

## Monologues Specifically for POC

*The Colored Museum* by George C. Wolf

---

### **A Soldier with a Secret**

*The Colored Museum is a series of exhibits in “a museum where the myths and madness of black/Negro/colored Americans are stored.” In this exhibit, Junie Robinson, a black combat soldier, “comes to life and smiles at the audience. Somewhat dim-witted, he has an easygoing charm about him.”*

JUNIE: Pst. Pst. Guess what? I know the secret. The secret to your pain. ‘Course, I didn’t always know. First i had to die, then come back to life, ‘fore I had the gift.

Ya see, the Cappin sent me off up ahead to scout for screamin’ yella bastards. ‘Course, for the life of me I couldn’t understand why they’d be screamin’, seein’ as how we was tryin’ to kill them and they us.

But anyway, I’m off lookin’, when all of a sudden I find myself caught smack dead in the middle of this explosion. This blindin’, burnin’, scaldin’ explosion. Musta been a booby trap or something, ‘cause all around me is fire. Hell, I’m on fire. Like a piece of chicken dropped in a skillet of cracklin’ grease. Why, my flesh was justa peelin’ off of my bones.

But then I says to myself, “Junie, if yo’ flesh is on fire, how come you don’t feel no pain!” And I didn’t. I swear as I’m standin’ here, I felt nuthin’. That’s when I sort of put two and two together and realized I didn’t feel no whole lot of hurtin’ cause I done died.

Well I just picked myself up and walked right on out of that explosion. Hell, once you know you dead, why keep on dyin’, ya know?

So, like I say, I walk right outta that explosion, fully expectin’ to see white clouds, Jesus, and my mama, only all I saw was more war. Shootin’ goin’ on way off in this direction and that direction. And there, standin’ around, was all the guys. Hubert, J.F., the Cappin. I guess the sound of the explosion must of attracted ‘em, and they all starin’ at me like I’m some kind of ghost.

So I yells to ‘em, “Hey there, Hubert! Hey there, Cappin!” But they just stare. So I tells ‘em how I’d died and how I guess it wasn’t my time ‘cause here I am, “fully in the flesh and not a scratch to my bones.” And they just stare. So I took to starin’ back.

*(The expression on Junie's face slowly turns to horror and disbelief.)*

Only what I saw... well, I can't exactly to this day describe it. But I swear, as sure as they was wearin' green and holdin' guns, they was each wearin' a piece of the future on their faces. Yea. All the hurt that was gonna get done to them and they was gonna to do folks was right there clear as day.

I saw how J.F., once he got back to Chicago was gonna get shot dead by this po-lice, and I saw how Hubert was gonna start beatin' up on his old lady, which I didn't understand 'cause all he could do was talk on and on about how much loved her. Each and everyone one of 'em had pain in his future and blood on his path. And God or the Devil one spoke to me and said, "Junie, these colored boys ain't gonna be the same after this war. They ain't gonna have no kind of happiness."

Well, right then and there it comes to me. The secret to their pain.

Late that night, after the medics done checked me over and found me fit for fightin', after everybody done settle down for the night, I sneaked over to where Hubert was sleepin', and with a neeld I stole from the medics...pst, pst... I shot a little air into his veins. The second he died, all the hurtin'-to-come just left his face.

Two weeks later, I got J.F., and after that Woodrow... Jimmy Joe. I even spent all night waitin' by the latrine 'cause I knew the Cappin always made a late-night visit and... pst, pst... I got him. (Smiling, quite proud of himself.) That's how come I died and come back to life. 'Cause just like Jesus went around healin' the sick, I'm supposed to go around healin' the hurtin' all these colored boys wearin' from the war.

Pst, pst. I know the secret. The secret to your pain. The secret to yours, and yours. Pst. Pst. Pst. Pst.

### **The Gospel According to Miss Roc**

*Miss Roj appears. He is dressed in striped patio pants, white go-go boots, a halter, and cat shaped sunglasses. What would seem ridiculous on anyone else, Miss Roj wears as if it were high fashion. He carries himself with total elegance and absolute arrogance.*

MISS ROJ: God created black people and black people created style. The name's Miss Roj... that's R.O.J. thank you and you can find me every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights at "The Bottomless Pit," the watering hole for the wild and weary which asks the question, "Is there life after Jherri-curl?"

Thanks, doll. *Yes*, If they be black and swish, the B.P. has seen them, which is not to suggest the Pit is lacking in cultural diversity. Oh no. There are your hinge queens, white men who like their chicken legs dark. And let's not forget, "Los Muchachos de la Neighborhood." But the speciality of the house is The Snap Queens. (*He snaps his fingers.*) We are a rare breed.

For, you see, when something strikes our fancy, when the truth comes piercing through the dark, well you just can't let it pass unnoticed. No darling. You must pronounce it with a snap. (*He snaps*).

Snapping comes from another galaxy, as do all snap queens. That's right. I ain't just your regular oppressed American Negro. No-no-no! I am an extraterrestrial. And I ain't talkin' none of that shit you seen in the movies! I have real power.

Yes, I was placed here on Earth to study the life habits of a deteriorating society, and child when we talkin' new York City, we are discussing the Queen of Deterioration. Miss New York is doing a slow dance with death, and I am here to warn you all, but before I do, I must know... don't you just love my patio pants? Annette Funicello immortalized them in "Beach Blanket Bingo," and I have continued the legacy. And my go-gos? I realize white after Labor Day is very gauche, but as the saying goes, if you've got it flaunt it, if you don't, front it and snap to death any bastard who dares to defy you. (*Laughing*) Oh ho! My demons are showing. Yes, my demons live at the bottom of my Bacardi and Coke.

