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Stunning

by David Adjmi

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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**Originally produced in March 2008 by
Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Washington DC,
Howard Shalwitz, Artistic Director; Jeffrey Hermann, Managing Director
Produced by Lincoln Center Theatre, New York City, 2009**

STUNNING was first produced by the Woolly Mammoth Theater Company in Washington D.C. on March 1, 2008. The performance was directed by Anne Kauffman, with sets by Dan Conway, costumes by Helen Huang, lighting by Colin K. Bills, sound by Ryan Rumery, dialect coaching by Sasha Olinick, and fight choreography by John Gurski. The cast was as follows:

BLANCHE Quincy Tyler Bernstine
JOJO Clinton Brandhagen
IKE Michael Gabriel Goodfriend
SHELLY Gabriels Fernandez-Coffey
LILY Laura Heisler
CLAUDINE Abby Wood

CHARACTERS

LILY SCHWECKY – (*sixteen*) Truly “cute”, slight, naifish, something of an oddball. The “baby” – she’s sixteen going on about 11; she’s a bit regressed. Her mind works quickly but her thoughts are incredibly scattered. A follower, but it’s more out of a need for connectedness than an innate passivity.

BLANCHE NESBITT – (*forties*) Lily’s new housekeeper, African American, an extremely intelligent, voluble, and terribly sensitive autodidact. Damaged, but maintains a great sense of irony and dry humor. She adapts to survive – she’s performative, and the performance wears her down eventually. An outsider.

IKEY SCHWECKY – (*forty-five*) Lily’s new husband: controlling, brute, bumptious, but there’s something fragile in him, broken – he’s more transparent than he thinks.

SHELLY – (*early-twenties*) Lily’s big sister; a leader; she’s got a stentorian quality, but naturalizes this by cultivating “girly” preoccupations. The laziness of her r’s and a’s feels calculated and somehow hostile.

JOJO – (*thirties, early forties*) Shelly’s uxorious husband; basically a good guy but limited; rather put upon, has trouble sticking to his guns.

CLAUDINE – (*nineteen*) a bit hysterical; unselfconscious – even brute – in her bids for approval. She has a desperate conformity.

SETTING

The play takes place largely within the confines of the midwood section of Brooklyn – a very affluent, largely Jewish area; one which exerts a centripetal force on the people who live there. Despite the proximity to Manhattan, there’s a provincialism to it, an insularity, but also an extremely tight-knit sense of community.

TIME

Around now.

A NOTE ON STYLE

The play shifts styles.

While it is concerned with psychological reality it only intermittently correlates with the detail or psychological consistency usually associated with Realism. There are deliberate and drastic alternations in tone, style, etc., that happen scene by scene, within scenes and between beats with no transition. It is therefore critical for actors to follow the rhythms of the play, as it is scored; the psychological truth can be extracted from this.

It is crucial that the shifts and transitions in the piece, no matter how abrupt, are rooted in an emotional reality.

NOTE ON TEXT

Sometimes I think of my plays as cubist, because they juxtapose elements that don't seem to go together – genres, styles, emotions, tonalities. There is a liquidity to them, a deliberate and precisely honed instability. The plays go wrong in production when things are smoothed out and normalized. The worlds of these plays are fractured, and the notational system (which can be maddening to read on the page, I admit it) is a way to delineate how they're fractured.

A double slash (//) indicates either an overlap or a jump – i.e., no break between the end of one character's speech and the beginning of the following speech.

Speech in parentheses indicates either a sidetracked thought within a conversation, or a shift in tone or emphasis with no temporal break, no pause or beat or transition.

A STOP, DISAMBIGUATED

A STOP is a pause followed by either a marked shift in tone or tempo (like a cinematic jumpcut or a quantum leap) or no change in tempo whatsoever – somewhat like putting a movie on pause and then pressing play.

STOPS aren't empty or merely ambient, they are "full" – i.e., the tension needs to first build – or drop – invisibly inside of them (again, the quantum analogy is a good one) and then explode – or dissipate – seemingly "out of nowhere." Because STOPS are all about tension they should be marked by physical stillness.

STOPS happen with NO psychological transition – the energy needs to either build or dissipate inside the pause. These moments are, in a way,

the key to playing my work. If you can figure out the STOPS you can eventually figure out the play.

SET

I know three things about the set for this play: 1. Continuing the homage to Douglas Sirk and Tennessee Williams (And Plato too, from *The Republic*) mirrors are very important to this world. It would not be out of keeping with the tenor of the play (and the themes of illusion, imitation, deception, whatever) to selectively stage whole scenes, parts of scenes, sections of the stage using full length mirrors (think “las meninas” or even “the lady from shanghai”) keeping in mind, obviously, that this can’t be used egregiously; 2. The world of the play is bleached out, whitewashed – there’s no color in it save for various shades of white, and transparent surfaces, glass, mirrors, etc.; 3. The set should have some kind of motility: it isn’t stable; it wants to move, it wants to transform, whether with panels, walls, rollers, I’m not sure but perspectives can shift.

–David Adjmi

GLOSSARY OF SYRIAN-AMERICAN TERMS

ABOOSE – “Oh, how sweet and adorable.”

CA-AN – (ca as in “cat” and an as in “ann”) Spoken when challenging the veracity of something. Has a vaguely sarcastic connotation, as in “yeah, right!” – sometimes serves as phatic punctuation.

DIBEH – Slang for idiot (female), *DIB* (male).

ERT – An exclamation of disgust or revulsion.

HEEE – Not a word but a sharp intake of breath indicating shock, concern, surprise or worry.

GAZZY – Silly and fun.

GAZZCASE (with a hard A, as in “Lair”) – Playful term for a someone who is mentally disorganized, a kind of screwball.

IBE (with a hard A, silent E) – Comment on “shameful” or inappropriate behavior.

OBDEH – (ob as in “obverse”) Person of african descent (f), *OBID* (m).

OOLIE – An exclamation of shock, worry, horror, discovery – and spoken with correlative intonations (reverential worry: “oooooollllliieeee,” “OO!LIE!”, *OOLIE!*, etc).

SHOOF, SHOOFIE – (A command) “look!”: as in “shoof haddie” (“look at her”).

SKETCHING – Slang for kidding or joking.

TRANSLATION FROM SPANISH

SPANISH: *Ella me decía: “Lily tú eres un angel, y tu pelo es de seda te quiero como mi hija”*

ENGLISH: She told me: “Lily you are an angel, and your hair is silk I love you like a daughter

SPANISH: *Yo tambien te puedo mecer en el columpio vamos al parque ahora mismo!!*

ENGLISH: I could push you on the swing too!! Let’s go to the park right now!!

SPANISH: *Todavía estamos trabajando Anna maria la luz está a tu derecha.*

ENGLISH: We’re still working Anna maria the light is on your right.

SPANISH: *Ojalá no se enoje.*

ENGLISH: I hope he doesn’t get mad.

SPANISH: *El no se enterará.*

ENGLISH: He won’t find out.

SPANISH: *¿Me lastimó, viste lo que hizo?*

ENGLISH: He hurt me did you see what he did?

SPANISH: *Tengo que irme de aquí; promete que nos iremos.*

ENGLISH: I have to get out of here – promise we’ll leave.

