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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

Belleville

by Amy Herzog

SAMUEL FRENCH

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BELLEVILLE was first produced at the Yale Repertory Theatre in New Haven, connecticut on October 21, 2011. The performance was directed by Anne Kauffman, with sets by Julia C. Lee, costumes by Mark Nagle, lighting by Nina Hyun Seung, and sound by Robert Kaplowitz. The Production Stage Manager was Gina Noele Odierno. The cast was as follows:

ABBY . . . . . Maria Dizzia
ZACK . . . . . Greg Keller
ALIOUNE . . . . . .Gilbert Owuor
AMINA . . . . . Pascale Armand

BELLEVILLE opened at New York Theatre Workshop on March 3, 2013 in New York City. The performance was directed by Anne Kauffman, with sets by Julia C. Lee, costumes by Mark Nagle, lighting by Ben Stanton, and sound by Robert Kaplowitz. The Production Stage Manager was Terri K. Kohler. The cast was as follows:

ABBY . . . . . Maria Dizzia
ZACK . . . . . Greg Keller
ALIOUNE . . . . . .Phillip James Brannon
AMINA . . . . . Pascale Armand

CHARACTERS

ABBY – Twenty-eight, American, white
ZACK – Twenty eight, American, white
ALIOUNE – Twenty-five, Senegalese-French
AMINA – Twenty-five, Senegalese-French

SETTING

A one-bedroom apartment in the Belleville section of Paris.

TIME

Mid-December of the recent past.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

A slash (/) indicates overlapping dialogue.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Virgil Blanc for his assistance with the French dialogue.

Scene One

(The main room of an apartment in Belleville. An old building with character; many layers of paint cover the original moldings. Tastefully but inexpensively decorated. A mix of convincing knockoffs of stylish modern furniture pieces and accents that suggest North African fabrics and crafts. Floor pillows augment the scant seating options. The residents here are temporary.)

(At lights up, it's late afternoon. No lights are on in the apartment. Indirect sunlight filters in from a window or two.)

(From within the bedroom, perhaps we can barely hear music.)

(A key in the lock.)

(The front door opens and **ABBY** *enters in lots of winter layers, carrying a yoga mat and several shopping bags. She drops the mat, the bags, and her winter coat on the floor. She closes the door. She turns on a light. She goes to the couch and drapes herself over it, her back in a deep arch. She closes her eyes.)*

(In her stillness, she hears the beat of nearby music and indistinct voices. She opens her eyes and listens. She stands. She walks slowly and quietly to the bedroom door, where she stops and listens. Hesitantly, she turns the knob and opens the door. She screams. She runs to the front door.)

(With the door open, we can identify the music as a porn soundtrack. **ZACK** *enters from the bedroom, buttoning his jeans.)*

ZACK. Hi.

ABBY. Hey.

ZACK. I thought you had class.

ABBY. No one showed.

(brief pause)

ZACK. Probably people have already left town.

ABBY. Yeah. Maybe.

(Pause. Simultaneously.)

ABBY. /What are you doing home?

ZACK. So you went shopping?

ABBY. What?

ZACK. You went shopping?

(brief pause)

ABBY. Just for the last few Christmas presents. I want to mail everything by tomorrow to be safe.

ZACK. Did you use the new credit card?

ABBY. Yup. It works.

ZACK. Good! What did you get?

ABBY. For your parents some, um. Tea.

ZACK. That's fine, they'll like it.

ABBY. Well.

ZACK. They'll pretend to, which is the same thing with them.

ABBY. And chocolate for my dad from that place he remembers going once with my mom. And for the baby, this Eiffel Tower, um. Onesie.

(She shows him.)

ZACK. Cute.

ABBY. *(apologetically)* My sister will like it.

ZACK. Maybe the child will be born with a keen sense of irony. Maybe she'll wear the onesie ironically.

ABBY. Not if she takes after / her father.

ZACK. Her father, true. That's it?

ABBY. Zack, what are you – ?

ZACK. What?

ABBY. Doing home?

(pause)

ZACK. I took the afternoon off.

ABBY. Why didn't you call me?

