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The Creation and Development of *Rise*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in Theatre

by

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Bachelor of Arts in Speech Communications and Theatre, 2014

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This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council

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ABSTRACT

In “The Creation and Development of *Rise*”, I will explain how my play evolved from the initial writing process until the actual production of the show. The Department of Theatre allows students to experience the development of new work through the functions of the classroom. The goal is to simulate how a process would occur in the professional world. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the journey of creation within *Rise*. *Rise* tells the story of the community of St. Marie, Louisiana during Mardi Gras, 1972. The play highlights the city’s triumphs and downfalls, and it is set to the sound of horns—signaling celebration and ceremony.

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INTRODUCTION

Rise bleeds the colors: red, black, and green—set to the backdrop of Mardi Gras in the fictional city of St. Marie, Louisiana. The story takes place in 1972 during a period when African-Americans were still fighting for freedoms within their communities. The central character, Nefertiti, sits on her throne, but her throne comes with many sacrifices. Originally, I wanted to write a play that paid homage to the efforts of Stokely Carmichael and Huey Newton—and all others that played pivotal roles in the Black Power Movement and the creation of the Black Panther Party.

However, *Rise* has turned out to be much more than that. It's a spiritual journey set to the sound of music—which honors Jackson State University's Sonic Boom of the South. The play's format originates from the formula created arguably by Melvin Van Peebles' 1971 film *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*. This film—and later films such as *Shaft*, *Foxy Brown*, and *Superfly*—created a genre, which became known as “Blaxploitation”. The term originated from an article in which “Junius Griffin—a press agent and head of the NAACP's Hollywood branch—coined the genre as “Black Exploitation.” (Dunn, 47)

These films had content matter and imagery that made members of the NAACP and CORE uneasy with how African-Americans were being represented in film. For members of an organization of people who were fighting for Civil Rights and African American equalities and to rid themselves of the struggle, the images in these films carried negative connotations. Critics of the genre felt that the films suppressed any room for political messages in favor of glorifying sex and fashion. With *Rise*, I strived to stray away from this formula, and push the political message to the forefront.

CHAPTER ONE

FROM "BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL, BABY!" to "RISE"

11-21-2016

My first working title was *Black is Beautiful, Baby!* The story was about a girl, Solandra, coming into her own superpowers. However, the story didn't seem true to what I wanted to share with the world. This draft sparked my interest in Yoruba Gods and Goddesses. In the initial draft, I utilized the Yoruba deities: Shango, Oshun, and Oya. Oya is the goddess of change, and Solandra reflected Oya. However, the spiritual element seemed to weigh down the play. The spirits were speaking to each other, but I could not find the overall message or story I was aching to tell. The original setting of the play was Jackson, MS. I knew early on in my process that I had to include the City of Jackson within this story in some form. However, after an early table read, some of the readers felt that the setting should be in New Orleans or Chicago. I agreed so I changed the setting to a fictional city known as St. Marie. Thus, sparking the transition from *Black is Beautiful, Baby!* to *Rise*.

The original characters in *Black is Beautiful, Baby!* included: Solandra Green, King Jimmy Green/Shango, Mama Nadine, Zorah/Street Walker, Black Panther/Homeless Woman, and Mr. Jacob Madison/Tommy Romiti. I originally was writing to double the roles due to lack of access to African American actors at this Predominately White Institution; however, I found that writing with practical concerns of casting in mind stunted my creativity and worrying about how this might be cast was further confusing me. I had so many ideas, but I was not sure on how to land them at the time. This draft also marked the beginning of a spiritual journey that I would find as the new focus of the play.

RISE 1st DRAFT

12-12-2016

The initial draft of *Rise* featured a new character, Soleil Dandridge. Soleil Dandridge is inspired from my own drag persona, Anyssa Solange Monet, and most importantly Dorothy Dandridge—the first African-American actress nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress. In this draft, Soleil is introduced as a friend of the main character, Solandra. However, she seemed more important to the story than she was in this draft. The play still lacked focus as I was trying to figure out the most important story—what is Solandra’s main arc.

This early draft also included a character named Mama Nadine. In this draft, Mama Nadine is a source of wisdom in St. Marie, and she left a lasting imprint on the city of St. Marie. I was trying to find a way to include her without her presence being a distraction. While the character of Mama Nadine has stuck with me since the initial creation of the story, I was still having trouble finding her through-line within the play. Meanwhile, the larger play was steering in many directions without focus. A lot of the characters were not fully realized.

RISE 2nd DRAFT

10-3-2017

I stepped away from *Rise* for almost a year, and I focused on a new project called *Under the Porch*. The two stories tie together—*Under the Porch* was set in New Hebron, Mississippi. Opening on the 4th of July in the late 1950’s, the story highlights a young Black man who struggles to find his place in America just as *Rise* focuses on a young black woman struggling to find her place in America. In, *Under The Porch*, characters make mention of St. Marie, Louisiana and Mama Nadine. Writing this play before revisiting *Rise* helped in the shaping of the

world I wanted to create. I have been striving to combine the realistic aspects of America into a spiritual world that includes the Yoruba deities that bloom from my imagination.

For the second draft of *Rise*, I changed the name of the main protagonist to Nefertiti Green—who was once Solandra Green. However, I was still experiencing difficulties in finding ways to activate Nefertiti. I also added a new character, Santiago Pierre, the captain of the St. Marie Chapter of the Black Panther Party, who is also in a relationship with Nefertiti. I began to find a better pacing within the play. I tied Santiago and Nefertiti, respectively, to Shango and Oya, which helped bring in the Yoruba spiritual dimension I had been struggling with in earlier drafts. The arcs of the core characters in the play were beginning to take shape for me, yet, I was still having problems balancing the ensemble.

RISE 2.1 DRAFT

11-12-17

With this draft, I focused on strengthening the character of Santiago. The story was almost in a full form. There were still some unanswered questions and things that remained from older drafts, which no longer held significance to the new story. I found that without having actors to read the material, it became very difficult to know what areas to focus on in this draft. In this draft, I introduced Jackson State College as the school Nefertiti attended. This helped bring much clarity to the relationship of Nefertiti and Soleil, as I conceived they were roommates back at Jackson State. It also brought Jackson, Mississippi back into the play, which satisfied one of my early impulses. I also wanted to pay homage to the lives of Phillip Gibbs and James Green, two victims of the 1970 Jackson State shooting. While I made strong progress with this draft, it

seemed every time I found a point of clarity, I also found places that still felt muddled and unclear.

RISE DRAFT 2.2

Draft 12-3-2017

The relationships became much clearer in this draft. However, I still wanted to further utilize the Yoruba myths of Oya, Shango, and Oshun in a greater way. I also discovered that Oshun and Shango had children together—twins known as Ibeji. So, my first step was to change one of the ensemble characters, who had been a member of the Black Panther Party, to a more realized character named Shunna, who was also the mother of Santiago’s children. While these additions strengthened the overall play, they also made the play longer. I began to pick out potential areas that could be cut or streamlined for my next draft.

RISE 3rd DRAFT

1-20-2018

This draft showed much progress from the early drafts. The story was beginning to form, but I still had a few loose-ends to tie up. One loose-end, was I recognized the need to tighten the story of Mr. Madison—the drug kingpin of St. Marie—and Tommy Romiti—his enforcer on the street. I discovered that Tommy was a former cop who had been let go by the police force, which helped build a history between the two men and reflected the corruptness of the justice system of 1972 America. Tommy’s father was Madison’s link to the police force when he was alive. Mr. Madison takes Tommy under his wing to fill the void of his dead father, which puts them into a

relationship that is like a family oath. The two men are not related; however, their business relationship has forged a homosocial bond.

In this draft, I'm also shaping the background of Angie Foster. I named her father, King David, after the biblical figure. King David was the ruling drug lord of Saint Joseph, a neighboring community of St. Marie. He was ousted from his throne at the hands of the Black Panther Party while it was being led by Harold Dixon—the former Party Captain whom Santiago replaced. This addition helped further create a more cohesive storyline and gave Angie—who seeks to replace Tommy and, ultimately, Mr. Madison—a more compelling inner life and drive. It also gives her desire to rid St. Marie of the Black Panther Party and Santiago more personal edge and urgency.

Beginning with the draft dated 11-2-2017, the production elements began to swirl around my internal drafting process. In early November 2017, we held auditions for the play. While we had a good turn out and were able to cast nearly everyone, my early anxieties around casting proved to be true, and we were not able to cast Santiago from the audition pool. As Santiago had developed into such a central character, this was obviously a problem. The Department of Theatre, the director (Cole Wimpee) and my faculty advisor (John Walch) assured me they would help me find a suitable actor but going into the winter break we still did not have a cast and this was stressful. In addition to the casting, we began design meetings, trying to define how *Rise* would live theatrically and elegantly on the stage. While the scenic design elements were of importance to me, the design components that I really thought would bring *Rise* and its characters to life were costumes and sound. Throughout my time studying playwriting at University of Arkansas, sound and music, have become an increasing crucial part of my process.

I will discuss in more detail how music and sound has become an essential part of my research and creative process in subsequent chapters.

For now, and while I knew I still had work to do on the play, the competing focus on design elements and the issues with casting (we did find an outside actor in mid-January of 2018, which the department hired to fill out the cast) were making it turbulent to focus on another draft I decided this was the draft we would (more or less) go into rehearsals with the following month.

The play has come a long way from *Black is Beautiful, Baby!* to *Rise* and I settled on the following cast of characters going into the rehearsal for *Rise*.

RISE: CAST LIST

Nefertiti Green: African-American. Female. Age 23. Educator and Activist. The “Queen” is a Jacksonian and a prominent educator within the inner-city community of St. Marie. She belongs to Santiago...Shango.