SPANISH: *Y a tí que te importa nos vamos para Chicago.*

ENGLISH: What do you care? We’re going to Chicago.

SPANISH: *Mira hacia atrás, no me conviertas en piedra.*

ENGLISH: Look back, don’t turn me to stone.

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ACT ONE

The Ambassadors

1.

(CLAUDINE's house.)

(A card game.)

(Three girls sitting at a card table: SHELLY, LILY, CLAUDINE.)

(They all have nearly identical feathered hair modeled after the 70's "Farrah" look from Charlie's Angels. They all have bangles – meretriciously loud bangles – on their wrists; this is an index of wealth.)

(They all have variations of the same boots, clothes – one gets the sense that no one does anything in this world without the tacit agreement of the others.)

(LILY is painfully, comically sunburnt and peeling for most of this act.)

(The play opens with a virtuosic shuffling of the cards.)

(rapid fire:)

SHELLY. Stick to the rules //

LILY. Where's // Tuni?

SHELLY. Jacks or better nothing wild everybody // in?

LILY. We have to wait for Tuni but-h.

CLAUDINE. Tuni's not coming she's getting a divorce.

SHELLY. She's //

CLAUDINE. Ye you didn't // hear she's

SHELLY. Whaddayousketching? //

CLAUDINE. separating from (no-I'm-not-sketching) she's separated // from

LILY. Oolie! //

SHELLY. She just got married!

LILY. She had a baby //

CLAUDINE. YE and the baby I think it has like a down's *syn-drome?*

SHELLY. HEEE //

CLAUDINE. (Aduknow) //

LILY. And she //

CLAUDINE. (or like) //

SHELLY. I //

CLAUDINE. *and they hid it //*

SHELLY. (to LILY) (Stop-playing-with-your-hands) //

CLAUDINE. and Tuni had to take it in to see a *specialist //*

LILY. Whch?

CLAUDINE. in the *ity-cay* This *y-gay //*

SHELLY. (You're-making-me-nervous-stop-it) //

CLAUDINE. (I think it was Mount Sinai) //

SHELLY. (*fixes earring*) (I-had-my-transplant-theh) //

CLAUDINE. And like the husband //

(SHELLY *pulls a packet of juicy fruit, puts down the cards.*)

LILY. Did she have a // girl?

CLAUDINE. he like //

LILY. (*imagining a cute baby:*) Aboose.

SHELLY. (to CLAUDINE) (You want?)

CLAUDINE. And then I (no-it's-not-sugahless) and I think he was rejecting the kid //

(LILY *accepts a stick of gum, chews.*)

SHELLY. I thought //

CLAUDINE. or no, YEAH //

LILY. Heeee //

CLAUDINE. goes "I don't want *you?* and I don't want this *kid?* and // gimme a divorce"

LILY. With the *down's* syndrome // *kid?*!

SHELLY. Dib Who's the husband.

CLAUDINE. Morris Betesh //

SHELLY. Piece a shit.

CLAUDINE. No-Ye-He-is-a-piece-//-a-shit

LILY. Who's he related to?

CLAUDINE. Schweckies of Avenue P.

SHELLY. That's not a good // family

CLAUDINE. (*munching violently on a carrot stick*) Piece a shit //

LILY. Do they own Duane Reade? //

SHELLY. THAT'S YA SECOND COUSIN DUANE READE
//

CLAUDINE. (*vicious*) They have a bad // reputation

LILY. What do they own //

CLAUDINE. (*finger wagging tone*) Bad family //

SHELLY. And I go to her I go //

CLAUDINE. (*vicious*) BAD //

SHELLY. I go don't marry this jerk //

CLAUDINE. Me too!

SHELLY. (And-remembah?!-and-I-go) //

CLAUDINE. Me-too-everyone-her-mother-Debby //

SHELLY. and now she's // screwed

CLAUDINE. And-I-//-go.

SHELLY. fogettaboutit //

CLAUDINE. (*shaking her hand as if it's burned*) Yeah-oh-figget-
//it

SHELLY. (*mimicking her hand shaking*) Ooooooie figetiiiiiiiiit //

CLAUDINE. (She // screwed herself)

SHELLY. She's // finished

CLAUDINE. She committed // suicide

LILY. (Oolie!) //

CLAUDINE. RUINED!!

[STOP]

CLAUDINE. (*crunching a carrot stick*) I like the dip What's in this //

LILY. Chives

CLAUDINE. (*bright*) Heeee. I like chives //

LILY. Should we // play?

CLAUDINE. (*quick*) (Did you see Debbie's hair? She cut // it)

SHELLY. I like your bangles //

LILY. (*exhibiting her wrist*) Sheri-got-me-for-my-showah

CLAUDINE. (*muffled resentment*) Your wrist looks thin.

LILY. I gained weight-h //

SHELLY. Ca-an she's a *stick!*

CLAUDINE. (*a little too loud*) You're BLACK!

SHELLY. She's a Obdeh. //

LILY. From the panama jack.

CLAUDINE. *Obdeh*

SHELLY. She always // gets black

CLAUDINE. (*singsong*) HOW WAS ARUBA-AAAAA?

LILY. Stunning.

SHELLY. (*singsong*) Ye-eee-eeee?

CLAUDINE. Dibeh-you-nevah-said-nothing-You-got-back-when.

LILY. Yestiday //

CLAUDINE. (Ack-blay) //

SHELLY. You flew Delta? //

LILY. United.

SHELLY. WITH THE TERRORISTS – ah?!

CLAUDINE. LEAVE HAH.

SHELLY. Whatditellyou.

LILY. Ikey bought the // tickets, I

CLAUDINE. You look STUNNING.

SHELLY. (*chews gum efficiently*) (Mommy wants you // to cawl hah)

CLAUDINE. You look UNNING-STAY.

SHELLY. cawl hah // cell

LILY. (*juts out her arm*) I'm peeling. shoof

CLAUDINE. Was the sand pink. //

LILY. (*peels an enormous swatch of skin*) SHOOFIE.

CLAUDINE. HEEEE. Put // cream!

SHELLY. (*mean*) Dibeh ya hafta put cream!

LILY. I put-h!!

CLAUDINE. Is the house finished Whch's Ikey?

LILY. We just moved in //

CLAUDINE. Did you go jetskiing? //

LILY. The water was choppy //

CLAUDINE. But-it's-fun-right-isn't-it-I-TOLD-YOU-right //

LILY. I //

CLAUDINE. Isn't it I know.

[STOP]

SHELLY. You're *egnant-pray*?

LILY. (*wide-eyed*) Aduknow.

SHELLY. Ca-an.

LILY. He wants to start // soon.

CLAUDINE. Is the house finished //

SHELLY. Excited?

LILY. Ye.

CLAUDINE. I want kids.

SHELLY. You'll have-h!

CLAUDINE. I'm sick of living with my mothah.

SHELLY. I told you I would set you up

CLAUDINE. with *Stevie* //

LILY. (*revulsion*) Ert //

CLAUDINE. THIS IS HOW HE DANCES //

SHELLY. He comes from a good // family.

