Singley: What?

(The doorbell rings)

Sade: Look Singley Michael wanted to bring him what was I supposed to say?

(Singley exits to get Zanni)

(The doorbell rings. Sade gets the door. Sade's mother, Mrs. Ola, enters. She is a proud African woman and looks regal. She is dressed in Westernized style clothes made of African material.)

Mrs. Ola: Good afternoon.

Sade: Hi Mom.

Mrs. Ola: Folasade are you cooking?

Sade: Yes mom.

Jumoke: Good afternoon Ma (she hugs her)

Mrs. Ola: Pele. Good afternoon. You're a good girl you have manners. I just saw your mother this morning. Hello Julietta.

Julietta: Hello

Sade: Mom what are you doing here? You're not supposed to be here for an hour.

Mrs. Ola: What are you talking about I'm not supposed to be here? I was coming back from Chinatown you're on the
way so I stopped in. You didn’t mention anything about eating.

Sade: I wanted to surprise you.

Mrs. Ola: I’m surprised. Is that egusi soup?

Jumoke: And pounded yam.

Mrs. Ola: Ah -ah that is made from yam powder what are you talking about? Anyway I can’t stay-oo. I have my own stew cooking.

Sade: Mom I’m sure you can stay a little while.

Mrs. Ola: Folasade the time has gone. (Tapping her watch)

Sade: You’ve been talking about wanting to see the apartment for the last year.

Mrs. Ola: I stopped in because you are on the way. If you wanted me to come and see your apartment you would have asked me come a long time before now.

(Singley enters with Zanni on her back. Zanni is help by a large piece of African wrapped around Singley’s body.)

Mrs. Ola: Ah Zanni! You’re just in time for a story before I go.

(Music plays in the background, the lights dim, and dancer dances through the audience, representing the Odide bird in Mrs. Ola’s story. The dancer should be dancing out the first part of a three-part story. At this time the audience is temporarily taken out of realism, following the story through the dancer’s movements.)

Once upon a time,

Sade: Time, time,

Mrs. Ola: There was an Odide who was common in Iwo town. Everybody knew the Odide. She sang with the school children every morning. She fluttered around the market women when they sold their wares, and she kept company with the men in the farms. Although she had the most colorful, vibrant feathers, too many people did not pay attention. She was just an ordinary Odide who was always around. One day, Odide was tired of being ignored and she set off on a holiday. She flew for some time, until she came to a foreign land. When the Odide arrived, she hid in a jungle and took off her Odide feathers, placing them in several trees. Then she turned herself into a baby girl, for everyone to fawn about. And to this day, Odide is cherished beyond all measure in her new home.

Singley: Thank you.

Jumoke: Auntie Dupe, would you like to take some food home with you?

Sade: What kind of Nigerian takes food home with them?

Mrs. Ola: Are you talking to me?

Sade: Yes Moin. I want to talk to you.

(Julietta, Jumoke, Singley and Zanni exit)

Mrs. Ola: What is all this wahala? I call you every day.

Sade: And you don’t say anything. You call and talk about how Kemi still doesn’t know her way around New York, or sale prices, or the stupid television -
Mrs. Ola: Today I tried to talk to you about your cousin's wedding oh? You didn't want to talk about that. So I try and talk to you about the things you want to talk about.

Sade: What?

Mrs. Ola: You're interested in talking about things that don't matter. So, I try and accommodate you.

Sade: What makes you think that?

Mrs. Ola: Sade honestly, how many times in your life have you talked to me about the things that matter to you?

Sade: Mom I'm not a big talker. Ok, you know that. And anyway most of the time talking means you criticizing and me listening.

Mrs. Ola: Eh heh, so I should just close my mouth. (She walks away from her awkwardly)

Sade: Mom why are you moving like that?

Mrs. Ola: Sade you are irritating me.

Sade: Are you all right?

Mrs. Ola: I'm ok.

Sade: Mom, you're holding your side.

Mrs. Ola: Sade what would you like me to say to you? You want me to tell you that I can barely walk? That my side aches every day? You want me to tell you that I have cancer? That I have a lump the size of your fist in my breast?

Sade: Mom?

Mrs. Ola: If you bothered to come and see me, you might know something was wrong with me.

Sade: WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

Mrs. Ola: I am ill Sade. Folasade. I am very ill.

Sade: How long have you -

Mrs. Ola: How long have I been carrying this around? One year.

Sade: One year!

Mrs. Ola: Yes.

Sade: Mom, what have you been do-, does Dad know?

Mrs. Ola: He knows.

Sade: He knows. Was someone going to tell me?

Mrs. Ola: You didn't ask.

Sade: You are my mother.

Mrs. Ola: And you are my daughter, it took you one year to ask.
Sade: Concealing an illness is not a virtue mother.

Mrs. Ola: I didn't know that I was ill.

Sade: Oh Mom!

Mrs. Ola: I have had problems my whole life. My breasts have always been bumpy.

Sade: You're joking.

Mrs. Ola: Folasade!

Sade: Ok, ok. I'm sorry. When did you go and see someone?

Mrs. Ola: I went to the clinic a few months ago.

Sade: You're not talking about the clinic around the corner from us? You went there?

Mrs. Ola: Fola who has been raising you? You never asked me to see a doctor any time your whole life.

Sade: That's because you were never sick.

Mrs. Ola: When we first came to this country, eh? We just had to get by. There were African medical students, whom your father knew, who came around to advise me.

Sade: But mom growing up, I went to get check ups all the time for sports, camp-

Mrs. Ola: That was you.

Sade: Do you have insurance mom?

(Silence)

Do you have health insurance mom?

Mrs. Ola: No.

Sade: You've been living here for 25 years and have no insurance? This is ludicrous.

Mrs. Ola: Do you have health insurance?

Sade: No mom I don't.

Mrs. Ola: Well?

Sade: Well I don't have a job. When I get a full time job I'll get insurance through work.

Mrs. Ola: I see. And if something happens to you, does it matter if you're working or not working? I'm not working anymore anyway.

Sade: What?

Mrs. Ola: I sold everything from the shop a few weeks ago.

Sade: Did you think about talking it over with anyone?
Mrs. Ola: We need the money. We're going home.

Sade: Home...? (Realizing she means Nigeria.) No.

Mrs. Ola: Ah-ah! How can you be saying no?

Sade: No, absolutely not, no way, I'm not going.

Mrs. Ola: Folasade?

Sade: What did the doctor tell you to do?

Mrs. Ola: You know I don't like these doctors.

Sade: So you are going to diagnose yourself? Kyolic and Chinese ginseng are not going to help you now mom. What did the doctor say?

