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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

Milk Like Sugar

by Kirsten Greenidge

SAMUEL FRENCH

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www.SamuelFrench.com
www.SamuelFrench.co.uk

FOR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES

UNITED STATES AND CANADA
Info@SamuelFrench.com
1-866-598-8449

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Originally commissioned and the World Premiere of MILK LIKE SUGAR produced by the La Jolla Playhouse, La Jolla California, Christopher Ashley, Artistic Director & Steven Libman, Managing Director.

It was inspired by attendance at the Aspen Institute's Ideas Festival and was the recipient of Aspen Theatre Masters Visionary Playwright Award and commissioned by Theatre Masters, Julia Hansen, Artistic Director.

Playwrights Horizons, Inc., Women's Project Productions, and La Jolla Playhouse produced the New York City premiere of
MILK LIKE SUGAR Off Broadway in 2011.

MILK LIKE SUGAR was first presented by La Jolla Playhouse, opening on August 30, 2011, at the Potiker Theatre in La Jolla, California, co-commissioned with Theater Masters and produced in association with Playwrights Horizons and Women's Project Productions; with sets by Mimi Lien, costumes by Toni-Leslie James, lighting by Justen Townsend, sound and original music by Andre Pluess, production stage management by Dana Depaul, production management by Linda S. Cooper, and general management by Debby Buchholz. The director was Rebecca Taichman. The cast was as follows:

ANNIE . . . . . Angela Lewis
TALISHA . . . . . Cherise Boothe
MARGIE. . . . . Nikiya Mathis
ANTWOINE . . . . . LeRoy McClain
MALIK . . . . . J. Mallory McCree
MYRNA . . . . . Tonya Pinkins
KEERA . . . . . Adrienne C. Moore

MILK LIKE SUGAR was first presented in New York City by Playwrights Horizons, Women's Project, and La Jolla Playhouse, opening November 1, 2011, at The Peter Jay Sharp Theater; with sets by Mimi Lien, costumes by Toni-Leslie James; lighting by Justin Townsend, sound and original music by Andre Pluess, production management by Christopher Boll, and production stage management by Kyle Gates. The director was Rebecca Taichman. The cast was as follows:

ANNIE . . . . . Angela Lewis
TALISHA . . . . . Cherise Boothe
MARGIE. . . . . Nikiya Mathis
ANTWOINE . . . . . LeRoy McClain
MALIK . . . . . J. Mallory McCree
MYRNA . . . . . Tonya Pinkins
KEERA . . . . . Adrienne C. Moore

CHARACTERS

ANNIE

TALISHA

MARGIE

ANTWOINE

MALIK

MYRNA

KEERA

(A tattoo parlor. **ANNIE**, **TALISHA** *[nails like talons, lacquered, bejeweled and bedazzled] and* **MARGIE** *[bubbly, dressed all in one bright color].)*

(Each girl receives many texts throughout, and each has her own specific text tone.)

TALISHA. It's gonna be mad cool, yo.

ANNIE. You think?

MARGIE. *(showing her tattoo)* It'll be just like mine.

ANNIE. *(leaning in to* **MARGIE***)* Is that straight?

TALISHA. Of course it's straight.

MARGIE. I got mine from someone got his own tattoo place, *but* this dude here practices on oranges so it *is*, it's mad c –

ANNIE. Oranges isn't skin. I should wait.

TALISHA. You don't need to wait you need to lie down and choose your colors.

(A ring tone sounds.)

Yo that's a wacked out ring shit.

ANNIE. *(looking at caller ID)* Yo, that's called *culture*. Not every song invented got to be clubs and thugs and shit.

TALISHA. Well, if that's your moms tell her we out all night cause the party's right.

*(***ANNIE** *hangs up the phone.)*

ANNIE. It's not my moms.

MARGIE. If that was *my* moms I better stay out all night cause next time she see me she hit me upside the back my head quick right.

ANNIE. This tattoo guy gets to use all the colors or just a couple?

TALISHA. 'Course he gets to use'm all. What you think this is, right? It's a tattoo shop, right?

ANNIE. It's not *his* tattoo shop, it's his cousin's –

MARGIE. He gets to use whatever he wants.

ANNIE. Well then what's up with this cat yo? What 's he gonna take all night?

TALISHA. So if it wasn't your moms; maybe it Malik.

MARGIE. Ooooo, Malik. I seen how he be lookin' at you Annie –

ANNIE. Give me water.

*(***MARGIE** *takes a bottle of Alize out and hands it to* **ANNIE***, who takes a seasoned swig.)*

TALISHA. What you getting, anyway?

(A text for **TALISHA***.)*

MARGIE. Malik's mad cool.

ANNIE. Ladybug.

MARGIE. *(squeals)* Cute.

ANNIE. Malik's alright I guess.

TALISHA. A ladybug's kinda stupid.