CLAUDINE. (*practically hyperventilating*) I'm nineteen-h! //

LILY. (*gingerly*) Ya bracelet is shahp

CLAUDINE. (My-cousin-makes-bracelets-she-sells-them-at-flea-markets.)

SHELLY. (*blame*) You don't go to parties //

CLAUDINE. YOU SOUND LIKE MY MOTHAAH.

SHELLY. Do guys like whiney girls NO.

CLAUDINE. (*covers her face, emotionally exhausted*) I'm old.

LILY. (I feel old.)

CLAUDINE. Bonnie has four kids //

SHELLY. (Three) //

CLAUDINE. and she's two years younger than me I'm gonna
be twenny.

LILY. If I met someone you will.

CLAUDINE. But you're pretty.

LILY. You're stunning!

CLAUDINE. I'M FAT!

LILY. Look at my // calves

CLAUDINE. (*looking in a mirrored surface*) No-I-have-//-crows-
feet

SHELLY. (*reapplying lipstick*) I like your // oots-bay

LILY. I'm // fat

CLAUDINE. (I got those at loehmann's) //

LILY. I feel old.

CLAUDINE. SHUT UP YA FREAKIN TWELVE-ah.

LILY. I'm seventeen next week.

[STOP]

CLAUDINE. I feel more secure in myself; don't you think
I'm more secure in myself than I was this time last-
chyee //

LILY. I like your bracelet //

CLAUDINE. (*Errrrrt, I hate this bracelet, it's disgusting.*)

SHELLY. How's the house?

LILY. Big.

CLAUDINE. I heard it's stunning

(*beat*)

LILY. There's a ghost.

SHELLY. Whadayou *tawking* about?

LILY. Ikey said there was, and then I saw it the other night.

(short pause)

SHELLY. There's no ghost.

(pause)

LILY. I saw it. *(beat; then to SHELLY)* I miss Mommy and Daddy.

SHELLY. Don't be such a freakin baby.

(beat)

(LILY, somewhat abstracted, lifts her thumb to her mouth, grazing the tip of her lip; SHELLY sees this – pushes it back down in her lap.)

LILY. *(regaining awareness)* It's weird. Aduknow.

[STOP]

CLAUDINE. I saw Stevie on the holiday I saw Stevie I saw
Ralphie // I saw

SHELLY. Are we gonna play or what.

CLAUDINE. Three card draw.

LILY. Deal //

SHELLY. (Five.)

CLAUDINE. *(to LILY, regarding some pastry)* Pass that //

(Loud music cuts her off.)

2.

(LILY and BLANCHE)

(An interview)

(LILY and IKE's home in Midwood, Brooklyn)

(The house is all white – perhaps several shades of white, but white. There is no color in this set. The minimalism LILY espouses is that of the arid, philistine, nouveau riche – no art or anything – but terribly impressive in its own bombastic right.)

(A vase of dilapidated chrysanthemums in a vase on a mantel. Lots of reflective surfaces.)

(A fishbowl with a lonely confused little goldfish swimming in circles – a single charged node of color in an otherwise colorless room.)

(LILY's outfit has an element of a girl playing dress-up – which thwarts the attempt at sophistication. She has a checklist in hand. BLANCHE stands out like a sore thumb.)

LILY. What's your name?

BLANCHE. Blanche.

LILY. (*quizzical*) Isn't that something you do to vegetables?

BLANCHE. I don't cook. //

LILY. (*mild suspicion*) Do you do windows?

BLANCHE. (Yeah and I iron) //

LILY. (*vague panic*) Tennis skirts?

BLANCHE. (*desperate retraction*) But I could learn to // cook

LILY. (Because-they're-white-and-if-you-burn-them-I'll-freak).

BLANCHE. I won't.

(beat)

LILY. Are you detail-oriented?

BLANCHE. Uh-huh.

LILY. Like "orientated towards the details"?

BLANCHE. (*nonplussed*) (Isn't that what that // means?)

LILY. I play tennis Wednesdays and Fridays //

BLANCHE. (*chummy*) Oh I used to play *squash* //

LILY. (*unbroken sentence*) it's good for this (*points to arm*) feel this (*gestures*) it's a great spoht tennis.

BLANCHE. (*feeling and talking at the same time*) But that was a long time ago.

LILY. (*points to hip*) It's good for this.

BLANCHE. (Supple) //

LILY. But my backhand is suffering //

BLANCHE. *Pity* //

LILY. And you have to use bleach! I'm very meticulous about everything and I have ways I like things done; I like things a certain way, I'm meticulous. (*aimlessly sprinkles fish food*) "Hiiiiiiiiieeee" (*to BLANCHE; still sprinkling*) that's Kitty // it gets fed once

BLANCHE. (*looks for a cat*) Where?

LILY. in the morning – "hiiiiiii" (But-don't-overfeed-it-cuz-you'll-kill-it.)

BLANCHE. The *fish*?

LILY. Kitty – I know it's funny right? It's *gazzy* – it's from Anne *Frank*? That's her diary, did you ever read that book?

BLANCHE. (*The whole thing is too much for her.*) Uh.

LILY. She kept a *diary*?

[STOP]

(*She forgets what she was saying. She jingles her bangles.*

Beat.)

LILY. So-whatevah. (*resuming her checklist*) Do you know // how to

BLANCHE. Forgive me but I thought I had this job already.

(*beat*)

LILY. What-h.

BLANCHE. This feels like an interview.

(*beat*)

LILY. (*indignant*) Well I thought you would be Porto-Rican!

(*She pulls her gum out and makes shapes with it.*)

BLANCHE. Why'd you think that.

LILY. (*darts a look*) Because we wanted a Porto-RICAN-h.

(*She pops the gum back in her mouth.*)

BLANCHE. *I'm confused.*

LILY. I don't think this is gonna work out, lemme call you a car service.

(*She goes to the phone, dials.*)

BLANCHE. But I have all my luggage with me.

LILY. Whew do you live.

BLANCHE. (*panicked*) Don't do that.

LILY. I have a carry thing (*into phone*) Always Available? I need a cahr.

BLANCHE. Please don't call me a cab // I don't

LILY. Do you want to take the train?

BLANCHE. (*We can see the despair.*) I'd...prefer. I. I don't have anywhere to go.

LILY. I'm more comfortable around Porto-Ricans. (*into phone*) Hello?

BLANCHE. LISTEN. I don't have anywhere to go and I'm tired, can't you just try me // out

LILY. (*into phone*) 929 Ocean Parkway, it's between –

(*BLANCHE grabs the phone, hangs it up.*)

BLANCHE. (*verging on tears*) I DON'T HAVE ANYWHERE TO GO!

[STOP]

LILY. Ya giving me a headeeche.

(*beat*)

BLANCHE. (*manages a smile*) Sorry.

(*beat*)

LILY. Ya meeking me very nervous-h.

BLANCHE. I'm – sorry. I'm...

(**BLANCHE** straightens up a few things to palliate – she assumes the comportment of some housekeeper **LILY** may have seen on television; she plasters on a smile. **LILY**, vaguely soothed, produces a nail file.)