ZACK. Because I thought you were teaching.

ABBY. Are you *sick*, or – ?

(Brief pause; he misunderstands.)

ZACK. I'm sorry, meaning – ?

ABBY. I mean are you – do you have a / cold – ?

ZACK. Just…kinda tired. Playing hooky. I know.

(He slaps himself on the wrist.)

You don't look so good.

ABBY. I just…need a sec…

ZACK. This is such a big deal?

ABBY. I guess not.

ZACK. I mean, it's embarrassing, for me.

ABBY. I don't mean for you to be embarrassed.

ZACK. No? Because you're having a *slightly* Victorian reaction.

ABBY. I am?

ZACK. Mmmm –

ABBY. I thought I was home alone. It was a little scary.

ZACK. Just me.

(He smiles. She smiles back, making an effort.)

I'm gonna jump in the shower, if that's cool.

ABBY. Yup!

(He hesitates.)

I'm fine! I am cool, this is me being cool. Go. Finish up.

(off his look)

ABBY. (*continued*) Kidding! Maybe, or maybe making a real suggesti – go. I'm not talking, go.

(He exits into the bathroom. She is still. The shower starts offstage. She goes toward the bedroom. She hesitates at the threshold, then goes in. Offstage, we hear the sound of the porn soundtrack resume. It plays for a few seconds, then stops. **ABBY** *reenters from the bedroom, stony. She closes the door behind her.)*

(A knock at the door jolts **ABBY** *back into alertness. She goes to the door and opens it to reveal* **ALIOUNE**.*)*

ABBY. Hey.

ALIOUNE. Abby!

ABBY. What's up?

ALIOUNE. Sorry, I –

ABBY. What?

ALIOUNE. I thought I saw Zack come in a little while ago.

ABBY. Yeah, he's in the shower.

ALIOUNE. I'll come later.

ABBY. It's okay, come in.

(She walks into the apartment leaving the door open, then turns to see he is hesitating.)

Come on, he'll just be a couple minutes.

ALIOUNE. You don't mind?

ABBY. Are you hungry? I made –

(She exits. **ALIOUNE** *comes all the way into the apartment, uneasily. He notices a book on the coffee table and stoops to look at it. He straightens up slightly guiltily as* **ABBY** *reenters with a tray of Christmas cookies.)*

ALIOUNE. Thank you.

(He takes one, sees she is still holding the tray out, and politely takes another. She takes one herself.)

ABBY. You can look at that, I just put it out for that reason.

(He picks up the book and dutifully looks through it.)

ALIOUNE. It looks nice.

ABBY. It was nice.

ALIOUNE. Big.

ABBY. A hundred and fifty people. Mid-size.

ALIOUNE. *(impressed)* Is this your house?

*(***ABBY** *laughs.)*

ABBY. No, that's a manor.

ALIOUNE. A – ?

ABBY. It was somebody's house once, and now it's a place you rent for weddings. We don't have a fountain at my house. Or a rose garden. Or ice sculptures, on a typical day.

ALIOUNE. It's very, it's…

ABBY. Yeah, it was fine, if I were gonna do it all over again I'd have like ten people meet us at city hall and spend the money traveling with Zack for a year before he started med school. But we were the first of all our friends to do it, we didn't have any basis for…it was nice, though, I was really happy that day.

*(***ALIOUNE** *turns the page. Something makes him smile.)*

What?

ALIOUNE. It's Zack's face, he's so –

ABBY. I know, he's such a ham. He hates having his picture taken.

(He turns the last few pages and politely replaces the book on the table.)

ALIOUNE. Thank you for showing me.

(brief pause)

ABBY. How's Amina?

ALIOUNE. Fine.

ABBY. And the baby?

ALIOUNE. Great.

(He gives her a thumbs up to accentuate his answer. More silence as they eat.)

ALIOUNE. (*continued*) Will you go home? For the holidays?

ABBY. Oh – Zack didn't tell you?

ALIOUNE. No.

ABBY. We can't. There's a problem. With the visas, I don't understand it, honestly, but apparently we won't be able to get back / in if we –

ALIOUNE. Oh, no.