ANNIE. I like ladybugs.

MARGIE. You guess? Why I go through all this trouble settin you two up for your birthday if you not diggin' on Malik?

ANNIE. When I say that? *(indicating bottle)* Water.

TALISHA. *(derisive)* Ladybug: It's like a little girl.

ANNIE. You kinda pissin' me off, Talisha.

TALISHA. It's T now. I'm so cool I don't even need a regular name like you all got, all I need is a 'nitial. T.

*(***TALISHA** *holds up her arms as if she is flexing both arms, in the shape of a T.)*

ANNIE. You don't want us to use your real name?

TALISHA. Just call me T, now, okay?

MARGIE. Malik got one of them Slider phones real, real nice. Almost as nice as one of those Blackberry ones.

ANNIE. This kid better come give me my tattoo a-sap or I'm about to jet, yo.

MARGIE. You seen that slider phone?

TALISHA. Slider phones is kaput. Anyone can get them. And ladybug *is* like a little girl. There's a song about them. Remember that song kids sing about the ladybugs?

MARGIE. Tuh: I like that Slider phone.

ANNIE. If this tattoo kid so good how come he letting me get this shit for free? If he's so good he should wanna get paid, right?

TALISHA. Ladybug, ladybug, rings and rosie. Ladybug, ladybug, rings around the poses.

MARGIE. You high alright. No more for you.

TALISHA. That's it, that's it, right? That nurseries rhyme.

ANNIE. There ain't no such thing as a nurse*ries* rhyme.

TALISHA. Um, newsflash, school let out hours ago. This ain't English class.

ANNIE. *(playful)* Well shut up about nurseries rhymes and give me water, yo.

TALISHA. Which reminds me I gotta find out who gonna write my papers this year.

ANNIE. Yeah, last term your report card look like the side of a milk carton. D, D, D, D…

(The girls laugh.)

TALISHA. Yeah, that fool didn't even type the damn shit.

ANNIE. Where is this kid?

TALISHA. Sing that song with me.

MARGIE. Ms. Jones down the hall watched me I didn't go to no nurseries school.

TALISHA. Come on. Ladybug, ladybug…

*(***TALISHA** *waits, then finally:)*

ANNIE. Your house is on fire your children will burn.

TALISHA. Your children will burn? What kind of shit is that for kids to sing?

ANNIE. Kids aren't supposed to sing it.

TALISHA. Well adults sure as hell don't go around singing it. What adult goes around singing shit?

ANNIE. I think it was made up like in old times like when women was first going to work and stuff. To make them feel bad just for leaving the house and crap.

TALISHA. What you mean women couldn't leave the house and crap, course women could leave the house, what person just stay inside the house like they in the zoo?

ANNIE. Like to work: they made that shit up to scare people.

MARGIE. When my mom went to work, Ms. Jones kept us *all* day.

(A text for **MARGIE**.*)*

Breakfast, lunch, sometimes dinner –

TALISHA. What a song about a insect got to do with scarin' people?

MARGIE. That spider song with the curdles and whey sure used to scare the hell out of me.

TALISHA. I only asked to know the words, shit.

MARGIE. Even though a flip phone's all Jerome got we still do it cause one day he gonna have a better one, right. One day maybe he have a touch screen. That what I think about: the future: when he got a touch screen. Those the kinds of things pop into your head when you pass one of them tests, you all: the future.

ANNIE. How many times you had to do it to pass?

MARGIE. Me and Jerome we do it all the time.

ANNIE. No, how many times you got to do those tests?

TALISHA. Supposed to be the morning pee, that's the best kind to make it come out right.

MARGIE. I think me and Jerome must be real what you call like fertile right? We like the way they is in the wild –

ANNIE. The wild Margie?

MARGIE. 'Cause I only got to take that test one time and BAM that Coach diaper bag almost mine, y'all.

TALISHA. How you afford a Coach anything, Margie?

MARGIE. You put what you want on a list. Then everyone you invite to your party has to buy things off that list. That's how it's done, I didn't make that up. Coach diaper bag –

TALISHA. Uh-uh, Burberry better.

MARGIE. A *Coach* diaper bag what I need for this baby to look good enough to be seen in public with me. Jerome already buy it little pink Jordans for its feet.

ANNIE. Burberry make sneakers, too. Match the scarf and the bag and the hat.

MARGIE. *And* I also want one of those jogger strollers.

TALISHA. Oooooo yeah. Those slick.

MARGIE. They slick cause they got the three wheels. So fancy four wheels be too much for those things.

TALISHA. Me too right. That's what I'd want too, right. In pink right.

ANNIE. Pink yeah. The army kind.

TALISHA. What? Camouflage.

ANNIE. Yeah, yeah. Me, too, yeah.

MARGIE. Yeah.

TALISHA. Mad cool.