LILY. (*files her nails; bright*) It's just I had Porto-Ricans my whole life, as maids? My mother had a Porto-Rican maid? and then when I was a little girl I had a maid called Anna Maria. She took care of me; I loved hah. she taught me *Spanish?* she took me to the *park*, and pushed me on the swing – *ella me decia*. “*Lily tú eres un angel, y tu pelo es de seda // te quiero como mi hija*”

BLANCHE. *Yo-tambien-te-puedo-mecer-en-el-columpio-vamos-al-parque-AHORA-MISMO!!*

(*beat*)

LILY. (*shocked, ecstatic, drops nail file*) *TU HABLAS ESPAÑOL!!!!*

BLANCHE. (I studied languages)

LILY. *Do you want a piece a gum? //*

BLANCHE. *Gracias!*

(*They chew gum and look at each other.*)

LILY. I've been chewing this same gum for three days.

BLANCHE. That's a lot of gum.

LILY. (*quick*) It is? No it's not because it's just one piece. I been *chewin* it fa three days. *Heeeee*. I love gum, you know what I like, charms blow pops. OH MY GAWD. I used to get in so much *trouble?* in my *math* class? Oh my od-gay the *rabb?* HEEEEEEEE. because you're not allowed to chew gum? and he caught me? and I was gonna swallow it and I didn't? and he stuck it in my HAIH!!! *Ha ha ha ha ha*. Oh my gowd he was SO SICK.

BLANCHE. Did //

LILY. Rabbi-Lerner-he's-SICK-oh-my-god-I-LOVE-him.

BLANCHE. You're in school. //

LILY. Me no I quit //

BLANCHE. You // did?

LILY. Lastchyee, because I got married. I wanted to stay but my mother told me quit. Anyway I had a lot of planning with the wedding and everything.

BLANCHE. (*pretending it's all normal*) How long have you been married?

LILY. I had a long engagement.

BLANCHE. How long?

LILY. Three years.

BLANCHE. Wow

LILY. I was twelve!

(*beat*)

BLANCHE. When you – got *engaged*?

LILY. (*filing nails*) Ye.

BLANCHE. (*incredulous*) You're *fifteen*?

LILY. Seventeen Well I'm gonna be My birthday's next week.

BLANCHE. But you said three years.

LILY. (I mis-did the math) We're goinna tavern on the *green*!

BLANCHE. That's quite a young age to be married.

LILY. What? Yeah. No. But I'm mature. (*contemplative*) I matured very fast starting when I was ten? I'm more matured since then, I was ten then I was a kid, I'm more matured now.

BLANCHE. Is that some kind of religious custom? To get married so young?

LILY. We're Jewish.

BLANCHE. You don't look Jewish.

LILY. How do I look?

BLANCHE. Middle Eastern.

(*beat*)

LILY. (*perplexed and annoyed*) Middle Eastin!!??

BLANCHE. You have Middle Eastern features. You know Dark Features?

LILY. (*squinting in disbelief*) I'm *tan*. I went to *Aruba?* //

BLANCHE. Not your complexion, your features.

LILY. I look *white*.

BLANCHE. Not to me.

LILY. (*indignant*) What do you mean not to you, *look at me* //

BLANCHE. I'm lookin.

(*A brief staring contest.*)

LILY. (*sheepish*) Well my family *they* are...I think from...the Middle East.

(*beat*)

BLANCHE. Where? //

LILY. *Aduknow the Middle East someweh!*

BLANCHE. You don't know where?

(*beat*)

LILY. I think Syria.

BLANCHE. I didn't know there were Syrian // Jews.

LILY. But we're all *white*.

BLANCHE. Well technically you *aren't* white if // you

LILY. I tan easy? I have melanin in my skin?

(*Beat. Then playing along.*)

BLANCHE. *That's a nice tan.*

LILY. I'm peeling! (*She gleefully peels a huge rectangle of skin off her arm.*)

BLANCHE. (*horrified*) You should use lotion for that!

LILY. *I use!* //

BLANCHE. Black people use cocoa butter, that's why we don't get any wrinkles //

LILY. (I'm getting // wrinkles)

BLANCHE. You know that expression "black don't crack"?

LILY. No.

BLANCHE. That's where that's from.

LILY. You don't have any wrinkles.

BLANCHE. I know and I'm forty-three.

LILY. (*grabbing onto the sofa*) HEEEE. THAT'S FREAKIN OLD.

BLANCHE. (*disconcerted*) It's not *that* old.

LILY. (But-you-don't-look-it.)

BLANCHE. (*pridefully*) "Black don't crack."

LILY. Cocoa butter.

BLANCHE. And you're *not* getting // *wrinkles*

LILY. And your skin loses collagen That's what happens when you get old.

BLANCHE. Not you, you got great skin.

LILY. Your skin loses elastin, that's what happens, it's called "elastin." (*She goes up to the mirror and examines her "wrinkles" while speaking.*) So when people come to my house I want things to appear a certain way, like I want everything to be spotless – you see how everything is white that's how I want things to be Stunning stunning *white* //

BLANCHE. Does this mean I have // the job?

LILY. And we have a bucket of paint in every room So if things start to get dirty like if there's spots? like on the walls? or if you have nothing to do and there's down time you *repaint* ok?

BLANCHE. (*sigh of relief*) Thank you.

LILY. Can I call you Anna Maria?

BLANCHE. Why? //

LILY. I just like that name //

BLANCHE. I was hoping you'd call me Ms. Nesbitt //

LILY. *Who's that?* //

BLANCHE. Me.

(*beat*)

LILY. I-kinda-hoped-I-could-call-you-Anna-Maria (is-that-okaaaaay-I-feel-//-baaaad)

BLANCHE. I // kinda

LILY. (*regressing*) Anna-Maria-you're-so-nice-Anna-MARIA.

(*She hugs BLANCHE. She claps a tiny clap.*)

(*beat*)

BLANCHE. Where's my room?

LILY. (*cheerful*). It's in the basement!

BLANCHE. And it's safe?

LILY. (*wide-eyed cheer*) We took the asbestos out of the *ceiling!*

BLANCHE. Oh // good (?)

LILY. There's an alarm //

BLANCHE. Ok.

LILY. (*Could you not track // dirt?*)

BLANCHE. (*I'll take these // off*)

LILY. (*single breath*) When you're finished unpacking you can dustbust The kitchen's just around theh? you turn right and it's right there ok? I'm gonna get a facial here's my cell if you need it Oh wait I don't have a pen.

BLANCHE. (*fear*) And I have the job right?

LILY. (*scrunches her face in the mirror*) (*I'm losing elastin.*)

BLANCHE. (*You look // fine*)

LILY. OOLIE! I'm going to be late for my manicuah //

BLANCHE. *Ok.*

LILY. (*frantically grabbing her things*) Down the stairs and the first door on your left That's your room.

BLANCHE. Down // the –

LILY. No second //

BLANCHE. What //

LILY. Door //

BLANCHE. On my left? //

LILY. *No right.*

(*BLANCHE descends the stairs, hauling her heavy luggage with her.*)

LILY. *(cont.) (chatters away in Spanglish after her)* Oh and be careful, the steps Let me show you It's very steep. *(Spanish, speaks quickly)* *Todavía estamos trabajando Anna Maria la luz está a tu derecha (runs after her)* Switch the alarm off, *cuidado Anna Maria* careful don't fall... ANNA MARIA!!!!