Soleil Dandridge: African-American. Male. Age 26. THEE Artiste. She is a woman of the night...Not a prostitute, Honey. She is a drag queen. She was born as Mark Mason. She’s connected to the Ancestors. The Messenger.

Santiago Pierre/Shango: African American. Male. Age 23. Leader and St. Marie Panthers’ Captain. He is the “King” to Nefertiti. Healer of the St. Marie Community.

“King” Jimmy Green: African-American. Male. Age 27. The King/Drug Pusher. Brother of Nefertiti. A man with the hopes of gaining back what he is owed. He was once the “Savior of the Ghetto.”

Angie Foster: African-American. Female. Age 21. Businesswoman/Hustlah. She is the daughter of a hustler. She wants to run the city of St. Marie...Then, maybe.... the world. She is her father's daughter.

Mr. Jacob Madison: European-American. Male. Age 55. The Man/ "Owner" of St. Marie. He is the head of the drug ring in St. Marie. Killer of the community—Pushing those narcotics into the hands of the citizens.

Tommy Romiti: Any Race. Male. Age 26. Son of a fallen drug lord. He works for Madison. Madison's highest-paid man.

The Follower: (Ensemble: Drug Pusher/Lady Donna)

The Leader: (Ensemble: Drug Pusher/Shunna)

Rehearsals were set to begin in early March of 2018, but before exploring the discoveries made about the play throughout the rehearsal process, I want to discuss my research-base and how music became a central inspiration in the creation of *Rise* and in my larger creative process.

CHAPTER TWO

THE INNER WORKINGS: INFLUENCES

In the following Chapter, I delve in into brief explorations of two historical influences (The Sonic Boom of the South and the Legendary Prancing J-Settes and the Black Power Movement) that gave rise to my play *Rise*. While I want to give enough historical context, this is not intended to be an exhaustive discussion of either of these incredibly profound movements, but rather a discussion focused on my creative process and how my understanding of these two movements formed the “inner workings” of my play *Rise*.

The Sonic Boom of the South and the Legendary Prancing J-Settes

As an undergraduate student, I attended Jackson State University—an Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in Mississippi— and was a proud member of their marching band. The theatrics of the band—with its powerful fusion of music and movement and its emphasis on empowerment and pride—have enlightened me as an artist. In conceiving *Rise* I knew I wanted to have this vibe represented in the play.

Jackson State University’s band program roots began at the hands of Fredrick D. Hall—now the namesake of the Jackson State Music Department. In 1921, Dr. Hall began teaching at Jackson College and was responsible for starting the school’s orchestra.

“Although Dr. F.D. Hall served as director of the band, primarily chorus and orchestra, the marching band began in the 1940s consisting of college students and students from Lanier High School.” (Jackson, 2014) However, it wasn’t until the late 60’s—around the time of the Black Power Movement—that Black College dance teams began forming at HBCU’s across the country. These dance teams would serve as auxiliaries for the marching bands. Many teams

began as majorette squads, but—as the new decade approached—many of them started to trade in their batons, replacing their routines with groovy dance numbers. Alcorn State University’s Golden Girls were the first dance team to be created in 1968. They were followed by Southern University’s Southern Belles in 1969, which later became known as the Fabulous Dancing Dolls. In 1970, the majorettes at Jackson State College, now Jackson State University, requested to become a dance line. They began to perform dance numbers. In 1971, the ladies were named the Prancing Jaycettes—now known as Prancing J-Settes.

As a young kid growing up in Prentiss, Mississippi, I vividly remember attending the first annual Battle of the Bands in Jackson, Mississippi. I was captivated by the fluidity and elegance of the Prancing J-Settes. I still see those blue capes flying in the wind and those white boots being flung into the air—in the form of mesmerizing kicks. I had never seen anything like it before. The Sonic Boom of The South, as Jackson State’s marching band became to be known, accompanied the ladies in a way that seemed seamless. These two entities worked together as one. The music and dancing moving together as one.

As noted in Chapter One, in my earliest draft I had originally set the play in Jackson. It didn’t feel quite right, but I knew I wanted the brass band music vibe in the play, which helped bring me to the creation of St. Marie, Louisiana. St. Marie is a fictional city filled with Mardi Gras inspired brass band music, and all the lineage, tradition, and magic that comes with it. While I was attending Jackson State University, I learned the importance of legacy and tradition. As a member of the Sonic Boom of the South, I had the honor to play songs that had been played by other members of the ensemble as early as 1974. In 1974, *Get Ready* by the Temptations became the theme song of the Sonic Boom. There has only been one arrangement change since that time, and each year the band enters the stadium playing *Get Ready*. It’s a tradition that won’t

die, and I wanted to create that kind of community-mindset within this play. The love that African-Americans have for rhythm and music will never die. It may rebrand itself, but the love will forever remain the same—no matter the circumstances.

Black Power

Coupled with the pride I saw the Prancing J-Settes display, and as the name “Sonic Boom of the South” suggests there is something artistically powerful about this very special combination. While I was certain I wanted that artistic power in my play, I also wanted to marry it with something equally powerful politically. As discussed in Chapter One, I wanted my play to reclaim the genre of Blaxploitation, reframing it by pushing the political message to the forefront. Making the Black Power Movement a central element in the play seemed an excellent way to make the political content as powerful as the artistic.

Briefly, I discovered that the movement began in 1966 after Stokely Carmichael gave his famous speech in Greenwood, Mississippi which he closed with the phrase “Black Power”. This phrase resonated around the world, and it sparked a revolution. In Oakland, California, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. In my opinion, the party thrived from 1966- until around the mid 1970’s. After its inception, many forces attempted to end the movement and growth of the Black Panthers. The group was viewed as extremist by some White Americans as well as Black Americans. However, a lot of this judgment was formed by the media and attacks on the Party that got national coverage. So, I chose to set the play in the year of 1972 because it was a pivotal year when the Black Panther’s work was still on the *rise*. That same year, Shirley Chisolm also ran as a presidential candidate for the Democratic nomination. Politically, and artistically, black students were rising all over the country.

In the play, Nefertiti and Santiago are both very much wrapped up in these movements, they are agents of change, trying to change the political system of their city that has stewed in corruption and neglect for years. Where Nefertiti and Santiago are the political power players in the play, Soleil brings the artistic sonic boom into the play, which connects them back to their ancient Yoruba lineages.

These two influences served as touchstones for me throughout and continue to form the inner workings of the play.

CHAPTER THREE

MUSIC AS A TOOL OF DISCOVERY

While music has always been a central component of my life, over the course of my time developing as a playwright at University of Arkansas, it has also become a central part of my creative and artistic process. Music leads me to discovery, to unlocking the inner lives of my characters, to finding how they exist rhythmically in the world, how they connect to their lineages.

Orisha Worship Songs

For my research for the play, I listened to traditional Yoruba folk songs that honored the Orishas. These songs provided the spirituality of the world. As I listened, I observed the differences in how the Orishas were called upon. Some of the Orishas names were sung sweetly as a sign of respect and honoring. While other Orishas, mainly the gods, were called upon in outcries. The songs sound dark almost, but I believe that the songs reflect the strength of these Orishas. These songs are also evidence of how enslaved Africans passed on African traditions to their children. A lot of the cadences remind me of what I heard in church. This was hard for me to accept at first because I had been taught to stay away from this type of spirituality. However, I heard a voice telling me that I was doing the right thing in listening to these Yoruba folk songs and exploring this form of spirituality. This allowed me to connect with the individuals that were forced to shun their traditions. I discovered that I was the descendant of those people, and I refuse to believe that I come from an evil group of ancestors. These folk songs praising the Orishas led me on a path to further knowledge.

For the play, I focused primarily on Oya, Shango, Oshun, and Yemaya. Oya gave me background information for the character, Nefertiti. Oya—in nature—is the winds. She is known as the tempest, the goddess of change, and a warrior queen. Nefertiti, as the former Miss Jackson State College, is an agent of change in St. Marie. Shango is the warrior king, god of lightning, and a celebrated drummer. Santiago is Shango in the sense of ruling St. Marie with a gracious but strong hand. His personality is like lightning—very bold and opinionated. Oshun is the goddess of the sweet rivers, goddess of love, and fertility. Oshun is reflected in the character of both Shunna and Angie. Oshun is a goddess with many paths and each path has a different temperament. Shunna is Oshun in the respects of her bearing Santiago’s twins. Oya, Oshun, and Oba are historically known as the wives of Shango. Oya was his favorite of the three, but Oshun and Shango shared love which could be equated to a sexual chemistry. The myth says that Oya ends up raising the twins as her own since Oshun has a spell placed on her which took a mental toll on her and tampered with her sanity. There’s another myth that states that the children were taken in by Yemaya. Yemaya is known as the mother of all, goddess of the ocean, and goddess of childbirth. She is reflected in Soleil. Soleil acts as a “surrogate” mother for Nefertiti by serving as a sounding board and source of wisdom. Some gay men connect themselves to goddesses, and making this connection between Soleil and Yemaya was my intention.

Mr. Big Stuff

One of the first songs that resonated with the play was Jean Knight’s *Mr. Big Stuff*. This song sent me on a journey. I view it as an ode to “The Man”—or the system of oppression. For Soleil, this song is a reminder that she is in control of her destiny. No one can tell her what to do or boss her around. I played this song a lot in the initial creation of this piece, and it helped me

establish the world of Mr. Madison. He is a center of control in St. Marie, and the citizens of St. Marie must stand up to him if they are to regain control over their community. However; if they approach him with the spirit of fear, he will be the victorious one.