ABBY. Yeah, it sucks because my sister's about to have a baby. Like any minute. So it'll be the baby's first Christmas. Not like she'll know we're not there.

ALIOUNE. Your sister?

ABBY. The baby. She. My *sister*. Will know. My sister is not happy about it. I'm not sure if Zack mentioned that my mom died a few years ago?

ALIOUNE. Yes, and I want to say, that I am / so sorry –

ABBY. No no no, just to explain, that holidays in my family have become especially *weighted*. Almost to the exclusion of fun, it's like hours of meaningful eye contact, it's exhausting, actually. But no, I'm being glib, I fucking love Christmas with my family.

ALIOUNE. I'm so sorry.

ABBY. Well.

(She shrugs: 'what can you do?')

What are you guys doing for Christmas?

ALIOUNE. We're Muslim.

ABBY. Oh – *(the cookies) oh!*

ALIOUNE. It's all right.

ABBY. I just gave you a –

ALIOUNE. It's okay, we're not very strict.

ABBY. Well I hope not, since you're in the process of eating an angel. I feel so dumb that I didn't…because you guys are from…

ALIOUNE. Amina was born here. Originally, I'm from Dakar.

ABBY. Uh-huh. Which is in –

ALIOUNE. Senegal.

ABBY. Right. Which is Muslim.

ALIOUNE. Mostly.

ABBY. Sorry.

ALIOUNE. It is really, it's okay.

ABBY. No, yeah, it's good, I'll just set out to confirm every stereotype you may have about Americans.

ALIOUNE. The French, they are not so much better.

ABBY. That's comforting. Because the superior thing that they do, it's very *convincing*. Do you know that I get nervous before grocery shopping here? I have to psych myself up for every interaction, it's deeply sad. You're very sweet but you don't have to keep eating those.

ALIOUNE. I am afraid you do not like it here.

ABBY. Me? Oh no, I love it. It's the city of love, or the city of lights, which is it? Is it both? And I especially love this neighborhood, I love the – um, well I hate the word 'diversity,' I just feel like a button on a denim jacket in the late eighties, oh god there's no way you get that reference, but it's so – but there's a lot of life here, I don't feel like I'm living in an artifact, and it's nice not being the only, um, foreigners, you know, feeling like we are among others making a life in this sometimes hostile…

(She really wishes she hadn't started talking.)

Anyway it is *not about me*. Zack is doing research to prevent *children* from contracting *AIDS*, I can be a big girl and deal with a little homesickness, right? So, what do Muslims do for Christmas?

ALIOUNE. Uh…

ABBY. Joke, Alioune, that was a / joke.

(A sickening thud comes from off, where the shower is running.)

ABBY. (*continued*) Zack?

(no response)

Homey, you okay?

(She knocks on the door, no response. She opens it.)

You okay?

(Muffled, **ZACK***'s voice off.* **ABBY** *goes into the bathroom and closes the door.* **ALIOUNE** *stands, uncomfortable.* **ABBY** *reenters.)*

He's fine. He just dropped the shampoo. God, I'm jumpy.

ALIOUNE. I will come back.

ABBY. He'll just be a sec, I told him you're here.

ALIOUNE. I feel it's not – I have chosen a bad time.

ABBY. No, I – it's not a bad time, I'm sorry if I've, that I'm such a downer –

ALIOUNE. No, Abigail –

ABBY. I'm like going on and on about – I really apologize, I just don't have enough to do.

ALIOUNE. Stop. Stop apologizing.

(brief pause)

You know, Zack, he always say you are a wonderful actress.

ABBY. Really? Yeah, I'm all right. But to be an actor you have to love to suffer and I only *like* to suffer.

I'm a yoga teacher right now. And that's fine. The Dharma teaches you to say "good enough." You know?

(Pause. The shower stops. She calls off.)

Zack, our landlord urgently needs to smoke a bowl with you.

ZACK. *(offstage)* What?

ABBY. Hurry up, you're keeping Alioune waiting!

ZACK. *(offstage)* Oh, *pardon, une minute, / Alioune!*

ALIOUNE. *Ça va, ne t'en fais pas*!