ANNIE. *(to* **TALISHA***)* Maybe you and me should hit ourselves up with some baby juice like Margie here.

MARGIE. Coach bags for all of us.

TALISHA. My mom kill me if I come home with a baby. Like she bring out that extension cord for real.

ANNIE. Yo. Won't need moms no more if we each have tiny little babies made just for us, right?

MARGIE. Yeah, y'all, you two do this too and we have one big old *huge* shower for all three of us y'all.

TALISHA. How we all have a baby at the same time, yo? That kind of shit got to be planned out. What we need would be like charts and thermometers and shit.

MARGIE. Hey, I got PG and I didn't have no kind of fever any the times me and Jerome hit it.

TALISHA. We'd need thermometers, I seen it.

ANNIE. We don't need no thermometers and we don't need no charts, we just need it to be the right time and for me I know it the perfect time. I read once where it only work like once a month. Like clockwork I get mine whenever my dad change the oil on his cab and he due at Jiffy Lube next week. I remember cause that how I get out of going since he make me keep him company. I say cramps and he damn near lock the doors on me, so it work like a charm and I don't have to go *no*where.

MARGIE. I bet a camouflage stroller be the kind Beyonce have 'cause she all strong like.

ANNIE. We all have babies we could be like, like strong and fierce just like that. Just like lions. Hunting around at night.

TALISHA. Surrounded by cute little cubby babies all day.

MARGIE. Yeah, yeah.

TALISHA. So, if we all gonna do this, you should get a rose since me and Margie both already got a rose.

MARGIE. This be real cool, yo, if Annie meet up with Malik, and you hurry it up with whoever's your flavor of the moment old dude –

TALISHA. He ain't old he just ain't no kid.

MARGIE. A red rose'll match our nails *and* Malik's phone.

ANNIE. Maybe I don't want everything all the same color and shit.

MARGIE. You sayin' I don't look good? I look *good* yo. This is style yo.

ANNIE. I do like red.

TALISHA. We all get red roses and we all do this baby thing. Okay?

ANNIE. And a ladybug is red.

TALISHA. A ladybug is stupid.

MARGIE. You both gotta get your move on, right, if we want to have our girls all at the same time.

TALISHA. Yo, Sierra and Cassie both got PG before school let out last year they already seen theirs on a screen but they did it all wrong. I seen them at McDonald's before school and you not supposed to eat breakfast if you want a girl. They did it all wrong and now they both stuck with boys. See Annie, you ain't the only one who can talk about shit.

ANNIE. You know, we don't even know if your dude got a name.

MARGIE. Who is it? Ramon? He got one of them sidekick things real slick.

TALISHA. I gets mine, that's all I'm at liberty to say. But what I *can* say is this new guy I'm talkin' to is so fine, it amazing we don't don't do it *all* the time. Cause he set up good, he got his own place –

ANNIE. Own place? Where his parents?

TALISHA. I don't care where they are. He ain't no silly kid, that's all you gotta know.

MARGIE. You better get working on Malik, Annie. You don't have time to waste on this, for real. I'm almost eight weeks already so we gotta plan that party, y'all.

*(***ANTWOINE** *enters, on the phone, which is of the flip variety. He shuts it, tucks it in his pocket.)*

ANTWOINE. Sweet sixteen right?

(The girls get a bit shy.)

(With a jut of his chin, **ANTWOINE** *indicates* **ANNIE** *lift her shirt.)*

*(***ANNIE** *does, lies back, and* **ANTWOINE** *sits.)*

So what it gonna be?

TALISHA. She think she want a ladybug but I think that stupid, don't you think that kind of stupid?

ANTWOINE. I think she should get what she want to get.

TALISHA. Fine, then, ladybug, then; like a little girl.

MARGIE. Long as it's red. 'Cause then it match Malik's phone.

ANNIE. Like. Maybe like a little flame or something?

MARGIE. Ooo, that a good kind of red.

TALISHA. At least it's not some little girl crap.

ANNIE. Like you know when you light a match? Like when I see my dad light one of his smokes. That first flash a red right after the blue.

*(***ANTWOINE** *looks at* **ANNIE**.*)*

ANTWOINE. Red after the blue. I like that.

TALISHA. But she don't want it blue. She want it red.

ANTWOINE. This gonna be forever yo, better be what you want, right?

*(***ANNIE** *looks at* **ANTWOINE**.*)*

*(***ANTWOINE** *looks at* **ANNIE**.*)*

(an understanding mixed with something else)

TALISHA. We don't got all night for this so maybe fill that thing up with the red and start right?

*(***ANNIE** *looks at* **TALISHA**.*)*

(The phone rings. **MARGIE** *grabs it.)*

ANNIE. Bet that my moms, bet she callin' to say Happy Birth –

MARGIE. *(as she checks caller ID)* Ain't your moms, it Malik. Giirrrrrrllll, you better talk to this boy, shit.