This song also speaks to me about female empowerment. The female characters within the play do not comply easily to men. Nefertiti challenges Santiago's authority without a problem. When Santiago abandons his manly duties for the benefit of the Black Panther party, Nefertiti lets him have a piece of her mind. I wrote the character with the notion of her being an African Warrior—poignant and sharp. Angie uses her sexuality to assert her power against the men in the play. Mr. Madison and King Jimmy view her as a sexual object, and she spends most of the play trying to assert herself as a businesswoman—no longer a prostitute. For Angie, this song speaks to her rise to power. She proves that she can be just as treacherous and equally as lethal as any of the males in St. Marie. She vows to kill anyone who presents themselves as a block towards her plan to overtake the drug empire of St. Marie.

You Got to be a Man

James Brown is an artist that has inspired many other great performers to step into the world of music. Helene Smith released a cover song entitled "*You Got to be a Man*". Smith performed for James Brown as one of his opening acts for a tour in the early 1960's. Her cover served as an answer-song to Brown's *Papa's Got a Brand-New Bag*. One line that speaks to the story of *Rise* states, "You don't have to be a king, To sit upon a throne."(Smith) I chose to name Nefertiti Green after the Egyptian Queen Nefertiti as a nod to African-American people embracing their legacies as Kings and Queens within the continent of Africa. Mama Nadine—Nefertiti, Soleil, and Jimmy's grandmother— has bestowed the honor of the throne to Soleil,

Mark Green. The throne represents family legacy, tradition, and connection to the spiritual world. In Mr. Madison's world, the throne represents a legacy of power, greed, and lineage. When I started to create this character, I searched famous men who built a living for their families with funds from the drug cartel. There are multiple stories and speculations about the Kennedy family. On the outer surface, the Kennedy's are known for contributing to the success of the American Society. However, there are many accounts that question that narrative and attributed their success to participation in the occult and the drug cartel. I also began to think about Black men's participation in the drug world. Many men turn to drug dealing to break the cycle of financial oppression within their families. However, the Black male immediately becomes a target once inside the drug game. Historically, Black men have been used as pawns for the white drug boss. In the play, this is reflected in King Jimmy and Angie's father, King David. King Jimmy takes a fall for Mr. Madison with the promise of riches in exchange. Whereas, King David is stripped of all his glory—spending the remainder of his days as a caged man. Angie concocts a plan to get justice for her father which leads her to take on the role of a man. Helene Smith belts out, "Oh, but you gotta be a man. Do what a man's supposed to do."(Smith) Angie Foster is the embodiment of this lyric because she basically fills the void that her father left. She is as manipulating as any man within the city of St. Marie, and she is secretly defiant in her stance. On the other hand, Nefertiti takes on a male role and takes her place on the throne. She fulfills the duties of King Jimmy in his absence, and she takes Santiago's place once he is murdered by Angie and Jimmy.

You Just Keep Me Hangin' On

The Supremes released this legendary track on October 12, 1966. The song carries a feminist charged message. “Set me free why don’t you, Baby. Get out my life why don’t you, Baby. Cause you don’t really love me. You just keep me hangin’ on.” (Smith) In my mind, I envisioned that this was how many African-Americans felt towards “White” America. In the late 60’s and early 70’s, many Blacks demanded control of their lives, which had been dictated by government policies and institutions—a government created without Black people in mind. The Black Panthers strived to install our own system of government within our communities—acting as our own law enforcement, healthcare service providers, and education system. *Rise* speaks to this creation of a new Black government with Santiago bringing the news of the St. Marie School. This is a nod to the Oakland Community School, which was formed at the headquarters of the Black Panther Party. Many Black intellectuals felt if we had our own school we could ensure that Black students learned the full scope of education—not just the basics and not a “White-washed” version of history.

Also, I took this song as an anthem for the rising female empowerment. The feminist movement provided women with more liberated and better images on the television screen as well as in the movie theater. Before the 1970’s women were mostly portrayed in stereotypical roles (seductresses, prostitutes, and homemakers). There was no interest in exploring a woman’s holistic personality. With *Rise*, I strived to heighten the feminism in the play through creating well-rounded, complex female characters—each one bringing something different than the other.

Dancing in the Dark

Solange Knowles is one of the biggest influences behind *Rise. Sol-Angel and the Hadley St. Dreams*, her second album, was in constant rotation in the initial creation of this piece. *Dancing in the Dark* is a song that immediately touched my heart. Every time I listened to the song, I was able to gain connection with the world of St. Marie. Solange sings, “I feel like walking, diving in tears. Water my roses with sweet liquor be a stranger to fears.” (Solange) Nefertiti is filled with fear. She fears the death of Santiago, afraid of the responsibilities that comes with adulthood, and she fears being alone. However, she suppresses those feelings with the notion that what will happen will happen. Many people suppress their emotions with alcohol to take away the pain—or narcotics for that matter. Nefertiti is also “dancing in the dark” in the matters of her future husband, Santiago Pierre. She knows that he has weird dealings going on, but she does not know enough to know the depth of his eventual downfall. This song speaks to a woman’s intuition—the time’s when all the signs are present but love still trumps those doubts and concerns.

Super Bad

James Brown is the sound of Black America. He risked his career by asserting his Blackness with the creation of the Black Power anthem, *Say It Loud (I’m Black and I’m Proud)*. He saw a decrease in the number of White supporters once he sung this declaration. *Super Bad* was equally polarizing. This song galvanized many young Black people to become active and stand up for their rights in American society. The song has a jazz-funk bassline that shifts it into a superhero-esque theme song. “I got something that makes me want to shout. I got something that tells them what it’s all about. I got soul. And I’m Superbad.” (Brown) Those lyrics send a

stream of consciousness through my own soul. When I hear those lyrics, I feel a surge of energy—a great sense of boldness. It lights the pride that lives within my soul. A pride instilled by my ancestors, by my grandparents, my parents, and all of those who have dedicated their lives to preserving African heritage within America. When I hear the song, I see the Black Panthers celebrating their victories—with a social gathering. I envision heads carrying afros that are picked to their highest peaks. *Super Bad* speaks to Santiago Pierre—highlighting his efforts to change the community of St. Marie. Santiago is a fearless leader, but his fearlessness causes him his own undoing.

Theme of Foxy Brown

As a young boy, I remember watching a VHS copy of *Foxy Brown* starring Pam Grier. My dad owned the videotape; somehow, the movie drifted into my fingertips. When I first watched the film, I was eight years old. I didn't understand a lot of things going on within the film, but I was instantly mesmerized by the beauty of Pam Grier. In my mind, she was like a life-size Barbie doll. The costume design provided great spectacle for the film, and my initial viewing embedded imagery into my memory that will remain with me for the rest of my days.

The film score was created by soul musician Willie Hutch, and he captured my attention with the title track. *Theme of Foxy Brown* is the ultimate superhero theme song. Hutch illustrates Foxy Brown in a way that is provocative and seducing. Hutch belts, "Please, don't make Foxy mad. Or you'll find out that the lady...is super bad." (Hutch) As the lyric swoons through my ear, I visualize a fierce warrior-like woman. The woman holds her head towards the sky because she is elevated—her intellect superseding all that lies before her. This song holds truth for Nefertiti. It's evident once she rises from the bed after three days of mourning Santiago's death that she is, in a deeper sense, waking up with a new level of consciousness.

During my experience as a grad student, I too have achieved a higher-sense of self. Many questions I had as an undergrad student have now received answers. I placed similar energies into Nefertiti's persona; for instance, she has returned to St. Marie after her matriculation at Jackson State College has neared its end. She returns with a plethora of knowledge from her studies, but there are some complexities of life that she has yet to comprehend. However, once she is forced to act, she learns.

Curtis Mayfield

Curtis Mayfield has always been one of my favorite male artists. While I've *known* his music since I was around the age of fifteen, I had always *heard* his music as a kid. When I was four years old, I remember watching Ice Cube's *Friday*. Mayfield's *Freddie's Dead* can be heard during the movie's drive-by scene. Mayfield also wrote and performed the musical score for the 1972 classic *Superfly*. The soundtrack is one of the most sampled albums in existence for great reasons. Curtis Mayfield depicted ghetto life in a way that was poetic and unique.

As I wrote this play, I listened to *Little Child*, *Running Wild* regularly. I tended to play this song when I was working on King Jimmy Green. Mayfield croons, "Broken home. Father Gone. Mama tired. So he's all alone." (Mayfield) The imagery that comes to me while listening to this song is a young, confused boy without any male influence—sitting on a stoop—looking out towards the sky. As he is looking out, his mind ponders and searches for answers. This young man wants to know what he did to deserve these living circumstances, and he now questions the existence of God because his current life is hell. Jimmy Green is the epitome of these words. His mother, Dahleen, did not know how to save her child. Once Mama Nadine passed away, the Green family lost its foundation and voice of reason. Mama Nadine was the protector of the

children, but Dahleen represents the young mothers who don't possess all the tools of motherhood. Dahleen speaks to women who feel that the presence of the male in a household is necessary. Often, some mothers abandon their duties, which allows outside influences to take over their children. Mayfield further sings, "Kinda sad. Kinda mad. Ghetto Child. Thinkin' he's been had." (Mayfield)

King Jimmy comes from an environment that is full of tradition and pride; however, he can never escape the fact that he is a product of the ghetto. He comes home from prison to find out that Mama Nadine's house has been torn down and replaced with a store owned by his oppressor, Mr. Madison. King Jimmy sets his ambition towards money because he feels that is the only way to correct the history of his family finances. Most enslaved African-Americans were not able to accrue any substantial income. The systems set in place within the country made the initial financial gain extremely difficult which is why many African Americans still struggle today. Most of us come from families that do not have any foundations of income. King Jimmy is a pimp, and he would possibly be a rapper in today's time. In the older generations, the pimp was idolized as a symbol of pride and hope in the African-American community. The pimp was a popular image because he had two things that most young boys and men desired—women and money. Pimps were also known for their popular, fancy vices which were expressed through expensive clothing and cars. Initially, I watched a documentary on Iceberg Slim. Iceberg Slim, born Robert Beck, was known for highlighting the lifestyle of a pimp. He glamorized the profession in a way that inspired future generations of pimps. The pimp extraordinaire wrote a few novels under his pseudonym. Among his most famous are "*Trick Baby*" and "*Mama Black Widow*". Much-like Jimmy, he strived to build a legacy for himself. His childhood was just as problematic as King Jimmy's as well. When I hear Curtis Mayfield's voice, I sense him calling

out to men like King Jimmy and Iceberg Slim. Many times, pimps are among the saddest individuals because their lives are not truly their own. Most of them work for someone else, usually a White man, which is still a form of oppression.