Mrs. Ola: The doctor told me to remove it.

Sade: The lump?

Mrs. Ola: Yes.

Sade: Can that be done?

Mrs. Ola: I don't know! Maybe. If they remove my breast, yes.

Sade: So you are going to have surgery?

Mrs. Ola: Of course I am not going to do that.

Sade: You want me to come with you, to Nigeria. So the village healer will come and look at you and tell you to drink some malaria leaves and you'll be ok.

Mrs. Ola: Folasade, you are disrespecting me.

Sade: I'm not going mom. I'm not going to 3,000 degree heat, and the mosquitoes, and the village. I'm not going where everyone can look at you and see something wrong and blame me. "Ah ah, look at little Folasade. You know her muthah had huh ovah theh, when she was stud-ee-ing. Modupe insists on raising huh ovah theh, because she is an American citizen and will do betah eef she goes to school ovah theh. Can you imagine?"

Mrs. Ola: Sade you are such a selfish girl. It is your responsibility to return with me.

Sade: It is my responsibility to tell you to listen to the doctor.

Mrs. Ola: Do you know why Americans have so many problems? Because they believe they can put asymmetry in their bodies, in their lives, and everything is going to be ok. I'm not having anything cut off of me do you understand? Me, I'm going back to my own country-oo.

Sade: Even if that means dying?

Mrs. Ola: Who's talking about dying? I'm just going back to my hometown.

Sade: Even now ma, after a whole year you're still not telling the truth.
Mrs. Ola: Stop thinking about yourself. (She begins to leave.) You should pack your things. I want to leave by next week.

Sade: For how long? (There is a silence.) I'm not going. I don't care what you say; I'm not going. I have a life here. I have friends. I have a life...

(Her mother looks at her, and walks out the front door.)

(Jumoke, Julietta, Singley, and Zanni enter.)

Julietta: We'll all pray for your mom.

Jumoke: Sade you know you have to go with her -

Sade: I'm not going anywhere.

Jumoke: You have to, she's your mother.

(Omar enters.)

Omar: Smells good in here! The door was open - what's up?

(Rebecca enters with Josh)

Rebecca: Hey everyone, I brought someone over for you all to meet.

Josh: Hi! (They all stare at him.)

Rebecca: He's white, not an alien. (Lights out.)

End of Act I

Intermission

Act II

(ACT II, Scene I lights up. Everyone is in the same positions)

Josh: Hello...

(After some time, with forced genuineness)

Omar: Hey - how you doing man?

Rebecca: Why is everybody staring? What's wrong?

Jumoke: This is not a good time Rebecca.

Sade: Why is this not a good time? (To Josh) My mother has cancer. She was just here to tell me that she is dying and wants me to go back with her to Nigeria and I won't go. Because of her traditional ideas she won't have surgery. She believes that God made us who we are and so we should all suffer for my mother's sake. Sounds barbaric and backward doesn't it? Would you like something to eat Josh?
Rebecca: Josh and I have to go to hear a lecture at school tonight. I just came home to change.

Sade: Well while you get ready we'll all take something to eat and get to know Josh.

Julietta: Sade?

Sade: What? We all have to eat don't we?

Josh: Sure - I don't mind.

Rebecca: (hesitating) I'll be right back (she exits to the bedroom).

Sade: So have a seat Josh. Have you ever eaten Nigerian food before?

Josh: Ah no, I haven't

Sade: You're in for a treat.

(Everyone is still staring at the absurdity of the situation. Slowly they begin to get seated around the table. Singley puts Zanni in her high chair.)

Julietta: So you're in Rebecca's program?

Josh: Ah, yeah.

Julietta: Do you do creative writing like she does?

Sade: You just asked him that.

Josh: I write science fiction.

Omar: What?

(The doorbell rings, Michael enters)

Michael: Hey ya'll, sorry I'm late.

Singley: This is Josh, Rebecca's friend.

Sade: You mean boyfriend.

(Everyone looks to him for an answer)

Josh: Boyfriend is probably right.

Julietta: We're just surprised we haven't met you before now.

Sade: Or heard about you.

Josh: I've heard a lot about all of you.

Michael: Are we going to eat or what?

Jumoke: Sit down, we'll eat.

Michael: I thought your mother was coming Sade?
Jumoke: Better yet - help me serve the food. (She ushers him out)

(Michael and Jumoke enter in and out of the kitchen, bringing in bowls with pounded yam, jollof rice, white rice, stew meat, plantain to the dining/living room area. Everyone else is around the table continuing to grill Josh.)

Omar: So you write about aliens, shit like that?

Josh: Sometimes.

Omar: Do you like Star Trek?

Josh: Yeah, I like Star Trek.

Omar: You know, a lot of people think that black people don't like Star Trek, but that's a myth.

Michael: (entering from the kitchen) I don't like Star Trek.

Singley: Well I like it.

Josh: I'm not like a big Star Trek fan -

Sade: Traditionally you eat yam and stew with your fingers.

Michael: Give him a fork girl! (To Josh) I'm eating it with a fork.

Sade: You probably want to start with the rice. (She puts it on his plate.)

Jumoke: (to Sade) I have an idea.

(Josh eats the rice and begins to cough)

Sade: It's spicy.

Jumoke: Your mother could move in here.

Sade: What?

Josh: What are these? They taste like fried bananas.

(Rebecca enters)


Sade: In Yoruba they're called do do. (To Jumoke) Clearly, you have lost your mind.

Singley: Are you from New York Josh?

Josh: No. I'm just here for school.

Omar: Where are you from?

Josh: Indiana.

Jumoke: Oh boy.
Omar: You know Star Wars is my favorite movie.
Josh: Mine too

Omar: Good and evil man, it's all a struggle of good and evil
Josh: And conspiracies.

Rebecca: We're going to be late Josh.

Omar: You mean how the government has us under one big set up?
Josh: Exactly, big brother is everywhere.

Omar: See that's what I'm talking about! Ya'll need to have white people up in this crib more often.

Josh: Even this whole Alien thing. It's just the government’s attempt to mislead us. We have big huge satellite dishes, computers, all kinds of sensitizing equipment to see what’s out there. But rather than looking to outer space we should be looking under our feet. The ocean covers almost of the planet and we've never touched ocean floor. The people who come back from alien abductions - the creatures they refer to are consistently nocturnal in nature. Where else could extraterrestrial life exist but the ocean?

(Everyone stares)

Michael: This white boy is bugged out.
Rebecca: Josh, we really, really need to go.
Julietta: let the man eat Rebecca.