*(***MARGIE** *hands the phone to* **ANNIE**.*)*

ANNIE. *Yello.*……Fine. Just don't be late, yo.

(She hangs up.)

You gotta show them who's the boss, you know. I'm gonna get this thing d double done, yo.

(to **ANTWOINE** *and with flourish:)*

Flame. Red. I got places I need to be.

ANTWOINE. *(as he leans in and* **ANNIE** *lowers a corner of her jeans)* Alright then.

(The girls quiet as **ANTWOINE** *leans in to work.)*

ANTWOINE. *(almost to himself, filler conversation)* Fire's cool. Flame. Heat. Least it ain't no rose, right? A girl comes in here asks for a rose I know she ain't put much thought into this at all right, cause a rose ain't that special right?

MARGIE. A rose is real pretty.

TALISHA. Yeah, um, Annie got somewhere to be soon so you should probably hurry up.

ANTWOINE. A tattoo is work, right? It takes time, right?

*(***ANTWOINE** *works.)*

ANNIE. So…um…you do this a lot?

ANTWOINE. Sure.

ANNIE. Like on real people a lot?

ANTWOINE. *(a twinge of a smile)* …yeah, I work on real people. I like a living canvas right. You take something like a person's arm, leg, and make it look like it ain't supposed to look but it's still beautiful, right?

ANNIE. Cool.

TALISHA. Yeah, neat-o, can we stop this chit chat? Tattoos isn't supposed to be like the Oprah show, we don't got to let all ourselves bust out and get all warm and cozy with each other. Red. Flame. Take the needle out and do the damn thing.

ANNIE. She eat her Wheaties every morning that why she so aggressive like.

*(***ANTWOINE** *goes back to his work.)*

MARGIE. You know what? I think we should all get matching baby bottles, too right. Along with the strollers. I think the WIC'll give em for free.

TALISHA. Miss T, here is in like Flynn.

ANNIE. For real, ya'll: Prada, Louis V –

TALISHA. Three pink joggers and our baby girls will go to nurseries school together.

ANNIE. This gonna be mad cool, yo.

TALISHA. How long could my mom's stay mad, right? After a week she'd let me back home, right?

ANNIE. We gonna be like *lions, y'all.*

ANTWOINE. *(leaning in to his work)* You gotta hold still, now.

TALISHA. *(wagging her head)* Your children will burn. That's some kind of wacked out shit, Annie.

ANNIE. Well we all ain't gonna sing that kind of stuff to ours, right? Little baby gonna love us all for us and we gonna do everything the right way for them. We call them *all* day on their birthday, right?

TALISHA. You meet up with Malik, by Friday it probably be done, right? By Friday.

ANNIE. For real, of course. Pinky swear.

*(***ANNIE** *holds up her pinky.)*

*(***ANNIE, TALISHA,** *and* **MARGIE** *pinky swear.)*

This the only present I need.

(The sound of the tattoo needle whirs.)

ANTWOINE. Here we go.

(The sound of a park in the dead of night.)

(A clearing. **MALIK.***)*

*(***ANNIE** *enters.)*

(Much of **ANNIE***'s bravado is gone.)*

MALIK. You made it.

ANNIE. Took forever to walk up here.

MALIK. It's worth it, you'll see. Whole world seems a thousands times more beautiful when you see it from here.

*(***MALIK** *looks up into the sky, proud, then to* **ANNIE.***)*

ANNIE. So like what? This supposed to be romantical or something?

MALIK. If you want.

ANNIE. Like stars and moonlight and shit?

MALIK. Sure.

ANNIE. Well didn't you think this out? You the one keep calling me.

MALIK. Margie say you like me. She gave me your number, told me to call – It can be romantical if you want it.

ANNIE. You got something to drink?

*(***MALIK** *shakes his head no.)*

How we supposed to do this if you don't got something to drink?

MALIK. I had pay to help my moms.

ANNIE. Why? She sick or something?

MALIK. I just had to help her.

ANNIE. How you have a slider phone if you got a sick moms can't pay shit for herself and shit?

MALIK. I don't want to talk about my moms. That's not really romantical to talk about your moms you know. Talking about your moms ain't gonna get someone in the mood.

ANNIE. Well fine if there's nothing to drink I guess that's okay.

MALIK. That how you usually? Like with something to drink?

ANNIE. Nosy.

MALIK. I should have brought something.

ANNIE. Yeah, you should have.

MALIK. Next time.

ANNIE. You wish, dude.

MALIK. Margie say you like me.

ANNIE. You done this before Malik?

MALIK. Sure.

ANNIE. How many times?

MALIK. I was thinking it would be nice to look up at the sky together.

ANNIE. With Cassie last year and who else?

MALIK. Cassie? My boy say she don't wash and shit. I hit it with Cassie my shit stink, too. I really. Thought you like the sky.