Jimmy Mack

Martha Reeves and the Vandellas are widely known for their breakout hit, *Heatwave*. From my point view, *Jimmy Mack* is one of their best recordings. The ladies sweetly sing, “Jimmy Mack. Jimmy...Ohh Jimmy Mack. When are you coming back?” (Reeves) When I heard this song, I immediately jumped to my feet. I began to dance in excitement because I found another song that would act as a catalyst to my writing process. For Nefertiti, Soleil, and Santiago, Jimmy’s return is not one of excitement. Nefertiti is happy that her brother will no longer live his life inside of a cage, but she knows that Jimmy does not know about Mama Nadine’s house being gone. Soleil knows the trouble and chaos that comes with Jimmy and is not thrilled with his return. Santiago does not need Jimmy to come back to St. Marie because he’s been working hard with the Black Panther Party to keep drugs under control in the community. The song is embedded into the play through Jimmy not disclosing his release date with anyone but Angie. No one in the community really knows when he’s coming back which allows room for Santiago to interfere with Jimmy’s business deal.

Black Power Songs

After I decided to set the play in 1972, I began to research music connected to the Black Power Movement. The Black Panther Party had compilation records with music from artists such as The Staple Singers, Gil-Scott Heron, Grady Tate, and many others. These songs called for Black Consciousness. Most of the songs talked about the struggles of being Black, and most

songs encouraged African-Americans to be proud of their heritage. These songs also pushed for the Black community to become more aware—in today’s time we call it being “woke”. Grady Tate’s *Be Black* was in steady rotation in my playlist. Grady exclaims, “Be Black. Baby, Be Black.” (Tate) Those words soothe my spirit because it urges African-Americans to take pride in their Blackness. I found this song around the time of Trump’s win of the presidency which was perfect timing. When I attended Jackson State University, I always felt immensely proud of the accomplishments of African-Americans to American society. The school is rich in history—having roots in the Civil Rights movement. My time as a Jacksonian was always like a history lesson. I was constantly learning things about Black culture from my professors and other students. When I hear *Be Black*, the Prancing J-Settes appear in my mind. I can vividly see them strutting down the plaza in front of the Sonic Boom of the South. I see the crowd of students, alumni, and community members surrounding the band. This song calls for Blacks to hold their heads high and keep marching on to the rhythm of the ancestors.

I collected all of these musical influences into a play-list that I was able to share with my collaborators. I feel the deep dramaturgy of the piece and the inner-lives of the characters can only be fully realized and felt through the music. I was excited to share these songs and the discoveries that they had inspired when we began the rehearsal process, which was set to begin on March 6, 2018.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE REHEARSAL PROCESS

I continued working on the script through the rehearsal process, in response to the many questions, ideas, and thoughts my collaborators brought to the table. As these weren't full-drafts per-se, rather working on sections as needed, making cuts and tweaks, I have included my changes to the script and response to the rehearsal process as a form of a log, cataloging the process, the discoveries, and the overall larger process.

March 6-9

The first week of rehearsal consisted of read-throughs of the most recent draft of the script as well as resource sharing and discussion. The first night, March 6th, the cast read through the script. Each member of the cast shared the aspects of the play that resonated with them. Many people appreciated the fact that Santiago was not a perfect hero. I received the critique that his shortcomings—his judgment of Soleil and his past infidelity—helped build him as a more realistic character. I also heard things within the script that I wanted to eliminate. On March 7th, we began rehearsals with watching two videos that correlated to the play. The first documentary was entitled *Bad Ass Cinema*, which highlights the movement of Blaxploitation films by providing in depth interviews from historians as well as actors/actresses. The group responded well to the film, and the director—Cole Wimpee—held a talkback session after the film. The cast brought up great points and displayed a sense of wanting more knowledge on the matter of Blaxploitation. The next film we watched was a documentary titled *Off the Pigs*. *Off the Pigs*, which explores the Black Panther Party and its movement as a civic-action group. The film was recorded in the early years of the organization so the footage was very raw and gritty. The cast

absorbed the film, and we began to dig into the first four scenes of the play with these videos and points of shared understanding in mind. On March 8th, responding to questions that arose from the table-read, I brought in changes to the first half of the script. Everyone responded well to the changes, and Cole asked further questions about the story to bring more clarity into the script. I took those suggestions, but I wanted to focus on the second half of the play before making other changes. On March 9th, the rehearsal began around 6pm. We focused on scene two and scene four, and the cast asked questions to help them better understand their characters. As the week came to a close, the play was coming into focus and was headed in a new and more purposeful direction.

March 11-15

I made sure to begin all rehearsals with music from 1972—or music reflective of that time—to build a sense of community and establish the world of the play. As we dug deeper into the scenes on March 11, I started to cut lines which I felt were not needed to support the larger story. We also began to put the scenes “on their feet” in the rehearsal space. The actors rehearsed with their scripts in hand and seeing the play rise from the page to the stage was quite informative. I was able to hear and see my words in motion. On March 12, we ran the entire play with the scripts. I was not pleased because the play seemed to drag, and the story was not cohesive as it seemed to me on paper. However, the play continued to progress. I trusted my instincts and continued to make adjustments to the script. On March 14, I finished a new draft of the script. However, it was still a little lengthy. On March 15, we held a short rehearsal with just myself, the stage managers, and the actors. The time was useful, and it helped build a great chemistry as a team. Overall, this week was very beneficial. Cole focused on scene work with

the actors and building circumstances to help them exist in these roles as authentically as possible. We had a week off for Spring Break, which would allow me time to rework aspects of the script and generally clean the script, cut, and focus on continuity issues.

March 30th-April 4th

On March 30th, I delivered a new draft to the cast and crew. This version was more abbreviated than the previous ones. We spent the first day seeing how much of the story had changed. The rest of the week I spent time finding further cuts in the dialogue. The pacing of the show still dragged at times. April 1st-4th was focused towards scene work, and I was still hearing things that needed a little tweaking. I made a list of the areas and moments that were not reading clearly for me. I created what I thought would be the final draft on April 5. I requested Cole to have the cast give a run through of the entire play, and we set the date for Sunday April 8th.

April 8th - 13th

On April 8th, we ran through the play in the Kimpel 404 Black box. The first act dragged a lot, but the second act pace was improved. The next day, April 9th, we held our design run at the Global Campus theatre. This was our first time in the performance space, and we had to make a few adjustments with blocking. While watching the run, I still was not pleased with the overall pacing of the script. A few lines did not come off well in the new, larger space as well. So, I worked and printed new scripts the next day. I got together with a few of the cast members after the design run, and with their input and the collective eye toward streamlining, we agreed on some script cuts. The story was there, but there were still a few lines that interrupted the flow of the dialogue. The new changes helped increase the pace of the first act, and it lessened the

page count. It felt great to be able to bond with the cast members, and I've learned new lessons in how collaborators can help me see more deeply into my own work.

April 15th-19th

On April 15th, I was beginning to focus more on the staging and the choices that were being made based on the most recent changes, and I was not pleased with a few staging choices. While I've been in the program, I have been working on being more proactive and vocal when I have an issue, and in this circumstance, I asserted myself and articulated my concerns to the director and cast. My comments were received well, and we made the necessary adjustments. Monday, April 16th, was the day before our first tech rehearsal. The day consisted of some very practical matters, like practicing the drags for the death scenes—with a tarp. Then, we ran the show. The run was decent; however, there were moments that still needed work. The director gave detailed notes to the cast, and the adjustments were made. And while I know there are still discoveries to be made and points of greater clarity to be found, we felt ready for our first technical rehearsal. Tuesday, April 17th, was our tech rehearsal. We didn't have one of the actors, which made things a little unclear; however, the rehearsal helped point out a few technical issues. The tarps added too much time to the show because two actors were literally dragging off each murdered character within the play. The stage and spacing caused problems with time efficacy. Cole was proactive in thinking of ways to fix this problem, and he promised that we would have it fixed by the time of the dress rehearsal. On April 18th and 19th, we focused on tightening the show. Cole worked with the actors on timing because he felt the show dragging in some sections. By the end of the week, we were in good shape heading into dress rehearsals.

April 21, 23-25

On April 21st, our final cue—to—cue and dry run was held in the Global Campus theatre. In this rehearsal, Cole decided to eliminate the tarps from the show. The designers ran cues to ensure that everything ran smoothly. The actors were delivering great on-stage moments. On the 23rd, we had our first dress rehearsal. It was exciting to see the show with the costumes, and the actors started to become the characters. The drags of the dead bodies off stage were replaced with a more elegant moment parasols opening over the bodies, which I was pleased with because it reinforced the idea of the parasols having many facets and points toward the tradition of jazz funerals in New Orleans. On the 24th, we were back in Kimpel in room 404. We only worked on fine tuning moments as far as the acting. Cole gave the cast notes from the design run at the top of the rehearsal, and the rest of the time went towards running the second act of the show. April 25th was our final dress rehearsal. The show ran beautifully from my standpoint, but there were a few stumbles from the actors. However, I was pleased with the direction of the show.