Rebecca: We're going to be late.

Jumoke: Since when have you been on time someplace?
Josh: It was nice to meet all of you. And thank you for dinner.
Sade: What Rebecca let you eat of it.
Josh: I'm sorry about your mother. (Josh and Sade share a beat)

Omar: (imitating a Star Wars Character he says to Josh) Your destiny lies upon a different path than mine.
Rebecca: I'll be home right after the lecture.

(They exit)

Sade: How could you ask me about my mother moving in when Josh is here?

Jumoke (sitting down): Oh so Josh is your boy now?

Michael: Why would Sade’s mother move in here?

Jumoke: I can't believe Rebecca had the nerve to bring that white boy over here.

Singley: Well now we know why she never brought him by before.
Jumoke: Miss black nationalist herself. I just can't believe it.

Julietta: You could have at least talked to him.

Jumoke: And say what? "I'm sure you're a nice guy but Rebecca doesn't know what she wants?" "Actually she does know what she wants and you're not it."
"To tell you the truth we're all a bunch of racists and don't believe in interracial dating even though Rebecca is interracial herself."

Singley: Aren't you blowing it out of proportion?

Jumoke: Rebecca and I were roommates for four years at Spelman College. She never thought of herself as white. Jewish: yes, white no.

Michael: She had that look.

Jumoke: What look?

Michael: The lock-down look.

Omar: Hmm hmm, I saw it too.

Julietta: You think Rebecca could marry a white guy?

Singley: Apparently.

Jumoke: Why are you all tripping? He was just somebody she brought over here.

Michael: Jumoke relax. When you are looking to get married, and I know you all have thought about it, you have to find someone who really really wants to be with you. Not just somebody you're in love with, who you like a lot, soul mate yaddee yaddee yada, but someone who is ready to work. If Josh is trying to be there for Rebecca, like that, then who cares if he's white?

Jumoke: And he's responsible, and trying to marry her - you know this from our big dinner meeting?

Omar: He has that Jedi knight thing working for him.

Sade: I don't really care what she does, actually.

Singley: You really don't care too much about other people at all do you?

(Silence. Sade looks at her and leaves)

Michael: What's going on?

Julietta: Singley that wasn't necessary.

Jumoke: Singley's right.

Julietta: You didn't ask any of us how we felt about Sade's mom moving in here.

Jumoke: You know damn well that if Sade isn't going to go with her to Nigeria, then she needs to care for her here.

Michael: Could someone please tell me what's going on?

Julietta: I have to go meet Christos. You can't force Sade to do something she doesn't want to do.
(She exits out the front door)

**Singly:** Suzanne is falling asleep. I’m putting her down. (Omar follows her and they exit.)

**Michael:** What is wrong with Sade’s mother?

**Jumoke:** She has cancer. And She wants Sade to go with her to Nigeria.

(Rising from the table goes to the door to call her)

**Michael:** Sade? Folasade wa (no response) Wa! (Sade reluctantly comes)

**Sade:** So you’re my big brother now?

**Michael:** Don’t forget who you are.

**Sade:** Go to hell Michael.

**Michael:** You are not an American!

**Sade:** I grew up in this fucking country. I don’t like my mother. My mother doesn’t like me. How do you expect that she can live here and I can take care of her?

**Jumoke:** We’ll all help you.

**Sade:** Help me do what? Clean up after a dead person?

**Michael:** Fola what is wrong with you?

**Sade:** What is wrong with you all? My mother could have surgery and live.

**Michael:** On the day my family arrived here we went to a restaurant. The waitress came to the table and asked me what we would like. I was a small boy, small, small. I looked up at her and asked "do you sell Coca Cola in this country?" She laughed and had the bus boy bring out a giant case of it, just to show me. My father turned to me and said, "What you can find at home, you can find here."

**Sade:** I’m not prepared for this Michael.

**Michael:** You are prepared.

**Act II, Scene II.** Rebecca and Josh are walking outside to the subway station. This dialogue overlaps with the last scene

**Josh:** Rebecca what was that all about?

**Rebecca:** I’m sorry you had to enter into all of that. But welcome to the wonderful world of black people. Everybody’s business becomes your business.

**Josh:** That’s not what I mean. Nobody even knew who I was.

**Rebecca:** Yes they did.

**Josh:** No they didn’t. Why are you lying?

**Rebecca:** I’m not lying. You called yesterday and said to Sade on the phone “this is Josh.”
Josh: So you sound annoyed about that.

Rebecca: I'm not annoyed, I'm just saying that people have heard about you before now. How could you have been in New York for over a year and never eaten plantain?

Josh: Is there something wrong in that? You want to add that to your little book?

Rebecca: My little book?

Josh: Your book of test questions, the one's I pass or don't pass, the answers you keep and record in your head. So how am I doing today? Am I passing or failing?

Rebecca: Why are you getting so upset? We're on our way to school; you just met my friends. So it was a little awkward so what?

Josh: A little awkward? They taught me to eat a meal like I was a child. This is bullshit. Forget this lecture, I'm going home.

Rebecca: Why?

Josh: I'm not going to play this little game with you Rebecca. If you want to talk to me about something real TALK. This conversation is wasting my time.

Rebecca: Josh.

Josh: What?

Rebecca: I have a problem with you being white.

Josh: No shit Rebecca, what would you like me to do about it?

Rebecca: Nothing, just listen. You are great ok? You have done everything right. But I wasn't expecting to fall in love with someone white. Being interracial is who I am. I wouldn't change that. But I spent a long time trying to prove that I was black enough, Jewish enough, I just can't go through that with children, all over again.

Josh: So then what are we doing Rebecca? You know how I feel about you. You are who you are, I am who I am, we proceed with our lives together, or we don't.

Rebecca: This is a lot more complicated than you think. Have you even been around black people before me?

Josh: You don't know me Rebecca.

Rebecca: What's there to know? You grew up on a farm with a really, really nice white family. Your friends were all really nice white kids who came from really nice white families. You grew up, you decided you wanted to see the world so you come to New York - to write. And what do you write about? UFO's, conspiracy theories, things that aren't real.

Josh: Why are you distorting everything? My grandparents owned the farm; I didn't grow up there. I grew up in Indianapolis. I thought you liked hearing about the farm?

Rebecca: Don't you see how different we are?

Josh: Nobody is denying that - but you are obsessed with it.

Rebecca: Because I don't rush to tell all my friends and family about you?
Josh: Because all you do is talk Rebecca, and over analyze. You don't make choices.

Rebecca: I'm with you aren't I?

Josh: I'm going home.