FULL MONOLOGUE: [https://www.african-americanshakes.org/wp-content/uploads/the-colored-museum\\_miss-roj.pdf](https://www.african-americanshakes.org/wp-content/uploads/the-colored-museum_miss-roj.pdf)

### **The Last Mama on the Couch Play**

LADY:

She was a creature of regal beauty  
who in ancient time graced the temples of the Nile with her womanliness

But here she was, stuck being colored

and a woman in a world that valued neither. Feet flat, back broke,  
she looked at the man who, though he be thirty still ain't got his own apartment.

Yeah, he's still livin' with his Mama! And she asked herself, was this the life for a Princess Colored, who by the translucence of her skin, knew the universe was her sister.

And she cried for her sisters in Detroit

Who knew, as she, that their souls belonged on the Nile. And she cried for her sisters in Chicago who, like her, their life has become one colored hell.

### **Lala's Opening**

LALA: (*Laughing*) I get it. It's a plot, isn't it. A nasty little CIA, FBI kind of plot. Well let me tell you muthafuckers one thing, there is nothing in that closet, real or manufactured, that will be a dimmer to the glimmer that is Lamé the star. You may have gotten Billie and Bessie and a little piece of everyone else who's come along since but you won't get Lala. My clothes are too fabulous! My hair is too long! My accent is too french. That's why I came home to America. To prove you ain't got nothing on me!

LALA: I must tell you this dream I had last night. Simply magnifique. In this dream, I'm running naked in Sammy Davis Junior's hair. (*Crazed laughter*)

Yes! I'm caught in this larger than life, deep, dark forest of savage, nappy-nappy hair. The kinky-kinks are choking me, wrapped around my naked arms, thighs, breast, face. I can't breath. And there was nothing in that closet!

And I'm thinking if only I had a machete, I could cut away the kinks. Remove once and for all the roughness. But then I look up and it's coming toward me. Flowing like lava. It's pomade! Ohhh, Sammy!

Yes, cakes and cakes of pomade. Making everything nice and white and smooth and shiny, like my black/white/black/white/black/white/black behiney.

Mama no!

And then spikes cutting through the pomade. Combing the coated kink. Cutting through the kink, into me. There are bloodlines on my back. On my thighs.

It's all over. All over... all over me. All over for me.

### **Permutations**

#### **The Party**

TOPSY: (*Dancing about.*) Yoho! Party! Party! Turn up the music! Turn up the music!

Have yaw ever been to a party where there was one fool in the middle of the room, dancing harder and yelling louder than everybody in the entire place? Well, hunny, that fool was me! Yes, child! The name is Topsy Washington and I love to party. As a matter of fact, when God created

the world, on the seventh day, he didn't rest. No child he P-A-R-T-I-E-D. Partied!

But now let me tell you 'bout this function I went to the other night, way uptown. And baby when I say way uptown, I mean way-way-way-way-way-way-way-way uptown. Somewhere between 125th Street and infinity.

Inside was the largest gathering of black/Negro/colored Americans you'd ever want to see. Over in once corner you got Nat Turner sippin' champagne out of Eartha Kitt's slipper. And over in another corner, Bert Williams and Malcolm X was discussing existentialism as it relates to the shuffle-ball change. Girl, Aunt Jemima and Angela Davis was in the kitchen sharing a plate of greens and just goin' off about South Africa.

And then Fats sat down and started to work them eighty-eights. And then Stevie joined in. And then Miles and Duke and Ella and Jimi and Charlie and Sly and Lightin' and Count and Louie! And then everybody joined in. I tell you all the children was just all up in there, dancing to the rhythm of one beat. Dancing to the rhythm of their own definition. Celebrating in their cuturwl madness.

And then the floor started to shake. And the walls started to move. And before anybody knew what was happening, the entire room lifted up off the ground. The whole place just took off and

went flying through space—defying logic and limitations. Just a spinning and a a spinning and a spinning until it disappeared inside of my head.

*(Topsy stops dancing and regained her balance and begins to listen to the music in her head.)*

That's right, girl, there's a party goin' on inside of here. That's why when I walk down the street my hips just sashay all over the place. 'Cause I'm dancing to the music of the madness in me. and whereas I used to jump into a rage anytime anybody tried to deny who I was, now all I got to do is give attitude, quicker than light, and I'm dancing to the music of the madness in m.

And here I was, all this time I been thinking we gave up our drums. But, naw, we still got 'em. I know I got mine. They're here, in my speech, my walk, my hair, my God, my style, my smile, and my eyes. And everything I need to get over in this world, is inside here, connecting me to everybody and everything that's ever been.

So, hunny, don't waste your time trying to label or define me.

... 'cause I'm not what I was ten years ago or ten minutes ago. I'm all of that and then some. And whereas I can't live inside yesterday's pain, I can't live without it.

Mulatto by Langston Hughes

Character description: Robert Lewis, eighteen, the youngest boy; strong and well built; a light

mulatto with ivory-yellow skin and proud thin features like his father's... resenting his blood and circumstances of his birth

ROBERT: *You* can do it if you to, but I'm ashamed of you. I've been away from here for six years. (*boasting*) I've learned something, seen people in Atlanta, and Richmond, and Washington where the football team went — real colored people who don't have to take off their hats to white folks or let 'em go to bed with their sisters — like that Higgins boy, asking me what night Sallie was comin' to town. A damn cracker! (*to Cora*) 'Scuse me, ma. (*continuing*) Back here in these woods maybe Sam and Livonia and you and mama and everybody's got their places fixed for 'em, but not me. (*seriously*) Nobody's gonna fix a place for me. I'm old man Norwood's son. Nobody fixed a place for him. (*playfully again*) Look at me. I'm a 'fay boy. (*pretends to shake his hair back*) See these gray eyes? I got the right to everything everybody else has. (*punching his brother in the belly*) Don't talk to me, old slavery-time Uncle Tom.

Character Description: Cora Lewis, a brown woman in her forties who has kept the house and been the mistress of Colonel Norwood for some thirty years.