April 27-29

April 27th was opening night for *Rise*. The show started promptly at 7p.m., and it was quite the spectacle. The audience was highly responsive, and they acted as if they were a part of the play themselves. I enjoyed the audience commentaries throughout the play. The highlight moment was when Nefertiti spit on Angie's corpse after she has killed her. The audience applauded as this moment happened. After the show, I got great critiques on the show. Most of the audience members loved the show and the performance. April 28th was our matinee performance. The show started eight minutes after 2 pm, and the energy of the show was much different than the opening. The audience response was different than the first night's crowd.

They were a responsive, interactive group, but it took a minute for them to get settled into the world of the play. After the show, many of the audience members shared their love for the story. The final performance was April 29th. The show began at 7:04 pm, and the audience response was vastly different than the previous performances. The audience did not share as much laughter as the other groups. The audience seemed to be listening to the words and evaluating. This affected the actor's energy, but I'm sure they were exhausted; however, they still had great moments. After the show, the audience let me know their thoughts of the show. Like the other audiences, they told me how much they enjoyed the show. I am pleased with the outcome of the show, and I'm hopeful for the future of the show.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this experience has been one of the most informative processes during my journey as a theatre artist. I've learned how to collaborate with others, and I've learned to assert myself when voicing my opinions. *Rise* is the love letter to my journey from a young man at Jackson State University until now. This has been a whirlwind experience, but it has shaped me into a stronger artist. From *Black is Beautiful, Baby!* to *Rise*, this story has transcended into one of my most promising works. This project has evolved in a short period of time which makes me excited for future projects.

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4. Willie Hutch. “Theme of Foxy Brown”. *Foxy Brown*, Motown, 1974.
5. Curtis Mayfield. “ Little Child, Running Wild”. *Superfly*, Rhino, 1972.
6. Martha Reeves and The Vandellas. “Jimmy Mack” *Watchout!*, Motown, 1967.
7. Helene Smith. “You Gotta Be a Man”. *Promo*, Phil L.A. of SOUL, 1969.
8. Solange. “Dancing in the Dark”. *Sol-Angel and the Hadley Street Dreams*, Geffen, 2008.
9. The Supremes. “You Keep Me Hangin’ On”. *The Supremes Sing Holland—Dozier—Holland*, Motown, 1967.
10. Grady Tate. “Be Black”. *Black Panthers Compilation Vol. I*, Skye, 1969.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A.

Department of Theatre Season Selection Proposal 2017-2018

Documentation of Initial Stages in Development

RISE

Brief Description

Rise is the story of Nefertiti Green. She's a hot and sassy mama—Tackling the streets of Saint Marie. One Criminal at a time. Nefertiti spends her days running a non-profit educational center, Olugbala. She laces up her boots and sticks it to the man at night. She is sparked to justice after she loses her main man, Santiago Pierre, to a drug scandal. Nefertiti takes matters into her own hands. Her mission is to rid Carmichael Drive of drugs by targeting drug lords like Mr. Jacob Madison and her own flesh and blood, “King” Jimmy Green. Nefertiti seeks spiritual guidance from a goodtime girlfriend and “profashional” drag queen, Soleil Dandridge. Nefertiti learns one of the biggest lessons: men are not the only ones running the drug game.

Long Description

Nefertiti Green is the “It Girl”—rephrase that. She is the embodiment of womanhood. Her beauty befits the name placed upon her. After a stint in Atlanta, at the prestigious Spelman College, she returned to Saint Marie with a mind to make changes to the social construct of the impoverished city of her childhood. With Shirley Chisolm running for the democratic nomination, Nefertiti feels that anything is possible. It pushes her to take control of her neighborhood. Green lives on Carmichael Drive—a historically black community— which is notorious for its drug affiliation. Nefertiti, or Nefe for short, has no tolerance for drug activity due to her brother’s, “King” Jimmy Green, incarceration. Jimmy is due for release in a couple of days, and he has promised Nefertiti that he is a changed man. Once Miss Green returned to Saint Marie, she fell upon a beautiful soul—Santiago Pierre. He is the leader of Saint Marie’s local chapter of the Black Panther Party. Pierre’s mission as the leader is to provide the community, particularly its youth, with a drug free environment. This upsets the individuals involved in the drug ring of Saint Marie. The Black Panthers have been able to wipe out drugs without being tracked until one-night Santiago is followed by one of Madison’s men after a Black Panther meeting. Jacob Madison is the most respected drug lord of Saint Marie—well in the entire state of Louisiana. He does not play about his money and his connections. Any favor that he may need can be carried out in a matter of seconds. So, when he got word of the Black Panthers’ endeavors, he sent out a hit on the main man, Santiago. Enraged by this act of violence, Nefertiti Greens zips up her Nancy boots and begins to ruin Madison’s system from the ground up. Nefertiti solicits support from her goodtime gal—The one and only, Soleil Dandridge. Soleil is all things fabulous and everything other-worldly.

Nefertiti relies on Soleil for spiritual advice and visions. Soleil is a drag queen without a filter. At the same time, she is a voice of reason. She is also the resident artist and soundtrack for this majestic world. Soleil has been amongst the likes of many heathens like Madison and his crew. So, she heeds Nefertiti on the danger that could be on the rise. Nefertiti will do anything to get justice, but it won’t be easy. There is a woman on Madison’s team, Angie Foster,

with her own agenda. She wants to rule the empire, and Nefertiti is getting in the way. All the while King Jimmy is trying to get back into the game. He is left with the decision of turning against his blood sister to reach the status that he once possessed. This causes an uproar within the streets of Saint Marie, and Nefertiti's acts of vigilante justice begin to catch up with her making her a target. Soleil comes to Nefertiti's side. Soleil always calls Nefertiti by the name Oya. She always says, "You're the Oya to my Shango". Nefertiti never understands what this means. There's a myth about the god, Shango and one of his wives, Oya. It is told that Shango retreated to Oya's house to lose a group of men that were trying to attack him. Shango was known for his warrior strength, and Oya was equally as strong. Oya dresses Shango as herself. So, he goes to face the army of men. They see Shango as Oya—exuding the same beauty. The men greet Shango as they would Oya. Once the men's guard was down, Shango attacked and defeats the army. However, this is not the tale that Nefertiti and Soleil are facing. Soleil is basically offering herself as sacrifice against Nefertiti's will. All whilst, Angie Foster is causing havoc. Angie goes after the head honcho, Madison, after he continuously reminds her that she will never be an equal or be more than a sex worker. Nefertiti witnesses the murder of Madison—she was really coming to end Madison herself. However, Angie begins to boast about how Nefertiti does not know the magnitude of what's going to happen. The two women begin to tussle and fight— all the sassy 1970's lingo placed throughout this brawl. There's a lot more that will take place, but that is the gist of it. I am creating a piece that crosses several genres into one. I have primarily pulled inspiration from two blaxploitation films, *Foxy Brown* and *Coffy*—both starring Pam Grier. I am combining the glamorous fashions of the 1970's with the hard-hitting action that was born out of this era. This play is an adaptation. The name, Nefertiti Green, is paying homage to two notable blaxploitation super-mamas, *Foxy Brown* and *Cleopatra Jones*. I am adding elements that are not included in many blaxploitation films which is a Yoruba myth, the Drag Queen lifestyle, and a deep emphasis on the Black Power movement.

Challenges and Objectives

One of the challenges that I face within the writing of this piece is the action. I have never written anything that had a lot of physical movement. However, I plan to utilize my stage directions in new and inventive ways to transfer my vision onto the stage. I do not want Soleil to only be seen performing songs throughout the play. I plan to develop poetry-like monologues that deal with femininity, police brutality, and transcendence. Soleil is a poet and activist. Adding these monologues would strengthen her poignancy. I have to devise a way to make King Jimmy's story believable and allow it to be heard. I am on a discovery to find what he needs from all of this drug foolery. What makes King Jimmy chase a dollar? That is the question that rings through my head. I am going to have a time with finding book research on African-American drag queens. However, I have a wealth of knowledge and a few video references that will get the point across. I intend for this play to be connected to *Under the Porch*—or closely-related. I placed a few pointers within *Under the Porch* like Mama Nadine, St. Marie, and Mosby—which is Soleil's last name as a male. I must think of ways to enlarge those stories and place them in this new world that I'm creating. I also intend to look over the laws that were set in place in the year of 1972. This footwork will enable me to accurately capture the world that existed in that period. I intend to seamlessly tie in the spiritual world within this play. I figured that it would be better to adapt a myth rather than using actual characters to reflect these deities. The central action of the play centers around Nefertiti Green. After her boyfriend is murdered, she does everything to bring the murderers to justice. She does not wait on the law to bring her justice because she knows that they don't care. Santiago was the head of St. Marie's Black Panther Party and wanted by many. So, justice only comes from the barrel of Nefertiti's gun—at least that is how she sees it. The conflicting part of this entire ordeal is that Nefertiti is pitted against her own flesh and blood. It is unbeknownst to her, but Jimmy has made deals with Jacob Madison to become the "King" again.

Sources

Autobiography of Aaron Dixon who founded the Seattle, Washington, chapter of the Black Panther Party in 1968, discussing his radicalization and the legacy of Black Power
More Details

- **Title:** My people are rising
- **Subtitle:** memoir of a **Black Panther Party** captain
- **Library Location:** Main Library
- **Source:** University of Arkansas Library Catalog
- **Publisher:** Haymarket Books
- **Date :** 2012
- **Place:** Chicago, Ill
- **Pages:** xiv, 345
- **OCLC:** 756581722
- **ISBN:** 9781608461783, 1608461785
- **Genre:** Biography
- **Discipline:** History & Archaeology, Women's Studies
- **Subjects:**

Seattle (Wash.) -- African Americans -- History
Dixon, Aaron Floyd
Black Panther Party
African American political activists -- Washington (State) -- Seattle -- Biography

- **Language:** English

Summary

In an era of stark racial injustice and decisive action, Aaron Dixon dedicated his life to the struggle for change, founding the Seattle chapter of the Black Panther Party in 1968 at 19. Through his eyes, we see the courage of a generation that stood up to injustice, their political triumphs and tragedies and the unforgettable legacy of Black Power.