Rebecca: Josh, come on. I'm sorry-

Josh: I'll see you later.

(Act II scene III: Following the previous scene, we hear sounds indicating a restaurant. The lights rise on a small area downstage. Christos, Julietta's boyfriend is sitting at a bar drinking a mixed drink.)

Christos: Hola momi (they kiss)

Julietta: Hola Christos. Como esta?

Christos: Bien. Good. (Entering)

Julietta: I was surprised you wanted to come down here.

Christos: You've been talking about this restaurant for awhile, I figured I'd try it. Do you want something?

Julietta: I already ate.

Christos: Your mother has been asking about you.

Julietta: Yeah? Did you tell her I'm not coming home?

Christos: Nobody asked you about coming home, I'm just wondering why you don't spend any time in the neighborhood.

Julietta: Because I don't want to be there I've told you that.

Christos: Mommy loved the cake.

Julietta: Chris what are we doing here?

Christos: My niece, Elena was so happy to see you.

Julietta: You haven't called me in two weeks and then after the party today you beg to come meet me downtown? You hate Brooklyn.

Christos: I don't hate Brooklyn.

Julietta: Yes you do.

Christos: No I don't. I just don't see why you gotta move all the way down here. You have a home. You have a family; you gotta place to live.

Julietta: I got a room that I share with two little sisters, and a grandmother that I tuck in at night. I got a bathroom, and a kitchen, and an ugly sitting room that I'm supposed to clean all the time.

Christos: What about your brother? Your brother helps.
Julietta: My brother has his own family to worry about.

Christos: Your mother misses you.

Julietta: My mother can hire a baby-sitter, house cleaner, and cook.

Christos: You know she can't do that.

Julietta: Then that's her problem. I was an honor student; I took dancing lessons for 8 years -- full scholarship at American Ballet Theater because I was that good. And then mommy fell apart and I had to give everything up. I had to come home every day after school and watch all the kids; I had to stop dancing. And now what do I got? I don't got nothing. I don't have a degree; I don't have any plans.

Christos: You used to go to church every Sunday. And then you used to come over and make Arroz con Pollo; we'd go to the movies --

Julietta: Are you listening to me at all? Ok Chris. I want to know what we're doing here?

Christos: I can't do this anymore.

Julietta: Do what?

Christos: This, us - like this. (pointing to both of them.)

Julietta: So this it Chris. You're breaking up with me? We've known each other since we were 12 years old this is the best you could do huh? In a restaurant?

Christos: You're the one who never comes around anymore.

Julietta: And why should I come home Christos?

Christos: Hey this is not my fault.

Julietta: You know what, you're right Chris. You're totally right. Because you don't want me. You just want me to come home and take care of everybody. And you know what? I would have done it, I would have married you, and had your kids, and cooked for everybody, even now if you had asked me.

Christos: Well I'm asking you. Your family needs you.

Julietta: But you don't right? You come all the way down here for my family?

Christos: I don't know what's happened to you Julietta, but I am trying to help you. One day you are going to look back at this time and what you'll see is someone who left her family.

Julietta: I live with people who care about me and respect me and want me to be happy. My friends don't expect me to clean up after them.

Christos: All of these years our families have been waiting for us to get together-


Christos: My life is finally coming together, I'm managing at the Bodega... Now is the time for us. But we can't do it with you living all the way down here.

Julietta: Well I'm about to be a lot farther.
Christos: What do you mean?

Julietta: I mean I'm going away. To Santo Domingo.

Christos: (laughing) what?

Julietta: That's right. In two weeks, I'm going.

Christos: What are you going to find your father there?

Julietta: Maybe. I'm going with my church, to do missionary work.

Christos: With that black church of yours? (Laughing more) do they even speak Spanish?

(Julietta getting up)

Hey, hey where you going?

(She tries to exit. He physically blocks her.)

Hey what do I tell you mother?

Julietta: Whatever you want

Christos: Don't do this Julietta. Please.

Julietta: Goodbye Christos. (She exits)

(ACT II, SCENE IV The living room in the apartment. Mrs. Ola is lying on the couch in the middle of the room. Sade enters)

Mrs. Ola: Where were you, I've been waiting for you all day.

Sade: I'm sorry mom, I got here as soon as I could.

(Pause)

Mom did you take a shower today.

Mrs. Ola: No.

Sade: How long are you going to refuse to bathe?

Mrs. Ola: I told you I'll wash when I go home.

Sade: Mother...

Mrs. Ola: I don't like showers. I prefer baths.

(Sade begins fumbling with the TV set)

Leave it.

Sade: Ok.

Mrs. Ola: I hate it here. I want to go home.
Sade: Then go home.

Mrs. Ola: If we were in Nigeria, you would have plenty of people to help you.

Sade: Well, we're not in Nigeria.

Mrs. Ola: Please get me some water.

(Sade reluctantly, gets her mother a glass of water from the refrigerator)

Mrs. Ola: Can you please put it in a different glass? I don't like those glasses

(Sade pours it into another glass)

Sade can you-

Sade: Can you please get whatever you need yourself?

Mrs. Ola: How can I do that when I am in this much pain.

Sade: Mom it's 4:00. Why don't you watch Oprah?

Mrs. Ola: Because I am not interested.

Sade: Oprah is at a whole new level now. They have this Remembering Your Spirit thing.

Mrs. Ola: Stop talking to me about Oprah, ah.

(Sade begins to leave)

Where are you going?

Folasade: Out.

Mrs. Ola: Are you a man?

Sade: What?

Mrs. Ola: "I'm going out" is what men say when they don't want to deal with you. Then they walk out the door.

Sade: What are you talking about mom? You're living in my apartment. I wait on you hand and foot.

Mrs. Ola: It's a lie. I see Jumoke more than you.

Sade: One of us has to work. I am doing the best I can.

Mrs. Ola: Well it is not enough.

Sade: Mom, women in Nigeria, do you know where they go when they get breast cancer?

Mrs. Ola: If you don't want me to stay here, then just come out and say it. Ah - Fola (clutching her side from pain.)

Sade: They go to the hospital. You had me late in life; you never got health insurance, you decided to live in this country. Those were the choices you made. If you went back in time you would have made the same choices because you thought you were doing the right thing - even when you were doing the wrong thing.
Mrs. Ola: I am still your mother Folasade! You don’t come here and tell me about what I’ve done wrong in my life.

Sade: I want you to live mom.

Mrs. Ola: I didn’t ask for breast cancer. It is what God gave me. This life is transitory.

Sade: You can be afraid mother. You can have chemotherapy and a mastectomy and face yourself afraid. You have to go to the hospital.