*(She looks after **BLANCHE** descending the stairs, her eyes glowing preternaturally.)*

(Arabic music cuts in, blasting.)

3.

(JOJO and IKE)

(They're both in fishing gear.)

(Both wear jojo jeans.)

(IKE has a button that reads: "I like Ike.")

(LILY is carrying an enormous fish that's nearly twice her size and weight.)

(BLANCHE is in the periphery, repainting the walls with a roller.)

IKE. You put it right on the grill //

LILY. With the bones?

JOJO. *(points)* Don't debone // it

LILY. Ert.

IKE. Grilled whole fish you never had that It's // unreal

LILY. (I nevah had // that)

JOJO. That's what gives it flava.

LILY. I never cooked fish.

JOJO. You put lemon You put salt You put garlic //

IKE. You put fresh oregano //

JOJO. Mint //

IKE. No // mint

JOJO. MY FATHER PUT // MINT

IKE. YOU DON'T PUT MINT!

(They roughhouse for a few seconds.)

(It ends just as suddenly as it started.)

LILY. I'm taking lessons, cooking lessons, at the école,
we're still on vegetables //

IKE. Gimmethebosses //

LILY. There's six kinds a // dice

IKE. *(kissing her paternally)* (Gimmethebosses // gimmethebosses)

LILY. No seven, brunoise, something a "m"? Lemme // get my

IKE. ALRIGHTAREADY

LILY. What?!

IKE. WE'RE // HUNGRY

LILY. ARAAAIGHT!

[STOP]

LILY. (Ooof)

(LILY exits, galled, lugging the huge fish.)

[STOP]

(The energy in the room shifts completely, becomes hyper-macho.)

(Tableau)

JOJO. She p.g.? //

IKE. *(makes a muscle)* Workin on it //

JOJO. Honeymoon? //

IKE. Feel //

JOJO. You're working out?

IKE. I joined the gym, gold's, I work out six days a week //

JOJO. I hired a trainer //

IKE. I run five miles a // day

JOJO. I run six //

IKE. I do crunches //

JOJO. I do squats //

IKE. *(pointing finger)* You stretch?

JOJO. I do bowflex //

IKE. You wanna hurt your back?! //

JOJO. *(points)* (Don't point).

(beat)

(IKE jogs in place.)

IKE. I'm in training.

JOJO. You gotta stretch the muscles.

IKE. I'm in pretty good shape // guy, my

JOJO. (Bowflex.)

IKE. age, look at Abie,

JOJO. Abie *yeah* // but

IKE. (*stops jogging*) Look at my stomach Jo, *flat* //

(*He lifts his shirt. JOJO, in examining his stomach, punches it.*)

IKE. DID I SAY PUNCH?

[STOP]

JOJO. (Good definition)

IKE. Flat //

JOJO. (*belated double take*) (Wait-Abie-who?)

IKE. (*strikes an Atlas pose*) Feel. //

JOJO. Whaddayouonsteroids?

IKE. (*Atlas pose two*) Creatine.

JOJO. That's bad fa ya kidneys You want *kidney stones*?

IKE. *I don't got kidney stones ya douchebag* //

JOJO. DOUCHEBAG //

(*Smack. Headlock. They get in Blanche's way.*)

IKE. Uncle.

JOJO. NO!

IKE. I'll break ya fuckin neck.

BLANCHE. (I'll move.)

(*They fight, alternating putting each other in headlocks; it's quite stylized.*)

(**BLANCHE** rolls her eyes.)

JOJO. UNCLE!

(**IKE** lets him out of the headlock.)

IKE. Power.

JOJO. Now my neck hurts //

IKE. Name of the game (*to Kitty*) Hiiiiiiiiiiiiieeeeeeeeeee
Kiiitty!

[STOP]

(*Energy in the room shifts again completely. a hyperreal business meeting.*)

JOJO. I'm hungry //

IKE. (*shift*) Alright let's talk business. //

JOJO. Alright (lemme get my // pad)

IKE. *Shoof*. outsourcing //

JOJO. Tawk.

IKE. We're at a time of expansion We need to leverage our capabilities Increase our profit margin //

JOJO. I // already

IKE. I know you don't wanna do // it but

JOJO. And then we gotta bring more *people* in, I don't // wanna

IKE. LISTEN TA MAY – We expand the market, pr, advertising //

JOJO. No –

IKE. (plus with decreasing the labor // costs)

JOJO. (It's-not-actually-so-much-cheaper-I-saw-the-spreadsheet.)

IKE. LISTEN TA MAY!

JOJO. I don't want no sweatshops, I'm not into that, (*He flexes some muscle.*) Ibe.

IKE. They're not sweatshops,

JOJO. (I'm starving // where's the fish?)

IKE. These people need work, they're dropping like *flies*, they're being barbecued *alive* they NEED WORK //

JOJO. I //

IKE. You wanna be a nike You wanna be a godiva chocolate?

JOJO. (*points*) Jojo jeans!

IKE. Jojo JEANS //

JOJO. (*moves to sofa*) And they got *sweatshops*.

IKE. (Who)

JOJO. Nike, godiva, child labor //

IKE. My *grammotha* worked in child labor she freakin *oved-it-lay* //

JOJO. CA-AN //

IKE. "CA-AN" in a candy factory They gave her free candy bars //

JOJO. We already have a sizable profit margin

IKE. What about our *skill set*?

JOJO. I //

IKE. We can leverage our capabilities CA-AN, Take it to the next level, we can be like a diesel, a levi's, a lee jeans (where's Brooke // Shields)

JOJO. I //

IKE. (Marky Mark The girl with the reversible mole) *not* this second-tier nonsense – if that's what you want fine I want MOAH!

JOJO. I want more // too.

IKE. (*practically edging him off the sofa*) No cause you're lazy // *move*

JOJO. I'm // not

IKE. Spoiled bastard if (MOVE) if // you

JOJO. I'M NOT SPOILED //

IKE. SHADDAP (if-your-father-didn't-have-money-you'd-be-scraping-the-gutters-with-the-back-of-your-throat) //

JOJO. *What* //

IKE. SHADDAP (you're-too-lazy-to-even-understand-the-shit-life-you'd-have-if-you-weren't-so-spoiled) *That's* corruption //

JOJO. *I'm* corrupt? //

IKE. That's *repreHENSible* //

JOJO. I'M //

IKE. (You're-sitting-on-your-blackberry) // REPREHENSIBLE do

JOJO. (Whch) //

IKE. you realize how much you have to work with Your skill-set? Where's your ambition, where's your fire? – I'm like Vesuvius I'm like Magic Johnson I shoot hoops I have winged feet //

JOJO. I work my ass off. I *started* this company it's MY company //

IKE. ARE. YOU. IN?

(*pause*)

JOJO. You treat me like shit.

I'm your partner.

(*pause*)

IKE. I love you like a brother; you know that.

(*beat*)

JOJO. Yeah yeah.

(*pause*)

IKE. (*puts his arm around him*) Remember we picked up non-Jewish girls together?

JOJO. (*fond reminiscence*) The chick with bad teeth?

IKE. (deltoids, traps, rhomboids)

JOJO. Fucked up teeth is hot...