Reason for Selecting:

Nefertiti's lover, Santiago, is going to be patterned after this man. This book would enable me to submerge deeply into the background story of Santiago. Also, it will further shape the knowledge that I possess of the Black Panther Party. Santiago is the leader of the Saint Marie chapter of Black Panthers. Aaron Dixon was only nineteen at the time he founded the Seattle chapter of the Black Panther party. Santiago is the same age as Aaron Dixon. The year of my play is 1972 which makes Santiago around twenty-two or twenty-three years old.

- **Title:** "Baad bitches" and sassy supermamas

- **Subtitle:** Black power action films
- **Alternate Title:** "Baad bitches" & sassy supermamas
- **Library Location:** Main Library
- **Source:** University of Arkansas Library Catalog
- **Series:** The new black studies series
- **Publisher:** University of Illinois Press
- **Date :** 2008
- **Place:** Urbana
- **Pages:** xv, 166
- **LCCN:** 2007048113
- **OCLC:** 177019488
- **ISBN:** 9780252075483, 025203340X, 025207548X, 9780252033407
- **Discipline:** Film
- **Subjects:**

Blaxploitation films -- United States -- History and criticism.

Action and adventure films -- United States -- History and criticism.

African American women heroes in motion pictures.

- **Language:** English

Summary

This lively study unpacks the intersecting racial, sexual, and gender politics underlying the representations of racialized bodies, masculinities, and femininities in early 1970s black action films, with particular focus on the representation of black femininity. Stephane Dunn explores the typical, sexualized, subordinate positioning of women in low-budget blaxploitation action narratives as well as more seriously radical films like Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song and The Spook Who Sat by the Door, in which black women are typically portrayed as trifling "bitches" compared to the supermacho black male heroes. The terms "baad bitches" and "sassy supermamas" signal the reversal of this positioning with the emergence of supermama heroines in the few black action films in the early 1970s that featured self-assured, empowered, and tough (or "baad") black women as protagonists: Cleopatra Jones, Coffy, and Foxy Brown.

Dunn offers close examination of a distinct moment in the history of African American representation in popular cinema, tracing its emergence out of a radical political era, influenced especially by the Black Power movement and feminism. "Baad Bitches" and Sassy Supermamas also engages blaxploitation's impact and lingering aura in contemporary hip-hop culture as suggested by its disturbing gender politics and the "baad bitch daughters" of Foxy Brown and Cleopatra Jones, rappers Lil' Kim and Foxy Brown.

Reason for Selecting:

This selection encompasses many topics that are explored in my play. Nefertiti Green is a “Sassy Supermama”. She kicks gender in its nut sack and defies what men define as being a woman. Nefe has beauty that is untouched by many of her peers. Further exploring the significance of roles like “Foxy Brown” and “Cleopatra Jones” is vital to truly depict the rise of feminism amongst many Americans. This is the age that shaped the world into what we know it as today. Women began to see themselves as figures of authority. On the screen, Pamela Grier broke many barriers for African-American femininity, African-American sex appeal, and womanly; superhuman strength.

- **Title:** Black queer studies
- **Subtitle:** a critical anthology
- **Library Location:** Main Library
- **Source:**
 - University of Arkansas Library Catalog
- **Publisher:** Duke University Press
- **Date :** 2005
- **Place:** Durham, NC
- **Pages:** xiii, 377
- **LCCN:** 2005009917
- **OCLC:** 59403452
- **ISBN:** 0822336294, 0822336189, 9780822336181, 9780822336297
- **Discipline:** History & Archaeology, Women's Studies
- **Subjects:**

Gay and lesbian studies -- United States
 Lesbians -- United States -- Identity
 Gays -- United States -- Identity
 African Americans -- Study and teaching
 African Americans -- Race identity

- **Language:** English

Summary

While over the past decade a number of scholars have done significant work on questions of black lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered identities, this volume is the first to collect this groundbreaking work and make black queer studies visible as a developing field of study in the United States. Bringing together essays by established and emergent scholars, this collection assesses the strengths and weaknesses of prior work on race and sexuality and highlights the theoretical and political issues at stake in the nascent field of black queer studies. Including work by scholars based in English, film studies, black studies, sociology, history, political science, legal studies, cultural studies, and performance studies, the volume showcases the broadly interdisciplinary nature of the black queer studies project.

The contributors consider representations of the black queer body, black queer literature, the pedagogical implications of black queer studies, and the ways that gender and sexuality have been glossed over in black studies and race and class marginalized in queer studies. Whether exploring the closet as a racially loaded metaphor, arguing for the inclusion of diaspora studies in black queer studies, considering how the black lesbian voice that was so expressive in the 1970s and 1980s is all but inaudible today, or investigating how the social sciences have solidified racial and sexual exclusionary practices, these insightful essays signal an important and necessary expansion of queer studies.

Contributors. Bryant K. Alexander, Devon Carbado, Faedra Chatard Carpenter, Keith Clark, Cathy Cohen, Roderick A. Ferguson, Jewelle Gomez, Phillip Brian Harper, Mae G. Henderson, Sharon P. Holland, E. Patrick Johnson, Kara Keeling, Dwight A. McBride, Charles I. Nero, Marlon B. Ross, Rinaldo Walcott, Maurice O. Wallace

Reason for Selecting: The LGBT community is on the rise in the 1970's. Long gone are the days in which they sat back quietly. Soleil Dandridge is a loud and proud homosexual. So, it would behoove me to discover as much about Black queer people during this era and beyond. Being Black and gay is a struggle unknown too many people. One has to exist within different worlds. One world is filled with Black people who give homosexuality a great disdain and disapproval. The other world is the white man's world where the color of his or her skin presides over everything. Then, you have gay world. A world where unicorns escape to be free. However, that world also has its division much like the real world.

- **Title:** Queering creole spiritual traditions
- **Subtitle:** lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender participation in **African**-inspired traditions in the Americas
- **Library Location:** Main Library
- **Source:** University of Arkansas Library Catalog
- **Publisher:** Harrington Park Press
- **Date :** 2004
- **Place:** Nwe York
- **Pages:** xii, 390
- **LCCN:** 2003011305
- **OCLC:** 52334867
- **ISBN:** 9781560233503, 1560233516, 9781560233510, 1560233508
- **Discipline:** Religion
- **Subjects:**

Afro-Caribbean cults
Homosexuality -- Religious aspects

- **Language:** English

Summary

What roles do queer and transgender people play in the African diasporic religions? *Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Participation in African-Inspired Traditions in the Americas* is a groundbreaking scholarly exploration of this long-neglected subject. It offers clear insight into the complex dynamics of gender and sexual orientation, humans and deities, and race and ethnicity, within these richly nuanced spiritual practices.

Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions explores the ways in which gender complexity and same-sex intimacy are integral to the primary beliefs and practices of these faiths. It begins with a comprehensive overview of Vodou, Santeria, and other African-based religions. The second section includes extensive, revealing interviews with practitioners who offer insight into the intersection of their beliefs, their sexual orientation, and their gender identity. Finally, it provides a powerful analysis of the ways these traditions have inspired artists, musicians, and writers such as Audre Lorde, as well as informative interviews with the artists themselves.

In *Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions*, you will discover:

- how the presence of androgynous divinities affects both faith and practice in Vodou, Candomble, Santeria, and other Creole religions
- how the phenomenon of possession or embodiment by a god or goddess may validate queer identity and nurture gender complexity
- who practices the African-derived spiritual traditions, what they believe, and who their deities are
- how these faiths have influenced the art and aesthetic traditions of the West

This landmark book opens a fascinating new world of thought and belief. The authors provide rigorous documentation and faultless scholarly method as well as personal experience and the testimony of believers. *Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions* sheds new light on two widely different fields: LGBT studies and the theology of the African diaspora. A thorough bibliography points the way to further study, and an extensive photograph gallery provides a unique look at the believers and their practices. Every library with holdings in queer theory, African mythology, or sociology of religion should have this landmark volume.

Reason for Selecting:

- Soleil is connected to the spirit world. She is a biological male that dresses in drag. Some people would find that to be odd; however, many queer individuals are usually rooted in religious or spiritual traditions—primarily in an African American community. Soleil embodies the goddesses Oya and Oshun. This book discusses “how the phenomenon of possession or embodiment by a god or goddess may validate queer identity and nurture gender complexity.” These spiritual traditions do not reject individuals based on their personal endeavors—or sexual preference.

SCHEDULE of SCRIPT Deadlines

- Working Draft (No Later than August 21, 2017)
- Marketing Synopsis and Title (75-200 words, no later than September 1, 2017)
- First Draft (no later than September 18, 2017)
- Thesis Committee Meeting #1 (October 2017)
- Audition Draft, with “sides” (no later than October 9, 2017)
- Workshop Draft (no later than October 23, 2017)
- Second Draft (no later than December 4, 2017)
- Rehearsal Draft (No later than January 22, 2018)

Technical Elements

There is a lot of sound involved within the play. Also, there will be a great need for fight choreography. I, myself, have dance ability and could choreograph my own dance numbers. However; if a choreographer is available, I would greatly appreciate the assistance. Costumes is a major component within this play.

Character Descriptions

CHARACTERS

Nefertiti Green- African-American /Age 22/ Female

Mark Mosby/ Soleil Dandridge- African-American/ Age 26/ Male

“King” Jimmy Green/ Boy 1- African-American/ Age 27/ Male

Angie Foster- African-American/ Age 26/ Female

Mr. Jacob Madison- Caucasian/ Age 50+/ Male

Tommy Romiti/ Boy 2- Caucasian/ Age 28/ Male

Santiago Pierre- African-American/ Age 23/ Male

Dispatcher/ Announcer (Voice Overs)- A fun, effervescent voice that can also sound serious.