ANNIE. Sky's the sky.

MALIK. Big dipper, little dipper and all that shit. Milky way.

ANNIE. You bring a blanket I don't want to get dirty.

MALIK. I –

ANNIE. Well shit, Malik.

MALIK. I don't think Margie knows what she say.

ANNIE. Nope. She don't.

(awkward)

Well may as well get started –

*(***ANNIE** *starts to unzip her pants.)*

MALIK. Oh. Right. Yeah.

ANNIE. Sky's the sky, Malik. Nothing special.

*(***ANNIE** *unbuttons her shirt halfway.)*

Well come on.

MALIK. Sure.

*(***MALIK** *undoes his pants, stops.)*

ANNIE. Like what now?

MALIK. I thought you like the sky.

ANNIE. I never said I didn't like the sky.

MALIK. I kinda like searched for this place.

*(***ANNIE** *looks at* **MALIK**.*)*

ANNIE. You did?

MALIK. Margie told me you. Nevermind. This probably not what you like at all. You probably never even look at the sky. I should head back down –

ANNIE. Don't, don't do that –

MALIK. I real popular since I got this slider phone. You and Margie prolly see that and think.

ANNIE. You don't have to go, Malik.

MALIK. My moms sick.

ANNIE. C'mon, man, it's like my birthday, yo.

*(***MALIK** *stops.)*

You got to be nice to me on my birthday, yo.

*(***MALIK** *waits.)*

And. I. Notice the sky.

MALIK. …Yeah?

ANNIE. …Sure.

MALIK. I searched this place out, right.

ANNIE. It's real nice.

MALIK. Yeah?

ANNIE. Sure.

MALIK. *(excited)* Cause you can see like the constellations and shit from here. Lights from the city so far away you can really. From my window I can barely see anything real good, like real stars. I look up, think I see, then wham, it moves.

ANNIE. Maybe it's like a shooting one or something.

MALIK. Naw. It's usually just a plane. I squint enough I almost can see those people's faces, flying away, looking down at me. I squint more I can almost see one or two laughing. Like at me. In my window, wishing I was up there, too… shit.

ANNIE. What?

MALIK. I need to go. This ain't right.

ANNIE. I…like you Malik.

MALIK. You just want Margie and Talisha think we did something.

ANNIE. No. I. I like you.

*(***ANNIE** *looks at* **MALIK**.*)*

*(***MALIK** *looks at* **ANNIE**.*)*

MALIK. Yeah?

ANNIE. Sure.

*(***ANNIE** *smiles.)*

*(***MALIK** *gets shy.)*

*(***ANNIE** *walks up to* **MALIK**.*)*

*(***MALIK** *inches a little closer to* **ANNIE**.*)*

*(***ANNIE** *kisses* **MALIK**.*)*

*(***MALIK** *kisses back.)*

MALIK. This don't have to do with my phone, do it?

*(***ANNIE** *kisses* **MALIK** *harder.)*

*(***ANNIE** *kisses* **MALIK** *almost too hard.)*

Hey.

ANNIE. I said I like you. Don't you like me too?

*(***ANNIE** *kisses* **MALIK** *hard, reaches for his zipper.)*

MALIK. HEY.

ANNIE. Like what the fuck, yo?

*(***MALIK** *looks at* **ANNIE**.*)*

MALIK. You tryin'a hit it pretty quick, yo.

ANNIE. How many times I got to say I *like* you, *dag*?

MALIK. You diggin' at me like I'm some sort of grab bag at a kiddie party, right.

ANNIE. You beginning to waste my time, Malik.

MALIK. You don't even ask me do I got protection or nothin'. I ain't thinking about being somebody's daddy.

ANNIE. You don't need to worry about none of that with me.

MALIK. That's what you say *now*.

ANNIE. 'sides, if something happen, it could be just for me. Like only for me. You wouldn't have to do anything, not even change its diapers right?

MALIK. Nah, nah. I don't like those people up in that plane laughing at me. Cause the way I imagine it, they see me from my window, Annie. They see into my window, they see the paint curling off the walls, they see my mom ain't done the washing in weeks, they see there ain't more than two packages macaroni and cheese in

the cupboard. They see that and they mouths crimp up into smiles and I wanna crush those smiles. 'Cause all they see is some bone head baby daddy don't know enough to use a rubber and end up stuck – paint curling, milk like sugar on the shelf. I do this like you want I be stuck forever with them laughing at me. Make my skin burn. You think about that? People like them folks in that plane up there? Laughing down at you like that? You and Talisha and all y'all can rot in this place but I won't. Thought you wouldn't want to, either.

(The sound of a plane overhead.)

*(***ANNIE** *and* **MALIK** *look up into the sky.)*

(A breakfast table. [Kitchen scene is new/rearranged.])

(Morning light.)