CORA: My boy can't get to de swamps now. They's telephoned the white folks down that way. So he'll come back home now. Maybe he'll turn into de crick and follow de branch home directly. (*protectively*) But they shan't get him. I'll make a place for to hide him. I'll make a place upstairs down under de, under ma bed. IN a minute ma boy'll be runnin' from de white folks with their hounds and their ropes and their guns and everything they uses to kill po' colored folks with. (*distressed*) Ma boy'll be out there runnin'. (*turning to the body on the floor*) Colonel Tom, you hear me? Our boy, out there runnin'. (*fiercely*) *You* said he was ma boy — *ma* bastard boy. I heard you ... but he's yours too ... but yonder in de dark runnin' — runnin' from yo' people, from white people. (*pleadingly*) Why don't you get up and stop 'em? He's *your* boy. His eyes is gray — like your eyes. He's tall like you's tall. He's proud like you's proud. And he's runnin' — runnin' from po' white trash what ain't worth de little finger o' nobody what's got your blood in 'em, Tom. (*demandingly*) Why don't you get up form there and stop 'em, Colonel Tom? What's that you say? He ain't your chile? He's ma bastard chile? My yellow bastard chile? (*proudly*) Yes, he's mine. But don't call him that. Don't you touch him. Don't you put your white hands on him. You's beat him enough and cussed him enough. Don't you touch him now. He *is* ma boy, and no white folks gonna touch him now. That's finished. I'm gonna make a place for him upstairs under ma bed. (*backs away from the body towards the stairs*) He's ma chile. Don't you come in ma bedroom while he's up there. Don't you come to ma bed no mo'. I calls you to

help me now, and you just lays there. I calls for you to wake up, and you just lays there. Whenever you called me, in de night, I woke up. When you called for me to love, I always reached out ma arms fo' you. I burned you five chilluns and now one of 'em is out yonder in de dark runnin' from yo' people. Our youngest boy out yonder in de dark runnin'. (*accusingly*) He's runnin' from you, too. You said he warn't your'n — he's just Cora's po' little yellow bastard. But he *is* your'n, Colonel Tom. (*sadly*) And he's runnin' from you. You are out yonder in de dark (*points toward the door*) runnin' our chile, with de hounds and de gun in yo' hand, and Talbot's followin' 'hind you with a rope to hang Robert with. (*confidently*) I been sleepin' with you too long, Colonel Tom, not to know that this ain't you layin' down there with yo' eyes shut on de floor. You can't fool me — you ain't never been so still like this before — you's out yonder runnin' ma boy. (*scornfully*) Colonel Thomas Norwood, runnin' ma boy through de fields in de dark, runnin' ma poor little helpless Bert through de fields in de dark to lynch him ... Damn you, Colonel Norwood! (*backing slowly up the stairs, staring at the rigid body below her*) Damn you, Thomas Norwood! God damn you!

*Native Son* by Paul Green and Richard Wright

Character Description: Bigger Thomas; Negro youth about twenty or twenty one years old.

BIGGER: Pshaw, nothing but that old piece of tin banging. They ain't found me yet! From the first jump I out-figure 'em. (*stopping*) Uhm — everything sleepy and 'way off — (*with sudden loudness*) I ain't scared, naw. They all scared, feeling me in the night, feel me walking behind 'em.... And everywhere, the bulls is searching them old nigger houses — Indiana, Calumet, Prairie, Wabash! Ha! But I ain't 'mong the niggers. (*calling softly*) Clara! (*he listens at the door at the right*) Why don't she come on here? (*he sinks down on an old boxing pulls his blanket shiveringly about him. The flopping tin bangs off at the left. He springs instinctively and nervously up, then sits down again*) Ain't nothing — that old tin banging again, hanging loose and ready to fall. Fall on down, old tin, but I ain't gonna fall. They ain't gonna get me (*gazing back over his shoulder at the night sky. Chuckling with low and bitter irony*) They smart, them white folks! Yeh, they get the niggers. But maybe not too smart — (*he spits in the air. He beats his arms about him and stares into the night*) That's right! Flash away, old sign! "Sun-kissed oranges." Ha! I'll be in them orange-groves soon... with the sun on my back! (*he raises his head more and sees far away, above him, the revolving beam of the beacon in the sky*) Uhhh — an' look at that old Lindbergh beacon, shining there 'way out through the darkness — (*musingly*) Old Lindbergh — he knowed the way. Boiling icy water below him, the thunder and the lightning, the freezing and the hail around him. Keep on driving — riding through. (*imitating the sound of an airplane propeller with his numbed lips*) V-r-r-r-rh-h-h-h! V-r-r-r-ruh-uh-uh! Yes, he

made it, got there. And all the people running and shouting, and the headlights switching and sweeping the sky! Old Lindbergh — he made it — got home, safe home. He not scared! (*snapping his head up, his hollow eyes burning through the shadows before him*) Aw, I ain't scared neither! (*he laughs*) An' when I light, ain't goin' to be no lot of people running to *me* with flowers! Hell, no! When I come, they run! Run like Hell!

*Take a Giant Step* by Louis Peterson Character Description: SPENCER SCOTT... is a Negro boy of seventeen.