Mrs. Ola: No! I won't go! I won't (throwing a tantrum she falls to the floor)

Sade: Mom! (Helping her off the floor)

Mrs. Ola: (clutching her wildly) I’m afraid of giving you this disease.

Sade: You have to get up mom. You have to get up. (Helping her)

Mrs. Ola: I have poisoned you.

Sade: No. You raised a fighter mother. Because you are a fighter. Please mother, please have the surgery.

Mrs. Ola: There is no guarantee the cancer won’t come back even if I have it.

Sade: (Holding her mother) It doesn’t matter. You’ve got to fight mom. Fight. Come on. I’ll take you to bed (she struggles to help her up and walks with her to the door.)

Mrs. Ola: I’ll manage it. (she gently pulls away.) When you were a small girl I always told you stories of birds, that could fly away. (She exits.)

(Sade enters the kitchen, flopping down in a chair from exhaustion. Jumoke enters from outside with groceries.)

Jumoke: I got some things for you and your mom. (Taking items out of a bag) Sweet potatoes, soy milk, oh and these are for you to read (she spreads breast cancer information pamphlets out on the table.)

Sade: I’m going to that new club for a drink. Do you want to come?

Jumoke: What about your mother?

Sade: She’s sleeping.

Jumoke: Sade-

Sade: Are you coming or not?

(Jumoke reluctantly follows her. They exit.)

(Mrs. Ola peeks out of her bedroom. She notices no one is around, and quietly limps out the front door.)

(ACT II, SCENE V. Singley enters from her bedroom; she gets out a quart of ice cream and begins eating at the table. Sitting at the kitchen table eating ice cream out of the carton. Julietta enters from the front door.)

Julietta: Hey. Anybody else home?

Singley: Mrs. Ola and Zanni are sleeping. Jumoke and Sade went out I think. How is Chris?

Julietta: Great. We broke up.
Singly: What?

Julietta: I told him I was leaving for the Dominican Republic.

Singly: Julietta really? Are you really going?

Julietta: No. I don’t know. I was trying to shock him.

Singly: What made you say you were going?

Julietta: My church is doing a mission outreach. Of all places, they’re going to the Dominican Republic. I could be useful to them, as a translator.

Singly: Oh Julietta why don’t you go?

Julietta: What are you kidding? My mother would have a heart attack. She thinks she’s done this great thing by bringing us over here.

Singly: Don’t you miss it?

Julietta: I don’t ever think about it really. And then the last couple of weeks, ever since they made the announcement, I’ve been having dreams about it.

Singly: I think you should go.

Julietta: I’m not going to the Dominican Republic.

Singly: Why?

Julietta: Because it costs money.

Singly: So?

Julietta: So I don’t have it.

Singly: Ask the church for it.

Julietta: Singley!

Singly: What? Look if I had a chance to travel to another country right now don’t you think I’d take it?

Julietta: It’s just not something I’ve really thought about.

Singly: Do you want to go to Santo Domingo?

Julietta: Yes.

Singly: Then go.

Julietta: I’ll think about it.

Singly: Julietta...

Julietta: I said I’d think about it. You know this is the first time I haven’t seen you with Zanni in awhile. You look pretty good without a baby (she laughs and notices that Singley isn’t laughing) Hey chica, I was just kidding.
Singly: I know. I know. Without her who am I?

Julietta: You can't think that way Singly.

Singly: Why can't I? Julietta you can come and go here whenever you like, you're not tied to anybody the way I am. The only person you're responsible for is yourself.

Julietta: Who do you think watched my brother's and sisters growing up? My mother was working, my brother was in and out of the house. I was the one who was there all the time. Me. I accepted being poor and taking care of other people. Mira! I know what it means to have nothing momi, don't tell me what I don't know.

Singly: But you left!

Julietta: That's right I left! Because I was being taken advantage of. And don't act like you can't leave either Singly. I don't care if Zanni is your kid. You choose to take care of her and that's good. But Omar is here, Omar has offered to help.

Singly: I carry this fear around with me day to day to work, on the subway. In between the baby and I. I look at her and I want to say this is where your father and I are going. But I don't know where we are going. And then I think, if I could just start over - because this is not the idea I was working towards. But I can't because Zanni is here. Zanni is on my mind constantly and my vision of the world - cooking, walking in the park, the fish - do you hear the way I talk to the fish? I was this person before she came. Now she's here. And there is no disappearing, no starting over.

Julietta: God is helping you.

Singly: Please don't tell me that. God is throwing me some crackers, and I'm supposed to dive for them.

Julietta: You wake up every day and you raise your daughter. Despite your fears, and your confusion. You do it and you live. Sometimes your life has to get worse for it to get better.

(Jumoke and Sade enter from the front door)

Singly: Where did ya'll go?

Sade: To that new joint on Dekalb. People were looking at each other so hard it felt like we needed to have a sign - 5, 7, 10+

Jumoke: When you asked the bouncer "Where do all the ugly black people go?" I knew it was time to leave.

Sade: I was having a conversation with the bouncer, whose name is Eric by the way, until you busted it up with your impatient ass.

Jumoke: Girl why are you trying to talk to a bouncer? The man was dogging a piece of chicken in your face, no napkin, no plate and you're up in there trying to look cute.

Julietta: Chris dumped me.

Jumoke: That's good girl.

Sade: That was one useless dude.

Julietta: Could I get a little sympathy? I love him.

Jumoke: No you don't.
Julietta: Yes I do.

Jumoke: No Julietta you don’t. You just went out with him because your mother and your brother wanted you too.

Julietta: You know it’s hard to find the right guy.

Jumoke: Yeah, and?

Julietta: I thought it was going to work for Chris and I.

Jumoke: Look he told you tonight this was over right? Well honestly when did you know it was over?

Julietta: ok... being honest, I guess a few weeks ago.

Jumoke: No, being honest, four years ago, date ONE, when he walked you home and you shut the door and you said thank you, good night and good bye. And then you called him the next day why I don’t know.

Jumoke: Because ... I thought - it made sense at the time.

Jumoke: Girl, if Chris was in a movie, with a whole bunch of extras, he’d just be one of the motherfuckers.

(Rebecca enters, clearly upset and downtrodden)

Rebecca: Hey everybody.

Jumoke: Well look who found her way home.

Rebecca: I’m going to sleep. Sade how is your mother doing?

Jumoke: Oh now you’re concerned?

Rebecca: What are you so mad about?

Jumoke: I ain’t mad. But I thought we made some progress around here. I thought we had grown some, and listened to ourselves, and followed our own advice?