ABBY. Ça va. That means I'm okay.

ALIOUNE. Or "it's okay." I see your French classes are proceeding at a very advanced, euh / rate.

ABBY. Oh that's sarcasm, that's good. I stopped going, actually.

ALIOUNE. Why?

(Perhaps around this time, **ZACK** *crosses from the bathroom back to the bedroom in a towel.)*

ABBY. Because the teacher made fun of my pronunciation, and because everyone speaks English here. As long as I know how to say "*pardon*" when I bump into someone and "*laissez-moi tranquille*" when men bother me on the metro/ I –

ALIOUNE. A lot of men give you trouble here?

(brief pause)

ABBY. Surprise though that may / be –

ALIOUNE. Not a surprise.

ABBY. Too late, you gave yourself away.

ALIOUNE. I only, I am disappointed, in my other, how do you say – ?

ABBY. My fellow men.

ALIOUNE. Thank you, that they do not treat you with respect.

ABBY. Uh-huh. How old do you think I am?

(he considers)

ALIOUNE. Thirty…two?

ABBY. Okay, get out. Seriously, get out.

ALIOUNE. Seventeen.

ABBY. Funny. I'm twenty-eight.

ALIOUNE. Sorry, your…

(He gestures vaguely toward her hair.)

ABBY. We gray early in my family, okay? God, you can see it from there?

How old are you?

ALIOUNE. Twenty-five.

ABBY. *What?!*

ALIOUNE. What did you think?

ABBY. You have two kids! And a property management business!

ALIOUNE. Yes. And I am twenty-five.

ABBY. Let me ask you this. When you were little, did your parents intone, over and over, "It doesn't matter what you do when you grow up as long as you're happy?"

(brief pause)

ALIOUNE. No.

ABBY. I am increasingly convinced that is the worst thing you can say to a child. May I never say that to my children.

Zack!

ZACK. *(offstage)* What?

ABBY. How old do you think Alioune is?

ZACK. *(offstage) (brief pause)*

Twenty-four?

*(***ALIOUNE** *laughs.)*

ABBY. He told you!

ALIOUNE. I don't think so.

ABBY. He has two kids!

ZACK. *(offstage)* Yeah, scientifically, I'm not having a problem with that timeline.

ABBY. *(quietly)* Where oh where have my twenties gone?

(The bathroom door opens and **ZACK** *enters, dressed, wet hair, with his laptop.)*

ZACK. Sorry to keep you waiting, man.

ALIOUNE. Now I understand, why are the hot water bills so high since you move in.

ABBY. Oh! Oh no, that's / me.

ZACK. That's Abby.

ABBY. I'm the worst, I take so many baths. It's a compulsion. I wake up in the morning and I'm like *I will not take a bath today*, and / then –

ZACK. She gets cold.

ABBY. I am perpetually chilled, and it's the / only thing –

ZACK. Blue fingernails, it's spooky. Once / she –

ABBY. Please don't tell this story.

ZACK. Why? Alioune / won't –

ABBY. Fine, but do the short version.

ZACK. We had a seminar together, in college, and it met in the basement of this / old –

ABBY. It was freezing!

ZACK. It was, it was unacceptable.

ABBY. Zack is never cold, and his teeth would chatter by the end.

ZACK. Oh because it was a three hour seminar. The professor was this old phlegmatic –

ABBY. Short version.

ZACK. So this one class meeting it was below freezing outside and Abby had herself contorted into / this –

ABBY. I have to sort of wrap my limbs around each other sometimes to keep warm.

(she demonstrates)

ALIOUNE. …oh.

ZACK. And when class ended and we walked out she said her leg felt weird so she pulled up her jeans, and her left calf –

ABBY. It was my right calf.

ZACK. Her *left* calf, you're wrong, was swollen to like twice its normal size. Because the way she was sitting, she had blocked off a vein or, artery or / whatever and –

ABBY. Can you tell this man attended *medical* school?

ZACK. And, shhh, and all this blood had pooled there. It was really grotesque.

ABBY. Thanks.