SPENCE: That's the one. Well, today they started talking about the Civil War and one of the smart little skirts at the back of the room wanted to know why the Negroes in the South didn't rebel against slavery. Why did they wait for the Northerners to come down and help them? And this Miss Crowley went on to explain how they were stupid and didn't have sense enough to help themselves. (*crosses chair left of table; sits*) Well, anyway, Gram, when she got through talking they sounded like the worst morons that ever lived and I began to wonder how they managed to live a few thousand years all by themselves in Africa with nobody's help. I would have let it pass — see — except that the whole class was whispering and giggling and turning around and looking at me — so I got up and just stood next to my desk looking at her. She looked at me for a couple of minutes and asked if perhaps I had something to say in the discussion. I said I might have a lot of things to say if I didn't have to say them in the company of such dumb jerks. Then I asked her frankly what college she went to... She told me I was being impudent. I told her I was not being impudent but I would honestly like to know. So she puts one hand on her hip — kinda throwing the other hip out of joint at the same time — and like she wants to spit on me she says “Scoville.” Then I says, “And they didn't teach nothing about the *uprising* of the slaves during the Civil War — or Frederick Douglass?” she says, “No — they didn't.” “In that case,” I said, “I don't want to be in your crummy history class.” And I walk out of the room. When I get out in the hall, Gram, I'm shaking, I'm so mad — and I had this cigar I was going to sell for a sundae. I knew I couldn't eat a sundae now 'cause it would just make me sick so i went into the Men's Room and smoked the cigar. I just had about two drags on the thing when in comes the janitor and hauls me down to old Hasbrook's office — and when I get down there — there's Miss Crowley and old Hasbrook talking me over in low tones — and in five short minutes he'd thrown me out of school.

MAY: We've given you boys everything that you could possibly want. You've never been deprived of anything, Spence. I don't need to tell you how hard we both work, and the fact that I'm in pain now doesn't seem to make a difference to you. I have arthritis in my wrist now, so badly that I can barely stand it, and it certainly doesn't hep it to hear any talk like this... You're



not sorry at all. If you were, you'd do something about it. We've bent over every effort to see that you were raised in a decent neighborhood and you wouldn't have to live in slums because we always wanted the best for you. But now I'm not sure we haven't made a terrible mistake — because you seem not to realize what you are. You're a little colored boy — that's what you are — and you have no business talking back to white women, no matter what they say or what they do. If you were in the South you could be lynched for that and you father and I couldn't do anything about it. So from now on my advice to you is to try and remember your place.

CHRISTINE: (*laughing*) I wanted something better, I guess. I decided I was coming up North to try my luck. I worked for a whole year before I'd saved the money, and the day I had what I thought was enough, I went down to the railroad station. (*stops work*) Boy was that some day! The sun was shining and I felt real good like you feel maybe once or twice in your whole life. When I got to the ticket window, the man had a calendar, and it had an advertisement for a big insurance company on it. So I looked at the name of the town and then told him that that's where I wanted my ticket to take me. Then I went home and packed my mama's cardboard suitcase, and that same night I caught the train. And that's the last I ever saw of my mother and my brothers and sisters and Rusty... Rusty was my dog. Well, I didn't go to work for the insurance company I went into service for a while and then I got married. And that's what I meant when I was telling you about the doors. See, my husband died about two years after that and about two months after he died, I had a baby and he was born dead... Well, I tell you for a while I felt like all I wanted to do was die myself. Then I realized that you can't go on like that. It's like your mind is divided into little rooms and each time you go back into one of those rooms your heart likes to break in two. So all you do is shut the doors — and lock them — to those little rooms in your mind and never let yourself in them again. So I've got two little locked rooms in mind. One for Bert, my husband, and one for my baby that never had a name. Do you want some more to eat?

### ***Blue Door* by Tanya Barfield**

Lewis: A divorce. (*Lewis quickly pushes the reality of the thought away. He speaks to the audience, upbeat with a wry sense of humor.*) I won't go to the Million Man March and my wife says she wants a divorce. She doesn't want to offend me completely, so she hedges for a moment, then: "Lewis," she says, "Lewis, I was thinking... I think I'd like a divorce."

A divorce?

"Yes a divorce."

A divorce?

“A divorce.”

A divorce. Why?

“Well,” she says, “you- I-”

Well? I say.

“Well, it’s just because of that.”

My wife and I have been married for twenty-five years. She says she thought about it for quite some time now, about nine or ten years, and it seems that there’s this resistance I have, to looking at myself.

“You won’t go to the Million Man March,” she says.

The Million Man March? Apparently, it’s interfering with our relationship. I ask if there’s someone else. She says it would be easier if there were someone else, less existential. But no, no there’s not. She says there’s a story to a person’s life, a dimensionality, because each person has a greater “personhood” within them. But if a person compartmentalizes their life like I do, she says, they deny the dimensionality of themselves and that’s difficult because you never feel like you’re getting the whole person. A relationship is about total honesty and-

“You know, Lewis... you’re black.”

Yes?

“It’s all about your father,” she says.

I didn’t go to his funeral. It’s been a year, I haven’t even visited his grave-

“What kind of man wouldn’t-”

I wasn’t close to my father.

“What about your great-grandfather, Simon?”

He died when I was ten.

“You said you were very close.”

When I was ten!

“You won’t go to the Million Man March. A million black men are gathering in public and you won’t go. And maybe it’s because you’re married to a white woman, but I don’t think that you should use the fact that I’m white as an excuse to erase your history.”

You want a divorce because I don’t want to march on Washington, not as any form of protest but just to announce to the world that I’m black?

“It’s also because of housework.”

Housework? I never commit. I say I'm going to do the dishes or vacuum or fix the hinges on the door, and I just don't do it.

Feng Shui, that Feng Shui book her sister gave her, that's what this is about. That book is Chinese and she's white- Do you think, maybe, she's "denying *her* culture"?

"I've learned a lot from Feng Shui. Your house has to be in order. The fact that it came from the Orient is not the point!" (*Beat*)

She leaves. The house is empty. Emptier than I can imagine.

I have the sensation of being watched. I watch my wife leave, and as she leaves, I divorce myself from myself. I become two selves- my self and then the self that watches my self.

Lewis: It all started when we lived in Greenwich Village, married two years, and my wife says she wants to take a vacation in the country.

Vacation in the country. Why?

We could go on hikes, we could read old books, she says, we could tell stories, analyze our dreams. She says my life is all about success, achievement, and it's great to strive, "But, Lewis, we need to be in nature."

Now, let's be clear: There are no delis in the country. She says you don't need delis. Because you have trees instead and that's all you need, the trees.