Rebecca: What are you talking about?

Jumoke: See ya’ll weren’t here for the last phase of Rebecca’s life. The I – CAN- ONLY – BE – WITH – BLACK – PEOPLE, the “I want black children.” News flash girl- white man means white people. Where have you been the last month? Not here. You’ve been with this man so much you’ve virtually dropped everything else. Pretty soon girl you’ll be going to Grateful Dead concerts.

Sade: And wearing those ugly ass sandals, you know they all wear the same sandals.

Jumoke: He’s got a white family did you think of that? And how do they feel about him bringing home a black girl. Even if his family doesn’t care that you’re black, fine. You’ll still be spending all major holidays with a bunch of white people, which by the way you don’t even celebrate Super Jew, and then what? Eventually he or someone he’s close to will say something stupid and whack about black people, and there you’ll be. And what will you say with your interracial self who doesn’t look black to them anyway?

Rebecca: What would you suggest Jumoke? That I sit around and wait for Mr. Grant Qtip Robeson Hill to sail through the door. Or something smaller, some kind of Love Jones hard working entrepreneurial banker lawyer black man who plays basketball with Omar and Mike and can speak to all kinds of people and appreciates my writing? This is the man that we’ve been waiting on. And it is this man, every last one of them, who’s disappointed me. Who started this theory? This black man image making machine? I don’t know why all of us are still believing in this
fantasy and pasting it on everybody who looks like that but doesn’t act like that. And then we all get together and talk about how we don’t have time to waste on some Negro who can’t even handle the basic shit. Although apparently we do have time to keep going for it again, and again, and again. How is it that this dope black woman sense of self works in reverse? The more dope you are, the more you think the somebody you want should not want you, so you get more dope to justify why what you’re getting is so fucked up. I love someone, who isn’t black. But his not being things will never be as significant as the fact that things change. People change.

Jumoke: I just don’t get this. I don’t get it.

Singley: You all are so dramatic. Jumoke what is it that you don’t get? They’re in the same program, he’s a nice guy, and I’m sure the man can probably ...

Sade: Fuck.

Singley: She loves him, so what? Anyway-

Julietta: Anyway I have more news. I’m going to the Dominican Republic for six months.

Singley: All right girl!

Jumoke: Six months? What about the rent?

Singley: We’ll sublet.

Jumoke: Why are you going to the Dominican Republic?

Julietta: I’m going to work for the church.

Jumoke: Oh that’s what they need you to do over there? All the problems they’re having and you’re going to help by introducing folks to Jesus.

(The phone rings)

Jumoke: Is there no peace ever? (To Sade) Did you give Mr. Finger licking good our phone number? Who is calling at 3:00 in the morning? Hello? (Her voice changes) Yes, yes, hold on. Sade it’s the police.

Sade: (Answering the telephone) Hello. What? No, that can’t be. (The officer on the other line has told her that her mother is dead. She drops the phone) Mom! (She exits to the bedroom. Stunned to find her mother missing, Sade begins to look around the apartment)

Jumoke: Sade what’s going on?

Sade: (Searching frantically) Mom? Mom where are you? Singley. Where did my mother go?

Singley: I thought she was sleeping....

Sade: Mom! Come out! Come out! Where are you?

(Jumoke picks up the phone)

Jumoke: Hello? Yes, Yes, Thank you. We’ll be right there.

Sade: Mom! Mom! (She begins crying. And drops to her knees) I KILLED MY MOTHER, I KILLED MY MOTHER.

Jumoke: (going to her) Lord please in this time of confusion, In this time of pain and fear show this girl the way.

Jumoke: Sade?
Julietta: Look on Sade Lord, give her the strength, spatter her with the blood of Jesus, and take care of her.

(Sade continues to weep uncontrollably, shaking her head)

Julietta: Hallelujah Lord! Hallelujah! You have Taken Sade’s mother to a place of triumph and forgiveness. Holy Spirit, we welcome you in this room. (Julietta spreads Sade’s arms up to God) We open ourselves to your great healing. Glory! Glory! I know you will heal her Lord, I know you will heal her.

Sade: Don’t leave me God. Don’t leave me.

(Black out)

(Act II. Scene VI The apartment, later that night. Josh knocks at the door)

Rebecca: Josh...

Josh: Hi, what’s up?

Rebecca: What are you doing here?

Josh: Can I come in?

Rebecca: (she lets him in and he walks straight into the living room.) Josh it’s really late and-

Josh: I’m leaving town. I spoke to Professor Kurlick. I am officially on leave from school.

Rebecca: The semester just started.

Josh: I know. Better to take off now than two weeks from now.

Rebecca: Where are you going?

Josh: Ice climbing. In Colorado. My brother and I are going.

Rebecca: Ice climbing? For how long?

Josh: I don’t know. For the winter.

Rebecca: You’re going to climb in sub-zero weather?

Josh: That’s right.

Rebecca: Did I miss something?

Josh: Ice climbing is something I’ve always wanted to do.

Rebecca: I thought coming to Columbia was what you always wanted to do?

Josh: It will be here when I get back.

Rebecca: This is not the way we do things.

Josh: How do we do things?

Rebecca: We talk. We sit down and we talk. Why didn’t you even ask me how I felt about it?
Josh: Because honestly I knew you would go on and on about it.

Rebecca: And what about our relationship? Am I supposed to wait for you?

Josh: I don't know.

Rebecca: Am I supposed to see other people?

Josh: I don't know. You make your own decisions.

Rebecca: Josh! We've been arguing some but you never said anything about leaving.

Josh: I want to go climbing Rebecca. And I want to write - essays, short stories, while I'm gone.

Rebecca: Ohhhh... because no one has ever disappeared from life to write about it before right?

Josh: Look Rebecca I'm not doing this to hurt you. Ever since we started you haven't known whether or not you were going to break up with me the next day.

Rebecca: I was wrong and I'm sorry. Can I please be given a chance?

Josh: I have to go.

Rebecca: Why?

Josh: Because this is something that I know I want.

Rebecca: And what about me? I thought you wanted me?

Josh: I do want you. I also have to live my life. I am a writer Rebecca.

Rebecca: You don't just walk away after all of the energy we've put in trying to make it work.

Josh: I know this is going to be hard for you to understand. But this is for me.

Rebecca: You're going to meet someone, I know it.

Josh: I'm sure they'll be lots of women in the Colorado Rockies... in the snow.

Rebecca: I've seen your stupid climber magazines. You'll run out of water somewhere or not be able to start a fire. Then some woman who's 35 but looks like she's 16, with her perfect body and blond hair will come and rescue you.