ALIOUNE. That's…

ABBY. Yeah, it's disgusting. I went to the health center and the doctor had never seen anything like it so she sent me to the ER. But by the time they could see me it had returned to normal so I just felt like an asshole. I was like, "yeah, I don't really know what I'm doing here, my leg was swollen…before," and they were like, "… awesome, so glad we had this talk."

See, it's not a good story.

ZACK. It is, however, the story of how we got together.

ABBY. Zack stayed with me the whole time.

ZACK. Even though you were desperately in love with somebody else, and / would be for quite some time.

ABBY. Blah blah blah, can we not…?

ALIOUNE. You should take as many baths as you need.

(pause)

ABBY. All right, I'll leave you two to your devious purpose.

(She begins to exit.)

ZACK. Hey, I was thinking in the shower, maybe we should go on a D-A-T-E tonight.

ABBY. Ooohhh! A D-A-T-E.

ALIOUNE. Why do you spell it?

ABBY. He thinks I'm like a dog, if I get too excited I'll pee myself.

ZACK. It's been a while since we went on a D-A-T-E.

ABBY. You feeling bad about something?

ZACK. You trying to start something in front of Alioune?

ABBY. I guess you're just *assuming* I'm available.

ZACK. I should have asked. Are you available?

ABBY. I think I can switch a few things around.

ZACK. I'd like that.

(Her phone rings.)

ABBY. That'll be my father. He's already been awake for a few hours without being reassured of his centrality in my existence.

(She picks up.)

Hi Daddy. It was cancelled.

(on her way out)

Because nobody showed up. What do you call a yoga teacher with no students? This has been your daily Zen Koan, by Abby.

(to **ZACK***)*

Window.

(She exits. **ZACK** *performs falling over in exhaustion.)*

ALIOUNE. No no, she – it was fine.

ZACK. Sorry. Whatever you just had to deal with, sorry.

(Over the following, **ZACK** *packs a bowl. He also opens his laptop to play music.)*

ALIOUNE. It was my fault. I offended her, because I thought she was thirty-two.

ZACK. Oh no!

ALIOUNE. Actually I thought she was older, I thought thirty-two was a / safe –

ZACK. Sorry I left you stranded out here, man. She walked in on me earlier. Um. On the computer.

ALIOUNE. *(brief pause)* Oh – oh, shit!

ZACK. Yup. Yes.

ALIOUNE. Was it – very nasty?

ZACK. The screen was turned away from her.

ALIOUNE. Good.

ZACK. But. Yes.

(They both laugh.)

ZACK. *(continued)* She's trying to go off her medication. Not trying, she's going off. It's torture. It's torture. But I'm not allowed to say anything because that would be *unsupportive*. And this is a *period of transition*. Meanwhile I'm thinking of resorting to mashing them up in her food, it's just…*so* not a good idea.

ALIOUNE. She was on…?

ZACK. Oh, like an anti-depressant, anti-anxiety. She started taking it when her mom was dying, and never imagined that five years later, yadda yadda, but as far as I was concerned that shit was worth its weight in *gold*, it was…

(proffering)

Green for you, friend.

(They smoke over the following.)

I'm just, I'm losing my mind, because for the last five years all she's talked about is Paris, her parents had some amazing trip to Paris in like nineteen seventy something, she thinks Paris will be the cure for all her, whatever, so I give up a really good residency to take this job, no complaints, it's a great job, but now we're here, and she quits her French classes, and she's uncomfortable in the neighborhood –

ALIOUNE. She's uncomfortable in Belleville?

ZACK. She would never admit it, but…anyway. You see what I'm dealing with.

ALIOUNE. Sorry.

ZACK. Yeah, it's a nightmare. It's very dark in there.

*(***ZACK** *types something briefly on the computer.)*

How's Amina?

ALIOUNE. Fine. The kids, they're fine. Uh…

*(***ABBY** *enters from the bedroom, still on the phone, holding* **ZACK***'s ringing phone out toward him.)*

ABBY. *(quietly)* Work.