Thesis Committee and Team

Director:

1st Choice: Michael Landman

2nd Choice: Cole Wimpee

Designers:

MJ Hall

More to come

○ **National Scale:**

Kenny Leon (Director) and Amy Evans (Dramaturge)

○ **Thesis Committee:**

John Walsch

Michael Landman

Amy Herzberg

Steven Marzolf

RISE SAMPLE

PROLOGUE

Setting: Payphone on a street corner.

DISPATCHER

911, what's your emergency?

NEFERTITI

Yes, I am reporting drug activity. There's going to be a drop on the corner of Carmichael Dr. and Newton Avenue at 1:30 a.m.

DISPATCHER

How do you know this?

NEFERTITI

I know what I know. *(BEAT)* It's Madison's people.

DISPATCHER

Do you wish to remain anonymous?

NEFERTITI

The corner of Carmichael and Newton at 1:30 a.m. Good Night.

NEFERTITI hangs up the phone. SFX: EXHALING. A whole new world opens up. Blaxploitation Introduction. The entire cast with the exception of NEFERTITI and SOLEIL appears differently than themselves. Two members of the ensemble carry a sign that bears the title RISE. SOLEIL enters like Diana Ross at her best. She's lipsyncing her heart out. Each member of the ensemble is carrying a sign. The Signs have phrases like Peace and Equality. Black is Beautiful, Love not War, and I am the SOUL. The signs reverse. One says Starring and the rest have the characters' names. SOLEIL and the ensemble bring the performance on home. End of Prologue

SCENE ONE

*SETTING: MADISON's Office.
TOMMY is breakin' the news to
MADISON.*

TOMMY

Boss, That Johnson kid got busted over on Carmichael.

MADISON

You're kidding me, right? I thought all bases were covered. Who keeps stinging us?

TOMMY

We think it's those Black Panther guys.

MADISON

You would think they'd be afraid here in the South.

TOMMY

They've been popping up all over.

MADISON

And throwing a wrench in my operation. I've been a part of this community too long. I've gave plenty Nigras a chance. Why are they coming after me?

TOMMY

I'm working hard to find out, Boss.

MADISON

How much did we lose?

TOMMY

About ten grand. And three kilos.

MADISON

I'm not happy about this, Tommy. We have to do something about this. Before you know it, the Blacks will think they can just play over me.

TOMMY

No one in this this town wants any trouble with you.

MADISON

This is the third time this year already. We haven't even made it to Valentine's Day yet. I can't deal with that. Not if I have breath in my body.

*There is a knock at his door.
TOMMY opens it to find ANGIE.*

TOMMY

(To Angie) How did you get in?

ANGIE

Santiago let me in.

MADISON

This is Miss Foster. She's fine. Come in, Miss Foster. *(BEAT)* Tommy, come up with some plan to nip this in bud before it becomes a problem.

TOMMY

Yes, sir. Anything else?

MADISON

I got it from here.

TOMMY exits.

MADISON CONT.

Miss Foster. Don't you look beautiful today.

ANGIE

You're quite handsome yourself, Jacob.

MADISON

You need anything? You know I can get you whatever you want.

ANGIE

A girl can't turn down an offer like that.

MADISON

Well if you keep doing things like you did the other night, I won't even offer anymore. You can just take what you need.

ANGIE

I aim to please.

MADISON

I'm thoroughly pleased. What do you have planned?

ANGIE

Nothing important. But I need to talk you about something. (*BEAT*) I know the person that's costing you money.

MADISON

Honey, don't worry yourself about that. We know it's the Black Panthers. We're just going to do a little exterminating.

ANGIE

What if I told you that is was a single person? A woman.

MADISON

A woman? Any details on her.

ANGIE

Santiago gave me a description. Says she gotta live on Carmichael Drive. He saw somebody wandering through the alley. Followed her till he lost her.

MADISON

Oh really? Well I want you to get on that. As soon as you can, Miss Foster.

ANGIE

And you know what else I heard in the streets? King Jimmy is headed back to town.

MADISON

I thought he had two more years.

ANGIE

Me too. But he's due back any day now.

MADISON

Who told you that?

ANGIE

Santiago.

MADISON

You and Santiago seem to be a team.

ANGIE

Oh, it's nothin' like dat.

MADISON

I just don't like wha—

ANGIE

I'm no stranger to the drug world. My dad used to deal before they locked him away. So, I know the game. I'm not trying to run a game or do anything dangerous.

MADISON

I didn't take you for a Drug Dealer's kid.

ANGIE

Daddy had made it into a family business. My brothers just don't believe that a girl has a place in the drug scene.

MADISON

There are places you can go.

ANGIE

I just want a man to take me seriously. I know the game like the back of my hand. (*BEAT*) Drug money gave me a chance to live. So, I'm going to handle this bitch. I'm gonna track her down and let her know how it's gonna be. She doesn't know how many lives she's ruining.

MADISON

I'll get my men on it. Is there anything else?

ANGIE

Will my name stay between me and you?

MADISON

It will. That's one thing you don't have to worry over. But if I ever need a favor, I hope you wouldn't say no.

ANGIE

My word is good. You know that.

MADISON

I sure hope so. Wouldn't want to cause a young woman like yourself any harm. I appreciate the inside information. Thanks for coming.

ANGIE

(BEAT) Anytime.

MR. MADISON pulls out a tote bag filled with money. He sits it on top of his desk.

MADISON

Take this with you.

ANGIE

What's this?

MADISON

Take some of it and get you one of those suites at The Waldron. The Presidential suite. And leave a key at the desk. The rest is yours.

ANGIE

You mean it?

MADISON

Anything for you.

ANGIE

See you soon.

ANGIE grabs the tote bag and exits.

End of Scene

SCENE TWO

SETTING: CARMICHAEL DRIVE. The street where The Greens grew up. She has a table set up—Urging the community to Vote for Shirley Chisolm as the Presidential candidate for the Democratic Party. The table is covered with a patriotic table cloth. There are pamphlets and buttons on the table. She also has a few snacks i.e. cheese, crackers, and juice. NEFERTITI is standing at the table.

NEFERTITI

Vote Shirley Chisolm for President!

MAMA NADINE exits. TOMMY enters as she exits.

NEFERTITI

Hey, I didn't get your name!

TOMMY

Maybe they'll come back.

NEFERTITI

Tommy Romiti.

TOMMY

How are you, Baby?

NEFERTITI

No complaints.

TOMMY

You're not still mad, are you?

NEFERTITI

I've earned the right to be mad.

TOMMY

It ain't healthy to be carryin' 'round hate, Nefe.

NEFERTITI

Don't call me that. *(BEAT)* Don't you have some place to be. I'm sure Madison got you running around doing somethin'.

TOMMY

I'm on the clock now. But I thought I'd stop by and check on ya.

NEFERTITI

I'm fine.

TOMMY admires NEFERTITI's voluptuous body.

TOMMY

I can see that, Baby.

NEFERTITI

Tommy if you ain't interested in votin'. We have nothin' else to talk about.

TOMMY

You know I ain't big on politics.

NEFERTITI

Just keep a strong connection with law enforcement and all is well, huh?

TOMMY

Connections ain't ever hurt anybody.

NEFERTITI

Maybe not in your world.

TOMMY

Simmer Down, Sweet Heat. *(BEAT)* You puttin' your money on Chisolm, huh?

NEFERTITI

Yeah. Gotta go with the candidate that is gonna look out for me.

TOMMY

None of them politicians ever keep their word.

NEFERTITI

A woman is different than a man. A woman's word stands the test of time.

TOMMY

Women lie just as much as us men.

NEFERTITI

I ain't say women were always truthful. But a real woman—once she has her mind set—ain't nothin' you can do to shake her, change her mind, or nothin'.

TOMMY

Is that right?

NEFERTITI

Tommy get the fuck outta here. I don't want to talk to-ya slime ball ass. If you came to ask about my brother, I ain't seen him.

TOMMY

They let ole King Jimmy out.

NEFERTITI

Don't act like you didn't know. Why the fuck are you here, Tommy?

TOMMY

Easy, Baby!

NEFERTITI

Get off my street, now.

TOMMY

You know this ain't yo street.

NEFERTITI

I ain't bout to let you fools ruin the work I'm doing in this community. We don't need your drugs on our street. I'm trying to make somethin' out of this next generation.

TOMMY

These kids gonna be whateva they decide to be. Some ain't gotta choice. Just gotta make it in the streets.

NEFERTITI

I'm tryin' to give them options. You tryin' to give em time. Just like your daddy did my brother.

TOMMY

Just let that go.

NEFERTITI

Tell me what the hell you want.

TOMMY

Mr. Madison sent me.

NEFERTITI

For what?

TOMMY

One of our men was put away last night. Someone squealed on us. The streets say it's you.

NEFERTITI

That's impossible. I don't know anything about what y'all got goin'.

TOMMY

Bull Shit. I know you have stuck your neck into somethin'.

NEFERTITI

Got proof? (*BEAT*) Gotta have proof if you want to make claims.

TOMMY

I'm just here to warn you. Madison don't like for his money to be at jeopardy. Don't come between that man and his money. It won't be nice when he comes to visit ya.

NEFERTITI

That's all.

TOMMY

Just be smart, Nefertiti.

NEFERTITI

Bye Tommy.

TOMMY

Stop tryin' to push me away.

NEFERTITI

I don't have any reason to keep you here. If you ain't interested in voting, keep it movin'.

TOMMY

Let Jimmy know I want to see him.

NEFERTITI

I'm sure he'll see you before I see him.

TOMMY

Maybe you're right. *(BEAT)* If you weren't so mean, I would make you my wife.