(*beat*)

IKE. Now we're *arried-may* //

JOJO. (She p.g. yet?)

IKE. I *told* // you

JOJO. "Be fruitful and // multiply"

IKE. I want ten // kids

JOJO. KILL THE PALE-FREAKIN-STINIANS //

IKE. (oneafteranothah-boom-boom-//-boom.)

JOJO. (*quick*) I says ta-hah. "YOUR BRA DON'T EVEN FIT-H" //

IKE. Who //

JOJO. (*quick*) She goes "I can't afford no bra" I go "I'll slip you twenty bucks if you show me your ass."

IKE. HA HA //

JOJO. HA HAHAAAAH.

[STOP]

JOJO. (*beat; concession*) Arite //

IKE. YES?

JOJO. (*a little lost, abstracted*) I don't know what I'm doing.

IKE. (*preening happily*) Cuz I'm alpha, cuz what I say goes
buddy

JOJO. (*violent*) BULLSHIT!

IKE. Alpha and the beta, the beginning and the end.

JOJO. (Omega.)

IKE. Who's got the power.

JOJO. (*regretting everything*) (I'm starved.)

IKE. (*posing in the mirror*) My arms are like *pistons*.

4.

(SHELLY and LILY)

(They wear fila luxe tracksuits. Headbands too. Makeup: perfect. LILY is stretching her calves. BLANCHE is dusting inconspicuously in the periphery.)

SHELLY. I used to get v's but now I do moons //

LILY. I have a French manicuah //

SHELLY. You go to linear nails? //

LILY. No I used to go theh.

SHELLY. With who Olga?

LILY. I don't go there // anymore.

SHELLY. Was she fat?

LILY. I go to Ana Orsini.

SHELLY. I used to go there.

[STOP]

LILY. I have a French manicuah.

(shows her)

SHELLY. Heeeee. Stunning.

LILY. Let me see your v's.

SHELLY. Moons.

LILY. I love // it-h

BLANCHE. Where's the pledge?

LILY. What.

BLANCHE. I'm dusting.

SHELLY. You use pledge? It gives you waxy buildup.

[STOP]

LILY. I thought //

SHELLY. (harsh blame) You use pledge??

LILY. (meek) Ye.

SHELLY. (to BLANCHE) LISTEN TA MAY. you don't use that, you wanna ruin all the furnitcha it's brand-new furnitcha very expensive mucho dinero, you wanna ruin this?

(**BLANCHE** shakes her head.)

SHELLY. You don't use that on the furniture. (to **LILY**) Did you tell her about the floors?

LILY. I //

SHELLY. (to **BLANCHE**; eyeing her suspiciously) You be careful with the floors araight?

BLANCHE. (restraint but it's difficult) What would you have me use.

SHELLY. I can't remembah it's this stuff // (snap, snap)

LILY. Anna // Maria

SHELLY. What's the freakin name? (disproportionately angry) I CAN'T REMEMBAH. (snap, snap) It's much bettah.

[STOP]

BLANCHE. Well //

SHELLY. I'll have you call my girl My girl is very good She'll give you the name.

LILY. (after an uncomfortable spell) Did you get the invitation // for

SHELLY. Oh and I'm pregnant-h.

(beat)

LILY. You're –

SHELLY. The-baby's-fine-no-disfigurement-I-got-the-ultrasound-Tuesday.

LILY. HEEEEEEE. SHEL // CONGRATS

SHELLY. (I saw a little hand I saw little feet.)

LILY. When did // you

SHELLY. I'm done with the first trimester they tell you not to tell anyone before that, I can still do exercise, speedwalking aerobics. am I glowing? //

LILY. Ye //

SHELLY. (Badminton.)

(beat)

SHELLY. It's nice being pregnant just to glow.

LILY. (*twirling her hair*) Did you tell Jo?

SHELLY. Yeah I mean no, I'll tell him, ca-an. Let's speed-walk.

(*beat*)

LILY. Do I?

SHELLY. What.

LILY. Glow.

(*beat*)

SHELLY. (*rhetorical*) Are you pregnant?

(*SHELLY smiles a freakishly wide, teasing smile at LILY; pokes at her stomach.*)

(*BLANCHE looks disdainfully at SHELLY. SHELLY stares her down. BLANCHE goes back to dusting, feigning interest in her dumb job.*)

LILY. Let's speedwalk I have my thing.

(*SHELLY makes to leave. Hawk-like, she watches BLANCHE, her mouth curled into a snarl.*)

SHELLY. Shoof haddie.

(*LILY looks up at SHELLY who is still fixed on BLANCHE.*)

SHOOFIE.

(*LILY jolts, looks to SHELLY and then BLANCHE.*)

(*BLANCHE freezes a moment, then slowly pivots to see if she's being watched.*)

(*SHELLY casually fingers the furniture for dust.*)

(*looks out casually*) Ooday ooyay ink-thay ee-shay eels-stay?

(*BLANCHE stops for a moment; LILY doesn't get it on the first try.*)

LILY. Uht-way?

SHELLY. Do you *think* she eels-stay?

LILY. (*slightly embarrassed*) I don't ow-knay.

SHELLY. SHOOFIE. (*pause*) My last aid-may ole-stay ings-thay.

(**LILY** looks at her.)

(*whispers loudly*) And she wasn't an *igger-nay*.

(**BLANCHE** freezes.)

LILY. (*deeply uncomfortable*) When are we going already?

SHELLY. *Iggers-nay eel-stay.*

5.

(IKE and LILY.)

(The master bedroom, night.)

(IKE does pushups on the floor. LILY watches him, bored.)

IKE. Eighteen Nineteen.

LILY. She needs it to be off the books she said.

IKE. Twenny (sit-on-me) twenny-one.

(She gets on his back while he does pushups.)

LILY. She doesn't want to pay taxes.

IKE. So.

LILY. So she doesn't want a check, anyways I need money.

IKE. Don't I give you money?

LILY. I had to pay the gardener.

IKE. Twenny-seven.

LILY. And Frieda's shower, I had to get her // a present

IKE. You don't have enough money?

LILY. I //

IKE. Look at this house, you don't like this house?

LILY. (No I like it.)

IKE. Those are dolomite floors.

LILY. Shelly has a credit card.

IKE. Use Shelly's I'll give you the money.

(LILY stands.)

LILY. Could I have my own bank account?

IKE. We have a bank account (thirty-six).

LILY. My name's not on it.

IKE. Why do you need your name on everything.

LILY. My mother says that she never heard of a husband //
who won't

IKE. Your mother should mind her own business.

LILY. DON'T TURN ME AGAINST MY FAMILY.

[STOP]

(More pushups. She brushes her hair and cries.)

IKE. What the hell is wrong with you.

LILY. Aduknow.

IKE. Why are you *crying*?

LILY. I cry better than I speak.

IKE. Who says?

LILY. YOU.

(Beat. He produces cash.)

IKE. You need more I'll give you more

LILY. I always need moah.

IKE. You buy gadgets.

LILY. *(gravitas)* I need gadgets.

IKE. No one // needs

LILY. You don't know what I need.

(IKE stands.)

IKE. I don't know what you need?

(He grabs her. They kiss. It's not that sexy.)