*(***ANNIE** *eats a pop tart.)*

*(***MYRNA** *writes in a notebook, is often lost in thought.)*

ANNIE. You was happy when you had us, right?

MYRNA. Boom, boom, boom. One after the other. Like stair steps.

ANNIE. Cause I. See. Talisha and Margie and, we kinda made this. Promise. We gonna be like fierce lions –

MYRNA. What you still doing here? When school start?

ANNIE. Oh, I was thinking I get Daddy swing back and pick me up –

MYRNA. What wrong with the bus?

ANNIE. I know I'm not feeling that bus today –

MYRNA. City bus or you walkin' Anniegirl. What customers Daddy get if you sitting in there with him?

ANNIE. Bus just got lots of people on it.

MYRNA. That the *point* of the bus.

ANNIE. I don't know if I wanna be all up against all those… people, right?

*(***MYRNA** *writes.)*

Nevermind.

*(***ANNIE** *eats.)*

ANNIE. *(cont.)* Had a good birthday night.

MYRNA. That's good.

ANNIE. Didn't get…maybe I missed. I had the ringer on but maybe I missed your call, right?

MYRNA. Sunday we'll do something. Name it, we'll do it, Ms. Big Old Sixteen. Name it. What you want?

ANNIE. Thought. Maybe you'd call when you got a ten minute or something.

MYRNA. Smoke breaks go quick as a wink. You think you gonna get so much done and 'fore you light the dog gone thing, foom. It's all over. I told Daddy to call.

ANNIE. Daddy quit using the phone in the cab. Say he get better tips when he quit using the phone in the cab.

MYRNA. Well, there's only one of me, Annie.

ANNIE. …I know.

MYRNA. The boys up yet?

ANNIE. Already left.

MYRNA. Good for them to be out early. Hear they hiring down the public works, maybe the boys get lucky, get a job.

ANNIE. Maybe.

*(***ANNIE** *eats.)*

*(***MYRNA** *chuckles.)*

*(***ANNIE** *stops eating, looks at* **MYRNA**.*)*

What's so funny?

MYRNA. Whole office quiet and it's just my fingers and those keys. Click, click, click.

ANNIE. So corner left his computer on again? That what happened to you?

MYRNA. Corner's a lady.

ANNIE. I don't think you should touch their stuff.

MYRNA. Picture of two kids in heavy frames on her desk and past few days I seen she got cookie wrappers in her rubbish bin. Thin mints cause those girl scouts been sellin' em down the bus station and she be going through them a box a day, so I think those two kids in those fancy frames gonna turn into three soon.

ANNIE. Just do the vacuum and get out there fast. Didn't they already like write you up about –

MYRNA. Their bark is worse than their bite. I think her office be empty soon cause who gonna keep her around she got a tiny baby at home? Babies is work –

ANNIE. Work? Not so much. You can dress 'em real nice. That's kinda what me and the girls – . Cause babies ain't like *real* work, they cuddly and cute and love you all for –

MYRNA. I don't know how cute it is to be changing diapers every two hours even in the middle of the night. The boys were the worst with that. Every two hours they'd just piss through everything, pamper, pajamas, sheets, everything. You wouldn't think baby pee would stink but it do if you leave it. I was so tired I'd leave it and my mother would come over and give me an earful as she sprayed the crib with the pine-sol. Naw, babies is a whole lot of work and then some. That lady with the girl scout cookies know all about it. And that office only have one other lady in there and her v-v probably got webs all up in it.

ANNIE. Ma.

MYRNA. Maybe, and this just a crazy thought, but maybe, when she go, they say, Myrna Desmond, we got this one office free, Myrna Desmond, maybe you see if you could make good use of it, since it free and all.

ANNIE. There no such thing as a "v-v."

MYRNA. How you know? Thought they take that sexy class out of the school when we all told them that our job to teach you all. *Our* job: not no school's job teach about the birds and the bees.

ANNIE. Last I checked birds and bees ain't got nothing to do with p-p's going into v-v's.

MYRNA. That mouth. I ought to have your father wash it with soap.

(pause)

I'm thinking if I can finish this one, I print it, I print all my stories out and make some copies – I have the key to that copy room, right? – and see if one them guys sell it down the bus station. I'm just as good as one of them girl scouts. I get maybe one your brothers draw something for the cover.

ANNIE. When the last time one of them drew anything?

MYRNA. They get that creative spirit from me.

ANNIE. They're too old to draw.

MYRNA. Never too old to have creative spirit. *You* got the pessimic that's what you got.

ANNIE. The pessimic?

MYRNA. I bet people like my stories.

ANNIE. I think it's called *pessimism.*

*(***MYRNA** *blinks at this.)*

MYRNA. I bet I could even make movies out of my stories. I love the movies. Life all big in front of me. Blown up. Lose yourself.

ANNIE. No one else likes going to the movies anymore.