Josh: You have some imagination.

Rebecca: It's not funny.

Josh: I love you Rebecca.

Rebecca: You know, many guys would kill to be with me.

Josh: I would kill to be with you.

Rebecca: Josh please don't go, please. We just started.
Josh: This is something I need to do.

Rebecca: You are really hurting me. I've gone through so much trying to believe in us, trying to convince other people to believe in us. And then you decide to leave. Because it is convenient. Because it's what you want to do. And the best you can give me is "I don't know." "I don't know when I'm coming back," "I don't know if we'll stay together." I miss you when you're not with me now. How am I supposed to handle it if you're across the country?

Josh: I don't know what to tell you to do Rebecca.

Rebecca: Get out! (She stares at him until he lets himself out.)

(Act II, Scene VII: The apartment. The lights rise. It is a few hours later. Singley is up with Zanni, Sade enters. They sit across from each other for a long time not saying anything.)

Sade: I would watch them come like earthquakes bubbling at the surface. My mother's eyes would wince and her temple would beat forward. And then she would just walk away. And all of her anger would fall over me. I would scream, throw things, and cry. And she would pretend I wasn't even there. How very UN-African I was. Can you imagine? Me the American girl ashamed of my sudden UN-Africaness.

Singley: Sade I am sorry about what I said that night at dinner. About you not caring about anyone. I was thinking about what I would do, if after all I have done for Zanni-

Sade: She wasn't there for you?

Singley: Children are born free.

Sade: No they are not.

Singley: When you come back, I'll have moved out.

Sade: Where are you going.

Singley: I'm moving in with Omar.

Sade: What changed your mind?

Singley: Omar is Zanni's father. And I love him.

Sade: I think you're making the right choice.

Singley: Zanni knows something is wrong, that's why she can't sleep. Would you like to hold her?

Sade: No.

Singley: Well I have to go to the bathroom - just for a minute?

(Sade reluctantly takes Zanni. She stands up rocking her. Again the music begins and we see the dancer enacting the second part of this folk tale.)

Sade: Once upon a time (time, time) there was an Odide Bird, disguised as a little girl. Because she was never happy she went to the other side of the world seeking adventures. In all her travels she learned many stories in many different languages. The people of Odide's hometown missed her greatly. They were sorry they had neglected her. But they were not surprised. One who knows English never dies at home.

(The car horn is heard.)
(Act II, Scene VIII It is again Sunday morning. Jumoke is in the living room reading. Michael enters from the outside, not seeing Jumoke, he is doing his best to silently sneak in.)

Jumoke: Michael what are you doing here?
(Michael jumps.)

Michael: Girl don’t scare me like that!

Jumoke: It’s 8:00 in the morning.

Michael: That’s right why are you even awake?

Jumoke: It’s my house. Why are you awake?

Michael: I’ve been up girl, I have a toddler remember? I need some eggs.

Jumoke: You couldn’t go to the store?

Michael: I was out walking and I landed here. Did Sade leave?

Jumoke: Yeah last night.

Jumoke: Michael, things are really a mess.

Michael: What’s up?

Jumoke: Sade lost her mother and now is gone ’til who knows when. Julietta announced that she’s going to the Dominican Republic as a missionary. Singly finally decided to move in with Omar, and Rebecca, I don’t even know who Rebecca is anymore.

Michael: Why don’t you know Rebecca?

Jumoke: This whole thing with her dating a white dude just has me tripped out.

Michael: Jumoke why are you so worried about other people’s choices?

Jumoke: I love Fort Greene. For all its problems I still belong here. I love this apartment, and that I live down the street from my school. I love second graders and I teaching black children. I love that parents ask me if their children will learn about their culture in my class. (Pointing out the window.) I love going to that Bodega every morning for coffee and to get my meat pie for lunch.

Michael: That’s good.

Jumoke: So why does everybody have to leave?

Michael: People come back. Better than before when they were missing something.

(the doorbell rings. Jumoke goes to answer it.)

Edna: Good morning honey. Good morning Michael.

Jumoke: I think Rebecca is still sleeping.

(Rebecca enters from the bedroom wearing a bathrobe.)
Michael: Jumoke you want to come over to eat?

Jumoke: Sure Mike. Bye Edna. (She turns from Rebecca without speaking to her.)

Michael: Good morning Rebecca. Bye Edna. (Michael and Jumoke exit out the front door.)

Edna: Come on Mopey. We still have time to make morning services.

Rebecca: I'm not going to temple ma.

Edna: Rebecca you can't stay depressed forever.

Rebecca: I'll come by for dinner Ok?

Edna: Good because your Uncle Al is already drinking to get ready. He's talking about planting a tree in the front of the building.

Rebecca: Where?

Edna: I explained to him that concrete is not the best fertilizer for trees. Your father is trying to tell him he'll have to get a permit from the city.

Rebecca: Dad?

Edna: Yes. He's at home with your with your uncle. Last night I was thinking about the holiday. And I went to see your father. I told him I forgave him for not being the man I wanted him to be. For not being the person I had hoped for. I told him I was sorry for being angry with him all these years. Angry for all the times he chose to stay at work than come home, for being hard on you and your sister, for never letting me be who I really was. I told him I would never regret marrying him because he brought me the most beautiful girls in the whole world. He said L'Shana Tovah. After all these years, he still never forgets the high holy days. And he told me, that he would always be there for me if I ever really, really needed him. After all, he did tell me, and our families, and God that I was his wife, and he my husband. I spent a long time not trusting him, not trusting myself. I figure I'm through with that for the New Year.

Rebecca: I'm so glad it only took you 18 years to work out your differences.

Edna: The point is, we work them out little by little.

Rebecca: Josh is gone and it's my fault.

Edna: Is that what he told you?

Rebecca: No.

Edna: So why is his going your fault?

Rebecca: All of that craziness. Asking him to be something that he wasn't.

Edna: When did you ask him to be something he wasn't?

Rebecca: It was implied. I was never satisfied you know?

Edna: I know.

Rebecca: Do you know what the worst part of it is? I had been praying to God for him to leave. Because then I
wouldn’t have to worry about this anymore, and feel afraid anymore, of making the wrong decision, of ending up alone, of making the same mistakes that you made, and Dad made, and my roommates are making. And then when he told me he was leaving all I wanted was for him to say “Rebecca come with me.” He didn’t even ask me to wait for him. So I got my wish. He’s gone. And here I am alone again.

Rebecca: Is that what you think you are Rebecca? Alone? If Josh comes back you’ll be happy. If Josh doesn’t come back, you’ll be happy. It’s a good time to be a Jew.