That's a good girl.

(She looks up at him with her big, watery eyes. She chews her gum. She brushes her hair.)

LILY. I'm bohed.

IKE. Your hair smells nice.

LILY. *(cheered)* There's no flakes *right-h?*

IKE. Who's my little girl.

LILY. Me.

IKE. *(stroking her cheek)* We'll talk about getting you a credit card.

LILY. *(She sits on his lap.)* Also I want to take acting lessons.

IKE. You're already taking // lessons

LILY. At the école but that's cooking.

(pause)

IKE. I thought you wanted a family.

LILY. I can have // both

IKE. Because I want to have a family I thought that was clear.

(beat)

LILY. Maybe we // could

IKE. And I want it now //

LILY. But //

IKE. NOW I WANT IT NOW!

(He kisses her violently, starts tearing off her clothes.)

BLANCHE enters with laundry.)

BLANCHE. *(Ooh I'll come back.)*

(BLANCHE exits. LILY pulls away.)

(long pause)

LILY. I got fitted for a diaphragm.

(pause)

IKE. Where is it.

(beat)

LILY. In the draw.

IKE. Get it.

LILY. I just thought in // case

IKE. GET IT.

(Pause. She goes to the drawer.)

IKE. Flush it.

LILY. But I...I just got it.

(Beat. He stares her down. She exits and returns.)

IKE. *(sweet)* I didn't hear a flush.

LILY. You wanna check?

IKE. Don't use that tone with me.

(Chews her gum. Pops.)

LILY. We nevah do anything.

IKE. We just got back from Aruba.

LILY. I don't like being alone.

IKE. (*gleeful*) You're not alone – you got the ghost!

LILY. You shouldn't have told me about that.

IKE. (*teasing*) Awwwwwwww you scared of the ghost?

LILY. It's not funny //

IKE. BOO //

LILY. AAAAAAH

(She screams, he laughs. Stop.)

IKE. Honey there's no such thing as ghosts; don't be a dumbell.

(He ruffles her hair.)

LILY. You told me the real estate guy said it was haunted

IKE. You gonna listen to some real estate guy?

LILY. You said you believed it.

IKE. (*gently, playful*) Calm down.

LILY. I saw it. I saw it the other day. (*beat*) I saw a face.

(IKE looks at her, smiling curiously.)

IKE. You saw a ghost?

(beat)

LILY. In the living room – the other day.

(beat)

IKE. Honey, you're just seeing things.

LILY. (*increasingly upset, a child's nightmare*) It was looking right at me.

(He looks at her – he's a bit spooked.)

IKE. You saw somm?

LILY. The real estate guy told you – I'm not making // it up

IKE. Ok ok Look at me.

LILY. I saw a face.

IKE. Honey look at me.

(LILY looks at him.)

IKE. You think a ghost is gonna mess witchu when you got me protecting you?

LILY. (*sad*) When are you leaving?

IKE. China? I told you, Thursday.

LILY. Are you going to be gone for my birthday?

IKE. I leave right after.

LILY. How long will you be gone?

IKE. A few weeks.

LILY. Can I come?

IKE. Business.

(*Pause. She goes to mirror, brushes her hair.*)

LILY. *I'm not a dumbbell.*

(*beat*)

IKE. Who's my little girl?

(*no answer*)

(*seducing her*)

Daddy just has to be gone a little while and then he'll be home to take care of his baby.

(*pause*)

LILY. (*vulnerable*) I. I get panic attacks.

IKE. (*making fun of her*) "I get panic attacks."

(*beat*)

LILY. (*shocked by his cruelty*) It's not funny.

IKE. (*thinks this is funny*) AlrightAlright.

(*beat*)

LILY. I want to go with you.

IKE. Who's my little gadget?

LILY. (*frightened*) Don't leave.

IKE. Gimmethebosses.

6.

(**BLANCHE** and **IKE**)

(*The kitchen. Morning.*)

(**BLANCHE** has just made a pot of coffee, she's playing waitress. **IKE** is eating – or slurping giant mouthfuls of cereal, alternating with drinking his creatine shake.)

BLANCHE. Refill? //

IKE. Just a few things, you come in, not a big deal I was thinking Sunday //

BLANCHE. That's my day off.

IKE. (Get me some milk.)

BLANCHE. Right // but

IKE. Yeah but I need you to do it Sunday see because I have stuff going on so it has to be Sunday It's no big thing.

BLANCHE. You want me to come into your office //

IKE. Cuz we're moving, Hong Kong, stuff What's this?

BLANCHE. What? Oh. Soy milk.

IKE. I want regular milk.

BLANCHE. But have you tried // soy?

IKE. (*slams down milk, it spills*) GET RID OF IT.

[STOP]

BLANCHE. But it's // very

IKE. (*petulant, shouting*) I WANT MILK REGULAR MILK.

[STOP]

IKE. Here's a sponge //

BLANCHE. I'll // clean it

IKE. (Where's-the-splenda-we-got-splenda?) //

BLANCHE. I //

IKE. (*bright*) So this Sunday aright.

BLANCHE. Where?

IKE. The warehouse? It's in Jersey, Hoboken, I'll give you carfare I'll give you twenny bucks Don' worry about nuthin //

BLANCHE. This is making me uncomfortable. //

IKE. (Where's-the-splenda?) //

BLANCHE. Because. I, uh. I really don't clean offices?

IKE. You //

BLANCHE. Or. Well that's not what I was *hired* to do.

(*He gives her a dirty look. Downs some creatine.*)

(*increasingly nervous*) And. And I...The *boundaries?* (*beat*)
Do you see what I mean?

IKE. (*strained cheer*) An awffice is a house but with file cabinets.

BLANCHE. But. It isn't *really* a house.

IKE. Pretend it's a house.

BLANCHE. But //

IKE. (*bright*) Just pretend.

BLANCHE. Maybe we could organize it for later in // the week

IKE. (*violent*) I'M-ASKING-YOU-TO-DO-ONE-THING!

(*BLANCHE, frightened, reflexively tries to shield herself.*

IKE looks at her, completely unaware of his effect on her.
Beat.)

IKE. Whatsamatta?

BLANCHE. I - //

IKE. BOO!

BLANCHE. (*terrified*) AHHHHHHH!

IKE. (*delighted*) I scahe ya? AH HAHAAH.

(*BLANCHE makes a feeble attempt to laugh along with him.*)

IKE. Just do this for me, you're doing this for me (I'll give you twenny bucks) *What kinda music izzat?*

BLANCHE. Rachmaninoff.

IKE. It's giving me a headache BAH BAH BAH.

(*BLANCHE shuts it off.*)

BLANCHE. (*a concession; cleaning his spilled cereal*) I used to work in an office; I did bookkeeping.

IKE. Good girl //

BLANCHE. I did a lot of office // jobs

IKE. You're gonna clean this up I gotta go.

(He gathers his things.)

IKE. You could make a lot of money bookkeeping, why don't you do that?

BLANCHE. Capitalism, cubicles, it's not for me.

IKE. But if you got *skills* Your *skillset*?

BLANCHE. Offices make me claustrophobic.

IKE. *Awwffices?*

BLANCHE. The whole system.

IKE. Whaddayou a *commie*?