MYRNA. Who don't like the movies?

ANNIE. People next to you smell and stuff in there.

MYRNA. Who smells at the movies?

ANNIE. Bums and people.

MYRNA. What bum can pay to see a movie?

ANNIE. I'm just sayin. I went last night with the girls and I didn't lose myself, instead I really-

MYRNA. What was this? A late movie?

ANNIE. Yeah.

MYRNA. It got Denzel in it?

ANNIE. No, it ain't got Denzel in it, Ma –

MYRNA. That too bad, Denzel my *man*.

ANNIE. It didn't have Denzel and that's not what I'm tryina. What I. What I'm saying is, I was in that movie and I was. Seeing those faces above me like in the dark. Everything shiny and glossy and I'm looking up at the screen at those perfect faces – cause this kid, the one I was hanging with, he said this thing about. And I was thinking about… Maybe theres another way to. Be. Like you ever get confused about who you supposed to…? Like with the girls I'm like…but this kid was saying we shouldn't. But me and the girls came up with this plan, this like perfect plan…but I still feel there's maybe… Like another like, like the way people float by in like an airplane.

MYRNA. When you been on an airplane Annemarie Desmond?

ANNIE. I only said "like" an airplane.

MYRNA. Your Aunt Rae the only one been on one and she say it wasn't no great shakes.

ANNIE. Forget it.

MYRNA. Your Aunt Rae could turn heads. Met a guy said he get her on Star/Search –

ANNIE. Search. Yeah, I know.

MYRNA. Our ma used to say all a little girl need is be pretty and the world can crack open for her like a egg.

ANNIE. I don't want things cracking around me.

MYRNA. It an expression, Annie. And it true. Rae been on trips. Always got her nails polished and her hair done up. Aunt Rae buyin' Maybeline, I'm buying pampers: boom, boom –

ANNIE. I think I might like an airplane. Wouldn't you like to try –

MYRNA. You know I never wrote that one down?

ANNIE. You ain't even listening.

MYRNA. I been telling you about that egg I don't know how long and I think I shoulda written it down by now, don't you think?

*(***ANNIE** *looks at* **MYRNA**.*)*

ANNIE. Guess I should get goin'.

MYRNA. Yeah. With the boys out, you gone –

ANNIE. The house is quiet for you, I know, but I'm. Just wondering if you was happy when you had us –

MYRNA. That school gonna call here if you don't hop to it. That new teacher with the fancy degree –

ANNIE. Yeah, she stapling college brochures to all our papers –

MYRNA. She one Nosy B, I tell you what. Summer barely gone she already all up in our business talking about tardy this, truant that. You was only out two days. What, you miss building space rockets in those lousy two days? "Brochures." Where she gonna be when that college bill come due? College expensive. You get a good job, pay your own bills, stay on the straight and narrow. What more you need? I always did love September though. All them books you get to take home, read up.

ANNIE. They just bo – . *(an attempt at a joke)* You can cuddle up to us more than some lousy books.

MYRNA. Airplanes, Maybelline: eggshell may as well been cement for me, ladybug.

ANNIE. Don't call me that, mom, it's like a little girl.

(The sound of a school yard.)

MYRNA. You always be my little girl. Sunday we'll do something.

ANNIE. Sunday, sure.

(A school bell ring.)

(The kitchen disappears.)

(A bank of lockers.)

*(***ANNIE**, **TALISHA**, *and* **MARGIE** *work making their clothes as revealing and tight as possible as* **TALISHA** *does her nails and* **MARGIE** *does her hair.)*

*(***KEERA** *in long modest skirt, modest blouse, stands slightly removed, back pack on her shoulders.)*

*(***ANNIE** *looks down at her tattoo.)*

TALISHA. *(to* **KEERA***)* If you agree, then you can walk right?

ANNIE. *(to* **TALISHA***)* Cut that out, right?

TALISHA. Why you care right? *(to* **KEERA***) And* it need to be typed. Last kid I got to do this shit got me some bad grades yo. My mom nearly wore out her arm on me when that report card came in the mail.

ANNIE. Can't you just let her walk?

MARGIE. Who cares about English? What we should worry about is gym. We gonna be in delicate conditions yo.

TALISHA. *(to* **KEERA***)* One in history due Tuesday.

ANNIE. Just finish your nails and let's go, right?

TALISHA. Tuesday.

KEERA. Tuesday, okay.

TALISHA. Why you care about Miss Holly Hobbie here?

(a text for **MARGIE***)*

ANNIE. We just gonna be late right?

MARGIE. I don't think I should be messing around with mother nature, right? By exercising and shit?

TALISHA. No, no exercise supposed to be real good. Only thing you can't do is ride horses and shit. I seen that in the movies. You do shit like that you bleed and you lose it. Then we got to start over.