Rebecca: Of course ma. It’s always good to be Jewish when your life is falling apart.

Edna: Hey think of your ancestors roaming the deserts for 40 years. You think they didn’t have any questions about where they were going?

Rebecca: They had Moses.

Edna: Oh you were there? What’s the matter with you? You think you came from nothing? You think this is hard with you and Josh? You did not come from nothing. You think my father had any idea how he was going to get through another minute in Auschwitz? Maybe my mother didn’t know how she could survive one day without him. And you are here to tell me that she did. This, with you and Josh, is not that bad. We come from a people that have survived much, much worse. (Pause.) Dianu. Trust your life Rebecca.

Rebecca: I’m not feeling too trusting right now.

Edna: That’s ok. You can eat for now.

Rebecca: Did you make Kugel?

Edna: Of course I made kugel. And brisket that’s drying out as we speak. Come on I’ll help you get dressed. The Rabbi will be happy to see you.

(They exit to the bedrooms)

(The lights dim and then raise again to indicate the passage of time. Act II, Scene X. Singley is sitting in the kitchen with Omar. The doorkell. Singley opens the door and Omar enters. He sees her suitcase and immediately goes to get it. He gathers the rest of her things. Singley doesn’t move.)

Omar: Come on.

Singley: I can’t. I can’t go.

Omar: Singley, my brother is in the car waiting for us.

Singley: I’m going back home. I called my parents this morning.

Omar: You’re going to New Jersey?

Singley: Temporarily.

Omar: Then why did you have me come all the way over here?

Singley: I was hoping I would change my mind.

Omar: We have to go.

Singley: Last night, I packed up all of Zanni’s things. I told her all about her mommy and daddy, how we’re going to be a family. And then I realized I couldn’t remember how long it had been since I had done something for myself. I miss being able to run out to the store without having to get two people dressed. I’m always wishing somebody would
show up, just to clean up. I hate leaving this apartment without her. I'm scared of being out at night, I'm scared of the city.

**Omar:** That's over now. We'll handle it together.

**Singley:** I had Zanni, because in all truth I asked myself; what could I possibly do that would be more important than raising her? I can't do that to her.

**Omar:** Do what?

**Singley:** Zanni is not going to be your second chance. And she's not going to be my identity. I need help Omar, and you're not ready to give me the kind of help I need.

**Omar:** So you're going to jet? How is that going to solve anything?

**Singley:** It will give me some time, and the support I need.

**Omar:** You still can't forgive me can you? (Pause) You know if you can't learn how to let things go you're going to be a very lonely person.

**Singley:** You tell me how? How do I forget that you lied? Even when I try something happens and I remember it all again. Please Omar, if you can't give me time I won't be able to figure out how I feel-

**Omar:** You women amaze me. You all talk about there are no good men, and when one wants to do for you you tell him to leave you the fuck alone. You're not taking Zanni! (He loses control and attempts to leap over the table to get the baby, knocking over a chair. Julietta and Jumoke hear the scuffle from the back room and enter)

**Jumoke:** What's going on?

**Julietta:** Everything ok Singley?

**Omar:** Singley I—(totally shocked that he has lost control. He pulls himself together). Call me when you get to Jersey.

(He exits.)

**Jumoke:** You all right girl?

**Singley:** Yeah.

(Rebecca enters through the front door)

**Rebecca:** Hey ya'll, dinner! I brought some left--overs

**Jumoke:** Oh you are just the little food fairy aren't you?

**Rebecca:** It's not from me, it's from my mom. Did Sade get back yet?

**Julietta:** Not yet.

**Sade:** (heard offstage) Yo man, I am not paying you $5.00 that's a $4.00 cab ride, clearly, I take it all the time. What? Oh no, you would want to give me my bag back because I will call the police, and have your license so fast.

**Julietta:** Sade's home.

**Sade:** That's what I thought.
(The women crowd around the door. She enters.)

Sade: Hey everybody.

Rebecca: Welcome home

Sade: I missed you guys. I even missed the subway.

Julietta: You must think you were away longer than you were.

Jumoke: How was your journey?

Sade: Hard. But good.

Jumoke: On the phone you said you weren't sleeping. Did you get any rest?

Sade: The night of the memorial service, it must have been 4:00 in the morning and I was still in the kitchen cooking. An old woman entered some relative. She took me into the sitting room "Pele" she said and she lay my head down in her lap. That's when the tears finally came, in torrents. She just stroked my hair and continued to talk in Yoruba. Stubborn old woman. I fell asleep and when I woke up it was time to go to church and bury my mother.

Jumoke: Did the drummers come?

Sade: Lots of them. And your father danced a lot.

Jumoke: Ah, ah. Pops!

Sade: Your mother looked beautiful. Oh and I have material for you all. My Aunt knew you couldn't all be there because of the expense, so she bought material for you anyway.

(phone rings. Sade answers it)

Sade: Hello? Oh Hi Josh? What? Oh yeah I just got home? Where are you you sound so far aw-

Rebecca: (grabbing the phone) Give me that! Hello? Josh! Hi. How are you? I miss you. I'm sorry I was so horrible right before you left? Where are you calling me from? From a thousand feet? Your parents gave you a cellular phone. I'm so glad you called. I love you baby.

(Everybody starts making cooing sounds around the phone)

Listen, as usual I really can't talk now. Will you call again soon? Good. I'll talk to you soon. I love you! Bye.

Sade: You all are so corny.

Julietta: I think it's nice.

Jumoke: So do I.

(Rebecca and Jumoke share a beat)

Singley: So show us our stuff girl!

(Sade passes out the clothing to everyone - the perfect outfit for everyone, including a little suit and hat for Zanni. Sade takes Zanni in her arms. The music plays and the dancer dances/enacts the final portion of the folk tale. This should be a liberating dance, the bird that has found her way home.)

Once upon a time (time, time) there was a strong baby girl, who knew she was a beautiful bird inside. One day she flew
to her hometown for a rest. The town's people were so happy that they held a festival of lights in her honor. The Odide bird flew through the night sky, high above the tiny lights, over the farms and the dancing people of Iwo. Her day of rest turned into many days. The children opened the door to the schoolhouse to hear her song, the market women prepared a perch for her when she grew weary, and the farmers shared the last of their palm wine with Odide. After a long time, Odide went on holiday again. Some times she walks in the steps of a child, other times she wears vibrant, colorful feathers for the entire world to see. You will know it is she because she knows who she is. No matter how sweet the journey, the Odide always returns to Iwo.