BLANCHE. Commie? No, more, uh //

IKE. *(checks out her booty)* Commie //

BLANCHE. democratic socialist? anyway I resist labels //

IKE. (What are those, levi's?) //

BLANCHE. But the System wants to crush you.

IKE. "System"?

BLANCHE. The political truncheon? //

IKE. You got a good vocabulary.

BLANCHE. I got a PhD.

IKE. College, ye, not for me.

BLANCHE. I speak four languages.

(beat)

IKE. But there's only one language spoken in this world.

(He looks right at her.)

BLANCHE. Which is.

(beat)

IKE. Gold and Silver baby.

Money talks. *(beat)*

That's right.

[STOP]

BLANCHE. Are you still // hungry?

IKE. And I don't want you wearing no levi's, *listen ta may.*
I'll give you a closetful of jeans – the best – jojo jeans, a
closetful. **HOT.** The *best,* you *listenna-may.*

BLANCHE. I don't got a closet.

IKE. Wha?

BLANCHE. My room, I use a suitcase.

IKE. (*preening*) I'll get you a closet.

BLANCHE. (*irony*) (Oo-that'd-be-nice.) //

IKE. You like ya room? //

BLANCHE. (*tense smile*) Well-I feel-like-the-walls-are-closing-
in-on-me-but-yeah.

IKE. You could take somethin for that.

BLANCHE. (*finessing*) I'm a little claustrophobic aha // ha

IKE. (*a bit too loud*) YOU LIKE HIP-HOP!?

BLANCHE. (*jumps*) I yeah I I like Tupac.

IKE. Who?

BLANCHE. They shot him? //

IKE. To me it's // noise

BLANCHE. (And Jay-Z got gunned down in that // video?)

IKE. I like it but it's noise //

BLANCHE. Well.

[STOP]

IKE. (*swaggering*) You're a hip-hopster.

BLANCHE. I like Sibelius best.

(*She watches him swagger. She doesn't know what to do.*)

IKE. (*"rapping"*) the hip

the hop

the hip hip hippity hop

AND YOU DON'T STOP.

[STOP]

BLANCHE. Uh.

IKE. I know about hip-hop cause of my business, which is
fashion Denim You like denim?

BLANCHE. It's – versatile.

IKE. You dress nice.

BLANCHE. Thanks.

(BLANCHE cleans.)

IKE. No I'm serious yo.

(BLANCHE cleans. IKE struts over.)

Is that a hip-hop shirt?

BLANCHE. I don't know.

IKE. "FUBU. for us by us."

BLANCHE. Mm.

IKE. Like that.

BLANCHE. *(visibly uncomfortable)* Yeah.

IKE. Nice.

(beat)

BLANCHE. You like Sibelius?

IKE. You like me?

(stop)

(seductive) You like me?

(He grabs her around the waist from behind. She carefully disentangles herself.)

BLANCHE. I'll get the dustbuster.

(She exits.)

7.

(The night of LILY's birthday.)

(It's the middle of the night. LILY has come home from her party. She holds a few helium balloons tied together. She can't sleep. She looks in the mirror.)

(BLANCHE is reading by lamplight in the living room. She watches LILY.)

BLANCHE. How was the party.

LILY. I'm old.

BLANCHE. Nice balloons.

LILY. What are you reading?

BLANCHE. You wouldn't like this.

LILY. Could you read to me?

BLANCHE. It's theory.

LILY. What kinda theory? *(grabs the book)* I din know you liked to read.

BLANCHE. Cause I'm a maid?

LILY. Ye.

BLANCHE. "Ye"?

LILY. YE!?!? *(flipping through the book)* What kinda book is this?

BLANCHE. Semiotics (can I have that back?)

LILY. What's *semiotics-h*?

BLANCHE. The science of sign systems.

LILY. Why are you *reading* it?

(LILY flips through it.)

(deeply offended) This is *retarded*.

BLANCHE. Well I have my degree in it. So. And I might have a teaching gig, I'm waiting to hear.

(LILY just looks at her, waits for the punch line.)

LILY. *(squinting)* What *degree*?

BLANCHE. *(getting excited)* I did my undergraduate work at Chicago? I studied lit with (well-minored-in-philosophy) but with Saul Bellow?

LILY. Saul –

BLANCHE. He won the nobel prize?

LILY. *Heeeee!*

BLANCHE. And Paul de *Man* all these *guys*. They're mostly dead now, but nice dead white guys. And I did graduate work at brown in semiotics or – well under the rubric of critical // theory

LILY. What's *brown*?

BLANCHE. A college.

LILY. Is it a black school?

BLANCHE. It's integrated.

LILY. With what?

(beat)

BLANCHE. *(confounded)* White people (?)

LILY. *(scrunching up her face; indignant)* So why's it called *brown*?

BLANCHE. I think we should avoid racial issues

LILY. *(winsome)* (I always avoid them) *So you went to college? That's so shaahp!*

BLANCHE. And I even had a thing with Cornel West; well it // wasn't –

LILY. Who //

BLANCHE. He used to send me these letters? like loveletters and shit and he's all frontin he's all "your eyes your hips" // And he's

LILY. Your teacher?

BLANCHE. He's like "I want to collapse you into the fold." I was like "unfold me."

LILY. ?

BLANCHE. *(quick)* Actually it's kinda ironic cuz I studied representations of the African American Domestic in Mass Media with him & here I am – but I luuuv irony.

LILY. If you went to college you can get a job –

BLANCHE. Well I need. I – I have to pay – my *loans*.

LILY. (*clapping*) And you're my maid?

BLANCHE. For the time being.

LILY. (*sad*) But I *don't want you to go*.

BLANCHE. But I might have this teaching job //

LILY. (*earnest*) But-you-clean-my-house-stunning //

BLANCHE. (*produces pack of gum*) Gum? //

LILY. (*Hee I love // dentyne.*)

BLANCHE. (*quick*) And if I get it I can pay back my loans and it might lead to a tenure position Which can lead to making speeches and my book'll come out and I could maybe be a pundit Write for *harper's* Start a blog –

LILY. Why couldn't you just get a teaching job to start with//

BLANCHE. (*defensive*) DO YOU KNOW HOW HARD IT IS TO GET A TEACHING JOB?! (*compensatorily girlish; quick*) A-ha-ha I mean – no-but-the-academy is so *cloistered* I've applied for – I mean I can not tell you how many jobs I've applied for –

LILY. Really?

BLANCHE. Oh I used reams of paper *reams* forests, whole *arbors*; but it's very white and it's hard as a black woman a lesbian I mean I like white guys *fine* but it's kind of a closed system and everyone wants to teach //

LILY. Why //

BLANCHE. Because what else are you gonna do with your worthless semiotics degree.!?!? *Aha-ha just kidding*. No but they love the whole ivory tower thing knowam-saaayin? Because you're insulated from the real world. *That's* the academy. They won't look at *reality*. And of course it's all worthless I mean really does anyone give a SHIT about synecdoche or Kant's epistemological turn? *No!* // And the academy

LILY. You want taffy?

BLANCHE. wants you to believe that the life of the mind, critical thinking, that this is *worth* something but – SURPRISE – it's just more hucksterism, another trick

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