(to **KEERA***)*

Hey, you even know what this paper supposed to be about yo? If I were you I'd get a pencil out and take some notes and shit. It gotta be good.

*(***KEERA** *rummages in her bag for a pencil and paper.)*

MARGIE. If you two is in this you all better hurry yourselfs up.

TALISHA. You get it done with Malik?

ANNIE. Malik making this all harder than it need to be, so I been thinking 'bout talkin up someone else.

TALISHA. Someone like who?

ANNIE. We shouldn't be talking about all this stuff out here.

*(***KEERA** *looks up.)*

KEERA. Oh, it's okay, I wouldn't say nothin'.

TALISHA. What you spring cleaning in there? Shit. Pencil, paper, so you can get gone and stop taking up our air.

ANNIE. Talisha –

KEERA. I'm just. Can't find.

(A small radio falls out of **KEERA***'s bag.)*

*(***TALISHA** *grabs for it.)*

TALISHA. This like from olden times shit.

KEERA. It just til I get a new one. My dad gonna get me a new one for Christmas coming up –

ANNIE. *(to* **TALISHA***)* Give it back. First bell gonna ring any minute.

*(***TALISHA** *plays with it, teases.)*

TALISHA. *(makes static sound as she pretends to tune the radio)* You get this Annie?

*(***TALISHA** *plays with radio, then finally gives it back.)*

Why you carry around a big huge bag for no reason if you ain't got good stuff in it for real?

KEERA. Maybe I got a pencil in the bottom. I'm slow as molasses, my mother do say.

TALISHA. Well she right.

(waves at **KEERA***)*

You can walk on, long's you do that paper.

(to **ANNIE***)*

We can make Malik come around. How bout I have my guy rough him up a bit?

MARGIE. How she hit it with Malik if he all bruised and shit?

ANNIE. Maybe you all keep your voices down, right?

KEERA. I wouldn't say nothing, promise. Not if it supposed to be y all's secret right. My cousin got two babies already and they real sweet when they not sick.

MARGIE. Wait. How much her tests cost? Cause mines *cost.*

KEERA. Mad money. If you all have babies I hope they way cuter than my cousin's babies cause they took after the fathers so if you all havin some of you own better make sure the daddy cute cause it's like the inside of a twinkie: sometimes just like you expect, other times not enough frosting. Nothing worse than a twinkie without frosting and nothing sadder than a ugly baby.

(All three girls look at **KEERA**.*)*

Just. Hope your babies ain't ever sick an come out not ugly 's what I mean.

TALISHA. Like a twinkie.

KEERA. Yeah –

*(***TALISHA** *looks at* **KEERA**, *who does not move.)*

MARGIE. Like seriously, I don't want my baby deformed or no such thing cause I climbed some stupid ass rope in gym class, yo.

KEERA. Exercise could be a real good thing, actually. A lady in one of the churches I went to before I moved here used to walk all up and down Massachusetts Avenue and her baby could run before his first birthday.

TALISHA. I am like still wondering who told you you were in this conversation?

MARGIE. What Massachusetts Avenue got to do with babies who walk too much? And mine ain't gonna do that, I'm gonna train her to be good and sit in that stroller. This street walking baby sound like a bad baby. I don't want my baby come out running all around like a running fool. 'Cause I'm pretty sure it matters what you do when they in there. My mama went water skiing when she was pregnant with my older brother and his head way flat, yo. Flat, *flat*, flat.

ANNIE. That's ridiculous, Margie.

TALISHA. It is too. I seen it, Annie.

KEERA. I could see how that could happen right, yeah? I could see –

*(***TALISHA** *lifts her hand up in a stop gesture to* **KEERA**.*)*

TALISHA. *Why* does your mouth keep *moving*?

KEERA. But I know lots about babies since they lettin' me teach Sunday school at my new church –

TALISHA. *(turns back to* **KEERA***)* Tuesday you have my paper or walking around up in here gonna get real rough for you.

MARGIE. I carryin' the future around in here. I should get notes for the whole rest of the year.

KEERA. I wouldn't tell no one.

TALISHA. Not me. I gonna sign up for extra gym. Exercise real good, right Annie?

KEERA. Really, I can keep a secr –

TALISHA. You better watch it, Holly Hobbie. You takin up too much air.

(The school bell rings.)

MARGIE. My brother cute but I can't have a baby like that uh uh, I'ma see about my notes.

*(***TALISHA** *ushers* **MARGIE** *away. They exit.)*

(As **ANNIE** *starts to go:)*

ANNIE. Sorry about Talisha.

KEERA. At my last school one girl spiked my lunch milk with dollar perfume, so Talisha ain't *so* bad. Thanks for showing me the bathroom when school first started.

ANNIE. I should go –

KEERA. I won't tell no one about you all's plan if you really tryina keep it a secret, don't worry.

(a text for **ANNIE***)*

ANNIE. See you, right?

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