People lurk behind the trees.

"No they don't."

Yes they do.

"They do not."

Yes, as a matter of fact, they do.

"Who?"

Crazy people. Mass murderers. Red-necks.

She doesn't miss a beat. "I think you're experiencing "Tree Anxiety."

Tree anxiety?

"Yes," she continues, "I think you may be suffering from Tree Anxiety."

I ask her to elaborate on that, so I understand it properly. She says she's noticed that a lot of people here on the East Coast suffer from an irrational fear of trees.

Come on, I say, I'm not afraid of trees, I'm afraid of people lurking behind the trees, and I'm not afraid of them, I'm just cautious.

“That’s a form of Tree Anxiety.”

No it’s not.

“Yes it is.”

Look, I worry, a realistic worry, that there are people in the woods that wish to do harm to others. And, may I clarify, the country is filled with a bunch of racists and I believe the concern I have for racists is a realistic concern-

“Okay, so we won’t go.”

We can go.

“You’re saying you don’t want to go.”

What am I saying?

I am *suddenly* aware of the difference between my wife and me. Not that this hasn’t occurred to me before. But I am suddenly *aware*, in a very new and unsettling way. We live very different lives, and it isn’t because I grew up in a large metropolitan area, not because of Tree Anxiety but because I can’t fade into the country. I can’t take a weekend trip without a strained obviousness that I am there. There’s no choice attached to my difference, I can’t suppress it in order to grant my wife a weekend in the country. Even if I dress differently, cut my hair differently, speak differently. I can’t slip into the expanse.

I want to say: I can’t go, I can’t take a trip to the country, I can’t be a part of the trees-

I say nothing.

I can’t *not* be black.

### ***Fedra* by J. Nicole Brooks**

Fedra: Who would have thought it, nurse! All this time I had a rival. The chastity belt has been loosened! While I couldn’t tame him, Aricia did. Oh, yeah, pick up your jaw, nurse. This whole time that I have suffered ecstasies of passion, the horrors of remorse- she had his heart. I was out of my skull for him and the whole time those two were fucking!

How? How could this be? When? When did it begin? You never told me about their stolen hours. Have they been seen together? Of course they have. Oh, gods. What do you think they do together? I bet he plays his stupid guitar to her on the beach. Do they sip milkshakes from the same glass? Ride bikes in tandem? Play Yahtzee? Is that it, nurse? You seem to have had answers for everything else! Oh, now you’re quiet? Ain’t that a bitch?

***Single Black Female* by Lisa B. Thompson**

*SBF2: A thirty-five-year-old African American woman. An attorney who sports a flowing perm or hair weave and wears high heels and sexy business suits, she is SBF1's best friend, confidante, and alter ego.*

SBF 2: I really hate going to the doctor's office. (*whispering*) No, not for the flu, but when I have to go to the... gynecologist. Women's health is a pain in the ass!

There is something so sterile,

so impersonal about it. Just business as usual, especially when I was in college and all I could afford was Saint Vincent's. No, I'm not getting an abortion. The date wasn't that good. I'm here so I don't need to go there. I just have a yeast infection, AGAIN! I hate women who tell me they never had one. I find that just as annoying as those sistas who have never experienced cramps. Well, this particular yeast infection has no respect for that over-the-counter Monistat. I need some nuclear bomb stuff for this one.

***Fabulation, or the Re-Education of Undine* by Lynn Nottage**

*Undine, thirty-seven, a smartly dressed African American woman, sits behind a large teak desk sporting a sleek telephone headset.*

Undine: Can I be honest with you? I admire your expectations, but they're unrealistic, love. Yes, I can deliver something within your range. But your ambition outpaces your budget. But, but, listen to me, it's going to be a total waste of our energy. I've been doing this for a very long time. People give more when they get more. They want a seat next to a celebrity and a five-pound gift bag. It's the truth. Five years ago you could get away with half glasses of chardonnay and a musical theatre star, but not today. Generosity doesn't come cheaply. You're competing with heifers and amputees, rare palms and tuberculosis. What about the cause? Love, people don't want to think about a cause. That's why they give. Yes, I want to hear your thoughts. I am listening. Listen, I'm at the outer limits of my time and so I'm going to ask you to speak more quickly. I will. Yes. We'll talk tomorrow about the new budget. Bye-bye.

Undine: Actually, this is where the story will begin. It is mid-thought, I know, but it is the beginning. In the next twenty seconds I will experience a pain in my chest so severe that I've given it a short, simple, ugly name - Edna. Forgive me, I *am* Undine Barnes Calles. Yes. I left home at thirteen. I was a bright child. I won a competitive scholarship through a "better chance" program to an elite boarding school in new England. I subsequently acquired a taste for things my provincial Brooklyn upbringing could no longer provide. I went to Dartmouth college, met and mingled with people, in a constructive way, built a list of friends that would prove more valuable years down the line. And my family... they tragically perished in a fire- at least that's what was reported in *Black Enterprise*. It was a misprint, but I nevertheless embraced it as the truth. Fourteen years ago, I opened my own very fierce boutique PR firm, catering to the vanity and confusion of the African American nouveau riche. And all seemed complete when I met my husband Hervé at a much too fabulous New Year's Eve party at a client's penthouse. Eleven months later we married. Two years later he had a green card. Why? Je permitted me to travel in circles I'd only read about in *Vanity Fair*.