*(***ZACK** *takes the phone and* **ABBY** *returns to the bedroom, talking again to her dad.)*

Not yet, but / we finally got to Pere Lachaise. It was rainy though so we didn't…

ZACK. Sorry dude – one second.

Allo? Bonjour Brigitte, ça va?

Ouais, je me souviens. A dix heures, n'est-ce pas? Ouais.

Non, pas du tout, merci. A demain.

(He hangs up.)

My assistant. What were we…? Your kids! I saw your older one, in the / hall.

ALIOUNE. Ousmane.

ZACK. Yeah he's such a little person, he's such a little *guy*.

ALIOUNE. He is climbing stairs now, no hands, this is the new, uh…

ZACK. Incredible.

ALIOUNE. Yes. I want to have another, I want a girl, but Amina…

ZACK. She's done.

ALIOUNE. She's done. For now. We'll see.

(The jovial mood somehow drains away. Neither of them wants to have this conversation.)

So…

ZACK. I know. I know what you're gonna say.

ALIOUNE. Yeah. I really did not expect, after our last / talk.

ZACK. So what *happened*, I had it all in the account, this is as of forty-eight hours ago, what I didn't realize was that she had done all this Christmas shopping on the credit card, and unbeknownst to me made this like monumental *transfer* –

ALIOUNE. I'm sure there's a very good / reason –

ZACK. Which I did not discover / until this morning –

ALIOUNE. But it doesn't matter. I mean. Sorry, but I don't care. I don't care why anymore.

(pause)

ZACK. Oh-*kay*.

ALIOUNE. Listen, my uncle, he looked at the accounts. I… hadn't told him, because I knew he wouldn't allow it, and I thought you would – before he found out. But he saw, and now he is saying he can't trust me. You know, my uncle, he raised me, since I was six. A month ago he was asking me would I like to be his partner, now he is saying he can't trust me.

ZACK. Oh man, I'm so sorry –

ALIOUNE. No, it's – I'm not telling you to feel sorry for me, because it's my mistake. I don't know why I even tell you this, about my uncle.

ZACK. Because we're friends, and I feel like shit about putting you in that position, I really do.

ALIOUNE. Well that doesn't matter.

ZACK. It matters to me.

ALIOUNE. Zack, I need the money. All four months you owe me. Soon. Tomorrow, or –

ZACK. *Tomorrow?*

ALIOUNE. Okay, Friday. Or you have to go. I'm sorry, but…

(Pause. **ZACK** *goes to pack another bowl.)*

Not for me, thanks.

ZACK. For me, buddy, for me.

ALIOUNE. You know how much respect I have for your work.

ZACK. Uh-huh.

ALIOUNE. I mean that. I told my uncle, I even asked if we could make a deal with you, because – in a way, that's like giving to a charity –

ZACK. *Thanks.*

ALIOUNE. I tried to help, all right?

ZACK. It shouldn't be a problem, I can get it by Friday.

ALIOUNE. Yes?

ZACK. Yeah dude.

ALIOUNE. Well…good.

*(***ZACK** *tokes. He offers to* **ALIOUNE***, who hesitates, then accepts one more hit.)*

I feel much better, that we spoke.

But I should just say, that I'm serious, when I say… when I say that if you don't get the money –

ZACK. That you'll start throwing our furniture out the window, I got it.

ALIOUNE. Come on, no, / but –

ZACK. Hey, *own it*, you're a ruthless businessman, you gotta be makin' that paper, that's what you're about.

ALIOUNE. You have no reason to be angry at me.

ZACK. I'm kidding, dude, lighten up.

ALIOUNE. I don't think so. But okay.

*(***ABBY** *enters, holding up two shirts.)*

ABBY. Hey Alioune – Jesus!

(She opens the window.)

What were you guys, cutting a reggae album in here?

ZACK. I didn't want to open it because you get cold.

ABBY. Did you smoke more than one bowl?

ZACK. No!

ABBY. Because the last thing I need is you turning into a pothead. Alioune, this one –

(She holds up a shirt.)

Or –

(She holds up the other. He looks.)