Undine: No! I'm not! I killed my family. Yes, I killed all of them on the day of my college graduation. Dartmouth. My family drove two hundred and sixty seven miles in a rented minivan, loaded with friends and relatives eager to witness my ceremony. They were incredibly proud, and why not? I was the first person in the family to graduate from college. They came en masse, dressed in their bargain-basement finest. Loud, overly eager, lugging picnic baskets filled with fragrant ghetto food... let's just say their enthusiasm overwhelmed me. But I didn't mind. No, I didn't mind until I overheard a group of my friends making crass, unkind comments about my family. They wondered aloud who belonged to *those* people. It was me. I should have said so. I have said that my mother took an extra shift so I could have a new coat every year. My father sent me ten dollars every week, his lotto money. But instead, I locked myself in my dorm room and refused to come out to greet them. And I decided on that day, that I was Undine Barnes, who bore no relation to those people. I told everyone my family died in a fire, and I came to accept it as true. It was true for years. Understand, Sharona had to die in a fire in order for Undine to live. At least that's what I thought. What I did was awful, and I'm so so sorry. And, Guy, you are such a good, decent man. And I wouldn't blame you if you walked away right now. But I don't want you to. I feel completely safe with you.

***Othello* by William Shakespeare**

*Othello: the Moor*

Othello:

Her father loved me; oft invited me,  
Still question'd me the story of my life  
From year to year - the battles, sieges, fortunes  
That I have passed.  
I ran it through, even from my boyish days  
To th' very moment that he bade me tell it,  
Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances,  
Of moving accidents by flood and field,  
Of hairbreadth scapes i'th' imminent deadly breach  
Of being taken by the insolent foe  
And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence,  
And portance in my travels' history,  
Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,  
Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch heaven,  
It was my hint to speak - such was the process -  
And of the Cannibals that each other eat,  
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads  
Do grow beneath their shoulders. These things to hear  
Would Desdemona seriously incline;  
But still the house affairs would draw her thence,  
Which ever as she could with haste dispatch  
She'd come again, and with a greedy ear  
Devour up my discourse. Which I, observing,  
Took a pliant hour, and found good means  
To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart  
That I would all my pilgrimage dilate,  
Whereof my parcels she had something heard,  
But not intentively. I did consent,  
And often did beguile her of her tears,

When I did speak of some distressful stroke  
That my youth suffered. My story being done,  
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs.  
She swore, in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange,  
She wished she had not heard it, yet she wished  
That heaven had made her such a man. She thanked me,  
And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her,  
I should but teach him to tell my story,  
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake.  
She loved me for the dangers I had passed,  
And I loved her that she did pity them.  
This only is the witchcraft I have used.  
Here comes the lady. Let her witness it.

Othello: Why, why is this?  
Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy,  
To follow still the changes of the moon  
With fresh suspicions? No! To be once in doubt  
Is once to be resolved. Exchange me for a goat  
When I shall turn the business of my soul  
To such exsufflicate and blown surmises  
Matching thy interference. 'Tis not to make me jealous  
To say my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company,  
Is free of speech, sings, plays and dances well;  
Where virtue is, these are more virtuous.  
Nor from mine own weak merits will I draw  
The smallest fear or doubt of her revolt,  
For she had eyes, and chose me. No, Iago, I  
I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove;  
And on the proof, there is no more but this-  
Away at once with love or jealousy.

Othello:  
It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul.



Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!  
It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood  
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,  
And smooth as monumental alabaster.  
Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.  
Put out the light, and then put out the light.  
If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,  
I can again thy former light restore,  
Should I repent me; but once out thy light,  
Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,  
I know not where is that Promethean heat  
That can thy light relume. When I have plucked thy rose,  
I cannot give it vital growth again;  
It needs must wither. I'll smell it on the tree.  
Oh, balmy breath, that dost almost persuade  
Justice to break her sword! One more, one more.  
Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,  
And love thee after. One more, and this the last.  
So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,  
But they are cruel tears. This sorrow's heavenly;  
It strikes where it doth love. She wakes.

Othello:       Behold, I have a weapon;  
A better never did itself sustain  
Upon a soldier's thigh. I have seen the day  
That, with this little arm, and this good sword,  
I have made my way through more impediments  
Than twenty times your stop. But oh, vain boast!  
Who can control his fate? 'Tis not so now.  
Be not afraid, though you do see me weaponed;  
Here is my journey's end, here is my butt  
And very seamark of my utmost sail.

Do you go back dismayed? 'Tis a lost fear;  
Man but a rush against Othello's breast  
And he retires. Where should Othello go?  
Now, how dost thou now? Oh, ill-starred wench!  
Pale as thy smock! When we shall meet at compt,  
This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,  
And fiends will snatch at it. Cold, cold, my girl?  
Even like thy chastity. O! Cursèd, cursèd slave!  
Whip me, ye devils,  
From the possession of this heavenly sight!  
Blow me about in winds! Roast me insulfur!  
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!  
O Desdemon! Dead, Desdemon! Dead! Oh! Oh!

Othello:

Soft you; a word or two before you go.  
I have done the state some service, and they know't.  
No more of that. I pray you, in your letters,  
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,  
Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,  
Nor set down aught malice. Then must you speak  
Of one that loved not wisely but too well;  
Of one not easily jealous but, being wrought,  
Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand,  
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away  
Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,  
Albeit unused to the melting mood,  
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees  
Their medicinal gum. Set you down this;  
And say besides that in Aleppo once,  
Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk  
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,

I took by th' throat the circumcised dog,  
And smote him, thus.

***Is God Is* by Aleshea Harris**

*She: African American. Mother to Racine and Anaia. Has burn scars over her entire body.*

SHE:

I'll tell you                    It was a regular day.  
I had took y'all to day care  
and went to work. Regular day.  
Got off work, got y'all and came home,  
a baby in each arm. Y'all was three.  
We get home and I put you in the kitchen  
At the table with some apple slices - a snack  
while I made dinner.  
I had just chopped the onions at the counter  
   I'll never forget it  
   just chopped the onions when I heard the  
window in the bathroom shut.

*(A kind of flashback, SHE retreats into the past, hearing the window, suspicious.)*

Hello?

The T.V. Cartoons- loud

Hello?

The curtains in the kitchen- breathin.

The onion on the cutting board- waitin.

I rinse my hands and wipe 'em on my dress,  
iss and old dress.

Hello? I pat your baby-heads, go down the hall

Maybe just a branch against the window  
Hello?  
Only, ain't no trees near our windows  
Hello?  
Down the hall. Bathroom window wide open.  
Dark in there.  
The mirror showing my scared silhouette.  
Nothing in here but a bone-tired woman.

*(SHE laughs)*

My hand goes to the light switch  
just to be, just to be sure, you know?  
Can't be too careful  
He said he was gon come back, so  
Just to be sure  
And the green light flashes on  
and issa hand on the shower curtain  
O god  
The fear like an ax to the middle of my chest  
O no  
His hand, he pull the curtain aside  
kinda sweet-like and  
it reminds me of why I fell in love with him  
he do got a tender side  
he pull the curtain aside and just stands there

No smile or nothin. No frown, neither.  
Face as plain as a slice of wheat bread.

“Hey”

He says, like we on the street or somethin



and you two in the kitchen  
giggling like how babies giggle  
like they got the sun in they mouths  
ya know?

And the boots move toward y'all in the kitchen  
And I can't talk 'cause he took the wind outta  
my mouth  
but in my mouth is a rattle like:

“Don't you fucking touch  
my babies!!!”

But he already bringin y'all.

'Cine, I think he was holding you.

'Naia, you was walkin. One of y'all was sayin  
“daddy where you been?” and he sayin  
“on the Moon”

“the moooooon?”

“Yup. With the aliens.”

And by now y'all in the bathroom standing over me.

And 'Cine, you wasn't scared. You said to him  
“Daddy... whasss wrong with Mommy? What she  
on the ground for?”

And he said, “Mommy's sleepy and she want  
us to wake her up. You gonna help me wake  
her up, Anaia?”

And 'Naia, you was always the emotional one, you  
could tell somethin was off, and you was scared.

You say,

“I I wanna I wanna go back and watch  
Scooby Doo.”

“Just a minute. Let's wake Mommy up.”

“How?”

“Like this.”

*(A sound like a thousand matches being struck simultaneously)*

And ‘Naia went to whining.

“daddy I don’t like this.”

And then he musta dropped that little bit of fire  
on me ‘cause it was all on me gettin bigger,  
that quick  
eatin through me ‘til my brain was smart enough  
to turn off.

Thahwasit.

***Edith Can Shoot Things and Hit Them, by A. Rey Pamatmat***

Edith - 12, Filipino-American, a girl, Kenny’s Sister

*(EDITH sits on the rafter, 10-12 feet above the ground. She is 12 and wears a stained T-shirt, ratty shorts, and is barefoot. She holds a giant stuffed frog to which she is too old to be talking, but she does exactly that.)*

EDITH. I am very mature for my age. It’s true, Fergie, I am. I look twelve, but I’m much, much older. Everyone says so.

*(EDITH looks at the frog as though listening to her, pauses, and then punches her in the face.)*

Who cares what you believe? The truth is true. Our kind mature at a different speed than stupid, little human girls. On my planet, I’m a full-grown grown up, and I have my own apartment where I live without my twenty parents. Who needs them?

*(pause)*

Yeah! Twenty people to build one baby, and they all get together to help the baby grow. Feed her and make her clothes and paint her bedroom a different color every month no matter how expensive it is. There's always someone around, because everyone has twenty parents. But that was when I was small. Now I'm stuck here, alone on this planet as a test. To see - well. I don't know, but it's a test. THAT'S the test: for me to figure out what the test is. And I've got to do it fast, before the evil shape-changing aliens from an enemy planet take over our world! And Kenny waits to see if I complete the test, which is how he'll know I'm ready to fight in the war. And when I am, I'll sprout wings and fly away! My kind have wings when they grow up.

*(pause)*

Well, I mean, I'm grown up now, but when I grow up more, I'll fly away and return to my planet, shoot those aliens in their faces, save Kenny life, and rescue my twenty parents, who are really, actually helpless without me. And I'm going to do it all by myself. And when I do, Kenny will stay home because he'll be so proud of me. For being such a big girl. A big, grown up girl. With wings.

End of Scene

*(The phone rings. EDITH pauses the movie and answers.)*

EDITH. Hello?

Hey. I'm doing it now.

Invert and multiply.

You flip the numerator and the denominator. INVERT.

Dina, this is so basic. This is the review lesson before the actual lesson. This isn't even the 6th grade math part of 6th grade math.

I don't know why it works, it just does. Just do it.

No, I don't want to talk to your mom. Don't. Don't put her -

Hiiiiiii... I'm okay, Mrs. Osheyack.

My Dad's at work.

My brother's in the bathroom.

Pizza.



Okay, we'll eat healthy tomorrow.

I'm going to bed soon.

He's here; he's just in the bathroom. I'm completely safe. I can take care of myself.

Could you put Dina on?

I hate you.

I'll hang up next time. Tell her to worry about you.

You're the one who can't remember fractions.

Invert. Multiply. Reduce. Then you're done.

Yeah, I'm going to bed now.

Okay. See you tomorrow.

*(EDITH hangs up. She looks around the room, pensively, and then turns to the frog.)*

We're completely safe.

*(EDITH restarts the movie, turns up the volume, looks around again, and then exits.)*

...

#### End of Scene

*(EDITH in the schoolyard. She's dressed to leave and talking to the frog.)*

EDITH. Okay, Fergie. This is probably our biggest mission ever, and it's not that I think you can't handle it... But we have to execute every stage with utmost precision, or it's over before it even starts. It's just me and you now. You're all I have.

You.

A stuffed frog.

From my mom. My mommy.

Let's review the mission parameters. To blow this joint, what we have to do it - I mean, what you have to do. I don't know what you have to do. What I have to do it...

Stop talking to a stupid stuffed frog who never really did anything.

Maybe, Fergie, it's time for me to go it alone. I don't think mom really gave you to me anymore, and then when I talk to you I'm talking to her. I'm not talking to anyone.