ALIOUNE. Show me the first again – yes, that one. The other, I like it, but…

ABBY. It washes me out, right? It's so sad, I bought it in the summer when I was all brown and healthy and now it makes me look like a vampire.

ALIOUNE. A little.

ABBY. Thank you, that was immensely helpful. When I ask Zack questions like that he just tries to figure out which one I like better and says that one.

ZACK. I have found it to be a failsafe system.

ABBY. Hey, you're shivering. I'm not shivering, but you're shivering.

(She closes the window.)

ALIOUNE. I should get back to the office.

ABBY. Oh – okay. Can I give you some cookies to take with you?

ALIOUNE. No, I –

(off a look from **ZACK***)*

Yes, that would be wonderful.

ABBY. I'm just gonna get you a –

(She exits into the kitchen.)

ALIOUNE. *Alors, vendredi?*

ZACK. *Oui, j'ai bien compris.*

ALIOUNE. No matter what, I hope that we can still be friends –

*(***ABBY** *reenters with a nice piece of Tupperware.)*

ABBY. What happened, did you guys just break up?

ZACK. You're giving him our good Tupperware?

ABBY. It's the only clean one. He'll give it back.

ALIOUNE. I will, I will give it back.

ZACK. *(under his breath)* I love that Tupperware.

ABBY. Here you go, please say hi to Amina. Oh God.

ALIOUNE. What?

ABBY. Do you ever just step outside yourself and see yourself? I just saw myself handing over a Tupperware full of cookies I baked saying, "please say hi to Amina."

ZACK. That is what just happened.

ABBY. It's okay. I can have all the trappings of a person I hate and still be a person I like, right?

ALIOUNE. Thank you for the cookies.

(to **ZACK***)*

And the…

*(***ZACK** *salutes him, somewhat ironically.* **ALIOUNE** *exits.* **ZACK** *is still shivering.)*

ABBY. What's wrong with you?

ZACK. I think I might have smoked a tad too much weed.

(She goes to him and holds him. He burrows into her with surprising urgency.)

ABBY. Whoa. Hey, there. Hey.

ZACK. I'm sorry.

ABBY. That's okay, baby, I just took a valium.

ZACK. No, I mean, about…before.

ABBY. Oh.

No, that, that makes total sense, I just, I feel bad, that I haven't / been satisfying you.

ZACK. No no no –

ABBY. Well, the proof is in the pudding, so.

ZACK. I don't want you to think that, it has nothing to / do with –

ABBY. We'll work on it, right? We'll work on it.

(Brief pause. They kiss, chastely, tenderly.)

What did Brigitte want?

ZACK. To remind me there's a staff meeting tomorrow morning.

ABBY. Did you need to be reminded?

ZACK. No.

ABBY. But I bet it was still nice to hear from her.

ZACK. Hey.

ABBY. She's really tall, isn't she? She's one of those really tall women who wears high heels anyway?

ZACK. She is not tall, and not a threat.

ABBY. Promise?

(another sweet kiss)

ZACK. Listen, do you want to get out of here?

ABBY. It's too early for dinner.

ZACK. No, I mean – get out of Paris.

ABBY. I thought if we leave can't get back in.

ZACK. That's true.

ABBY. So…what are you asking me?

ZACK. What you want. What *you* want.

ABBY. You have a job here, Zack.

ZACK. I know.

ABBY. Like a really fucking important job that you care about a lot. That *I* care about a lot. That's why we uprooted ourselves and came here.

ZACK. Uh-huh.

ABBY. So…

ZACK. So, maybe that's not as important to me as you being happy.

ABBY. Aarrrrghghhhh!

ZACK. What?

ABBY. I am so tired of this fucking pressure to be happy. I am not happy, okay, that's just not my, like, mode of being, so if that's what you're trying to accomplish, *stop*. I'm pissed that you fucked up the visas and / we can't –

ZACK. It wasn't / me that –

ABBY. Or whoever, that whoever at Doctors Without Borders fucked up the visas and we can't see my family, and I'm upset that you came home from work early to jack off because you thought I'd be out, I'm not feeling great about those things, but just…live with it. Because I am so fucking proud of you, of what you're doing here, and I'm sorry I'm a pain in the ass sometimes, but I do not. Want. To leave. All right?