Because Kenny is a liar. He lies, and it's not funny anymore. He tells stories, like that mom got us all Christmas presents before she died. And that dad asks about me when he calls. And that he's going to come and get me. Because Kenny's not going to come and get me. The only person who can take care of me is me. I've got to do this all by myself, like I have to do everything. No Kenny, no mom, and no you. I'm going solo.

I don't need you, frog.

*(EDITH puts the frog on the ground and turns away.)*

*(10 seconds)*

*(EDITH turns back to the frog, snatches her up and holds her at arms length.)*

EDITH. *(cont.)* It's just... I. I'm alone now, Fergie. And I had to. It was a test. Because what we're doing is dangerous and important and probably illegal. So I had to know I could trust you. Because it's hard to know who to trust now that we're all alone.

Because this... is the test. THE test. Kenny can't come, because I have to prove to him that I'm grown up. That it's time to grow my wings and fly away.

Fergie, we have to get rid of any parts of us that are still little girls. No more useless, weak, little girls. I'm going to take care of everyone. You. Kenny. Even Benji.

But first we have to make sure that he's taken care of. Permanently. Make sure he can never leave us in a place like this again. Never, ever again. So I had to be sure that we were in this together no matter what.

*(EDITH takes some matches out of her pocket, strikes one, and watches it burn.)*

Here we go.

End of Scene

***The Ghosts of Lote Bravo, by Hilary Bettis***

The play takes place in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico

RAQUEL CANTU

15. Works at a maquiladora

## RAQUEL

Your voice sounds like a bull heaving and panting at the end of a fight and covered in long stakes with barbs ripping and tearing at his flesh and his ear is torn and hanging and his eye has been stabbed and the crowd cheers for his ultimate destruction! The matador taunts him still with his red cape and he charges with the last bit of strength he has right at the red cape, but on the other side is this long sword that cracks open the ribs of the bull and plunges into his heart and the pain, the brief moments before his heart explodes with blood and metal and shame, is so agonizing that he lets out a cry that is so desperate it shatters the eardrums of toddlers, but the grown-ups, they cannot hear it. And later that night they wonder why their children have gone deaf.

## JUANDA

For a month, maybe longer, I saved what I could to buy her this red shirt. It was a beautiful shirt with puffed sleeves that just fell off her shoulders.

I saw her admiring it in this little shop next to el mercado. Every time we passed by, her eye wandered for a moment to the mannequin wearing that shirt. It would only be a second. She did not want me to catch her eye and feel shame that I could not buy it for her. At first my intentions were to give it to her for her quinceañera... But I think a part of me... A part of me knew that if she had a pretty shirt to wear, and I begged her to find a night job... A part of me... I never asked her about shifts or the money she left at the foot of the Holy Virgin on the dresser. But I sent her out there! I dressed her in a way that would bring lust in men! I told her we would starve to death if she didn't do something. I told her it was her responsibility because she was the oldest... But it should have been me. It should have been me walking the streets at night.

*A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White*

*[MOTHER is a Negro.] The MOTHER is small, pale, and very beautiful. She has on a white summer dress and white shoes.*

MOTHER. *(sitting in a deck chair, takes a cigarette out from a beaded purse and smokes nervously. She speaks bitterly in a voice with a strong Georgia accent.)* In our Georgia town the white people lived on one side. It had pavement on the streets and sidewalks and mail was delivered. The Negroes lived on the other side and the roads were dirt and had no sidewalk and you had to go to the post office to pick up your mail. In the center of Main Street was a fountain and white people drank on one side and Negroes drank on the other.

When a Negro bought something in a store he couldn't try it on. A Negro couldn't sit down at the soda fountain in the drug store but had to take his drink out. In the movies at Montefore you had to go in the side and up the stairs and sit in the last four rows.

When you arrived on the train from Cincinnati the first thing you saw was the WHITE and COLORED sign at the depot. White people had one waiting room and we Negroes had another. We sat in only two cars and white people had the rest of the train.

*[CLARA] is a Negro woman of thirty three wearing a maternity dress.*

CLARA. July.

I can't sleep. My head always full of thoughts night and day. I feel so nervous. Sometimes I hardly hear what people are saying. I'm writing a lot of my play, I don't want to show it to anyone though. Suppose it's no good. *(Reads her play.)*

They are dragging his body across the green his white hair hanging down. They are taking off his shoes and he is stiff. I must get into the chapel to see him. I must. He is my blood father. God, let me in to his burial. *(He grabs her down center. She, kneeling.)* I call God and the Owl answers. *(Softer)* It haunts my Tower calling, its feathers are blowing against the cell wall, speckled in the garden on the fig tree, it comes, feathered, great hollow-eyed with yellow skin and yellow eyes, the flying bastard. From my Tower I keep calling and the only answer is the Owl, God. *(Pause. Stands.)* I am only yearning for our kingdom, God.

CLARA. *(To diary.)* The last week in March I called up my mother and I told her that Eddie and I were getting a divorce and I wanted to come to Cleveland right away.

She said I'm coming up there.

When, I said. When?

It was four o'clock in the afternoon.

When can you come I said.

I'll take the train tonight. I'll call you from the station.

Should I come and meet you?

No, I'll call you from the station.

She called at 10:35 that morning. She said she would take a taxi. I went down to the courtyard and waited. When she got out of the taxi I will never forget the expression on her face. Her face had a hundred lines in it. I'd never seen her look so sad.

CLARA. (*Reciting her play.*) They said: I had lost my mind, read so much, buried myself in my books. They said I should stay and teach summer school. But I went. All the way to London. Out there in the black taxi my cold hands were colder than ever. No sooner than I left the taxi my cold hands were colder than ever. No sooner than I left the taxi and passed down a gray walk through a dark gate and into a garden where there were black ravens on the grass, when I broke down. Oow... oww.