(Pause. Softening.)

Homey?

ZACK. Okay.

(She takes his face in her hands. They kiss. It deepens.)

ABBY. Is this okay?

ZACK. *(while kissing)* Mm-hm.

ABBY. What?

ZACK. Mmmmm.

(He pushes her down on the couch. She reaches to take off her shirt.)

Scene Two

(Several hours later. It's dark outside. **ABBY** *and* **ZACK** *sleep deeply, mostly naked and entangled.)*

(A phone vibrates. They continue to sleep. Around the fifth time it vibrates, **ABBY** *lifts her head.)*

ABBY. Homey, I think that's –

ZACK. Shhhh. No it's not.

(It has stopped. They drift off again. After several seconds it begins again.)

ABBY. *(drowsily)* Baby, you gotta let me up.

(He grunts.)

It could be my dad.

ZACK. He'll call back.

ABBY. It could be about Meg.

(Reluctantly, he lets go of her and she clambers off him, brutally stubbing her toe on the way to the phone.)

Ouch! Fuck!

Arrrgh!

ZACK. *(waking up from having drifted off again)* Whatsa matter.

(She answers the phone.)

ABBY. Hello? Shit. Hello? Daddy? Yeah, hi. Sorry. I just stubbed my toe and it hurts like a motherfucker. No I'm fine, I'm okay. Ffffffff. I'm okay. What's up?

(Se hops over to sit as she listens.)

When?

Oh my God.

*(***ZACK** *sits up.)*

Well of course I'm gonna – don't be ridiculous.

Fine, but you can't ask me not to worry, that's just…

What time?

Will you call me when you know?

Are *you* okay?

That was unconvincing. Once more, with feeling.

Yeah. Yeah.

(almost a whisper)

Yeah.

I'm here, anytime, okay? Whenever.

Love you too.

(She hangs up.)

ZACK. What's up?

ABBY. They're gonna have to induce. I guess her blood pressure / just…

ZACK. Oh, no.

ABBY. Dad says it's a totally standard procedure but he sounds like he's been crying. He gets this throaty thing in his voice.

ZACK. I've heard it.

ABBY. Oh, right. Of course you have.

ZACK. It is standard.

ABBY. Yeah?

ZACK. Really standard.

ABBY. Tell me more about that.

ZACK. Um, the chances of anything going wrong with either mother or baby in a major hospital in New Jersey are virtually zero.

ABBY. Thank you.

You did an OB rotation, right?

ZACK. Yup.

ABBY. So you know what you're talking about.

ZACK. Homey? They're gonna be fine. I mean I can't promise that child will be good *looking*, given the DNA in / question.

ABBY. *(laughing)* God, what does she see in – ?

ABBY. *(continued)* He loves her. He really loves her. I bet he's being so great right now.

(Pause. She smiles bravely.)

ZACK. Now let's see that toe.

(She hops over to him and offers her foot.)

So which – *oh*. The swollen one, with the broken toenail?

ABBY. Oh, is it – ?

ZACK. Homey, this is really impressive.

ABBY. Thank you. Do you think it's broken?

ZACK. I don't know, how does it feel when I do / that –

ABBY. Aa-aahhhhhhh! Ow! Ow!

ZACK. Sorry.

(He takes her toe in his mouth.)

ABBY. Ew! Is that – what they taught you in medical school?

ZACK. *(with his mouth full)* That's what they taught me in looooove school.

ABBY. That's so gross, I have a planter's wart on that foot.

ZACK. Mmmmmmmm.

ABBY. Zack!

(He takes her toe out of his mouth and kisses it. He stands.)

Where are you going?

ZACK. Ice.

(He exits into the kitchen. We can hear him opening the freezer, getting ice out of a tray, then assembling some kind of baggie. He reenters and applies the ice to her foot.)

ABBY. I like it when you doctor me.

ZACK. I'm gonna give you a *very* special rate.

ABBY. Ice is so *cold*.

ZACK. Upside? Much harder for you to run away from me now.

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