NEFERTITI

Honey, not even in your wildest dream.

TOMMY

Imma get you one of these days, Nefertiti Green.

NEFERTITI

I would love to see that happen.

TOMMY

We'll see.

TOMMY exits.

NEFERTITI

It's time for a sistah to take stand. She's been silenced for too long. She can't take the suppression anymore—she's exploding. Years of pain. Finally coming to surface. Shirley Chisolm is my candidate for President. She should be yours too. If you're tired of being a number, act today. The time is now.

End of Scene

APPENDIX B.

BLACK is BEAUTIFUL, BABY!

Initial Scenes

PROLOGUE

*Setting: Alley Behind SOLANDRA's
Apartment. Music of Oya is playing. The
Goddess of Darkness—Bringer of Change.
MAMA NADINE enters the space.*

MAMA NADINE

Queen God of the Market Place, and last resting place. In the day, Mother of Heaven, Queen of the Winds of Death. Queen of all spirits, saint with beautiful face. Protect me from whirlwinds, and death, Queen of Death, so ordered by God. Give me your blessings.

*There is a storm taking place as MAMA
NADINE is calling on OYA. It's the Lady of
Storms—herself.*

MAMA NADINE CONT.

Oya, we need you now. Queen God, bless this place I call home. It be more of a place of discomfort. Send your power, Goddess of Change. Let your presence fill the air. Bless Solandra. Give her the understanding that she needs. Keep her safe from the evils of the world. She's your daughter. Wrap her up in your garments. And guide her to a better place.

MAMA NADINE CONT.

OYA.....OYA...Mother of Heaven.....OYA....OYA....Warrior Queen....OYA.

OYA exhales. SFX: Exhaling. BLACKOUT.

End of Prologue

SCENE ONE

SETTING: CARMICHAEL DRIVE. The street where SOLANDRA lives. She has a table set up—Urging the community to Vote for Shirley Chisolm as the Presidential candidate for the Democratic Party. The table is covered with a patriotic table cloth. There are pamphlets and buttons on the table. She also has a few snacks i.e. cheese, crackers, and juice. SOLANDRA is standing at the table.

SOLANDRA

Vote Shirley Chisolm for President!

Homeless Woman enters. She does not appear to be homeless. Her clothes are not so shabby. She looks clean, but she is not spotless.

SOLANDRA Cont.

Hey Ma'am! How are you today?

HOMELESSWOMAN

I've seen better days.

SOLANDRA

I know what you mean.

HOMELESSWOMAN

Is that food free?

SOLANDRA

Of Course, Help yourself.

HOMELESSWOMAN

Will you fix it for me?

SOLANDRA

Sure Honey! *(BEAT)* Are you registered to vote?

HOMELESSWOMAN

In Georgia.

SOLANDRA

I can help ya register.

SOLANDRA picks up a binder with voter's registration applications.

SOLANDRA CONT.

What's your address?

HOMELESSWOMAN

I don't have one.

SOLANDRA

Are you stayin' at shelter? Just use that address.

HOMELESSWOMAN

I'm just passing through, Baby. (*BEAT*) Shirley Chisolm.

SOLANDRA

She's gonna be the savior for us Black people. She's standin' up like no woman has ever done that before.

HOMELESSWOMAN

You know she ain't the first woman to want that position.

SOLANDRA

I'm aware. I studied Political Science and Education at Spelman.

HOMELESSWOMAN

Oh, you're a teacher?

SOLANDRA

Not quite. I run a non-profit organization called Olugbala. And we have started an afterschool program for the neighborhood kids. Teaching them things that they ain't learnin' at the schoolhouse.

HOMELESSWOMAN

Interesting name.

SOLANDRA

My godmother gave me that name. It means—

HOMELESSWOMAN

Savior of the People. I'm aware. *(BEAT)* You seem like a smart girl. Which is why I'm puzzled that you think Shirley's got a chance.

SOLANDRA

She's qualified and capable. I don't see anything that disqualifies her.

HOMELESSWOMAN

I see two things.

HOMELESSWOMAN touches her own boobs to signify.

SOLANDRA

That's kinda chauvinistic.

HOMELESSWOMAN

America isn't ready for a female president. Especially not a Black woman. Hell, not even a Black male for that matter.

SOLANDRA

Shirley is a testament to the current state of America. Times are changin' and mindsets are changin' too. The world must evolve. And people just should be okay with that.

HOMELESSWOMAN

What can Shirley do for this country?

SOLANDRA

Put it in better shape than it is. I'm sure of it. *(BEAT)* We need someone in the office that cares about every class, every race, and every individual—regardless of sex. She would hold these policeman accountable for their actions. Too many Black men have been robbed of there lives at the hands of a cop. About two weeks ago, Joshua Ramsey was shot on his way home from work. The officer that shot him said that the boy was reaching in his pocket for a gun. *(BEAT)* All he had in his pocket was his inhaler. The boy was only fifteen. Future ahead of him and all. *(BEAT)* But the current system is corrupt and exclusive. What do you expect?

HOMELESSWOMAN

And you think Shirley Chisolm—a woman—can make that change.

SOLANDRA

Shirley will hold these officials accountable like no has ever did before. One person cannot change a world. It takes others with the same mindset as that person to make it happen.

HOMELESSWOMAN

You make it sound so simple.

SOLANDRA

It could be simple. But we, as people, always complicate it in some way. We'll know what's right. And do the exact opposite. Just the way of the world. *(BEAT)* But I have faith in change.

HOMELESSWOMAN

I don't have faith in anything—Especially not in this world. *(BEAT)* None of these people care about the value of a person's life. Not one of these Presidents have dealt with situations like mine in a manner that is impressive.

SOLANDRA

There are shelters that you could check out in this area.

HOMELESSWOMAN

I wouldn't feel safe. *(BEAT)* I stayed in at the Mt. Zion Christian Hostel the other night.

SOLANDRA

It's pretty nice.

HOMELESSWOMAN

Ain't nothing nice about it. *(BEAT)* I had twenty dollars hidden away. Long story, short...I ain't got a dollar to my name now. If Shirley can give me my twenty dollars back, I might would vote for her. Until then, I'm not voting for anyone.

SOLANDRA

So many people have died for the right to exercise their vote. And you're not gonna take advantage of it?

HOMELESSWOMAN

As a negro, your vote is pointless. This ain't "our" election. So, Imma just enjoy the ride. And see what happens.

SOLANDRA

My sistah...I respect your opinion. But the Black Community is awakenin'. Seeing things in a way that we never have before. I'm voting for Shirley. I hope you change your mind.

HOMELESSWOMAN

I'm sure it won't. (*Beat*) Well, let me be on my way. Thanks for the snack.

SOLANDRA opens her pocketbook and pulls out a twenty.

SOLANDRA

You're welcome, Suga. (*BEAT*) Here goes that twenty.

HOMELESSWOMAN

I can't take that.

SOLANDRA

It's my gift to you. Take it.

HOMELESSWOMAN takes the twenty-dollar bill and puts in her pocket.

HOMELESSWOMAN

What's your name, Baby?

SOLANDRA

Solandra.../Green.

HOMELESSWOMAN

Assata.

SOLANDRA

Huh?

HOMELESSWOMAN

Nothing Baby. Just babbling. You have a good one, now. Hope Shirley works out for you.

*HOMELESSWOMAN exits.
TOMMY enters as she exits.*

SOLANDRA

Hey, I didn't get your name!

TOMMY

Maybe they'll come back.

SOLANDRA

Tommy Romiti.

TOMMY

How are you, Baby?

SOLANDRA

No complaints.

TOMMY

You're not still mad, are you?

SOLANDRA

I've earned the right to be mad.

TOMMY

It ain't healthy to be carryin' 'round hate, Solo.

SOLANDRA

Don't call me that. *(BEAT)* Don't you have some place to be. I'm sure Madison got you running around doing somethin'.

TOMMY

I'm on the clock now. But I thought I'd stop by and check on ya.

SOLANDRA

I'm fine.

*TOMMY admires
SOLANDRA's voluptuous
body.*

TOMMY

I can see that, Baby.

SOLANDRA

Tommy if you ain't interested in votin'. We have nothin' else to talk about.

TOMMY

You know I ain't big on politics.

SOLANDRA

Just keep a strong connection with law enforcement and all is well, huh?

TOMMY

Connections ain't ever hurt anybody.

SOLANDRA

Maybe not in your world.

TOMMY

Simmer Down, Sweet Heat. (*BEAT*) You puttin' your money on Chisolm, huh?

SOLANDRA

Yeah. Gotta go with the candidate that is gonna look out for me.

TOMMY

None of them politicians ever keep their word.

SOLANDRA

A woman is different than a man. A woman's word stands the test of time.

TOMMY

Women lie just as much as us men.

SOLANDRA

I ain't say women were always truthful. But a real woman—once she has her mind set—ain't nothin' you can do to shake her, change her mind, or nothin'.

TOMMY

Is that right?

SOLANDRA

Tommy get the fuck outta here. I don't want to talk to yo slime ball ass. If you came to ask about my brother, I ain't seen him.

TOMMY

They let ole King Jimmy out.

SOLANDRA

Don't act like you didn't know. Why the fuck are you here, Tommy?

TOMMY

Easy, Baby!

SOLANDRA

Get off my street, now.

TOMMY

You know this ain't yo street.

SOLANDRA

I ain't bout to let you fools ruin the work I'm doing in this community. We don't need your drugs on our street. I'm trying to make somethin' out of this next generation.

TOMMY

These kids gonna be whateva they decide to be. Some ain't gotta choice. Just gotta make it in the streets.

SOLANDRA

I'm tryin' to give them options. You tryin' to give em time. Just like your daddy did my brother.

TOMMY

Just let that go.

SOLANDRA

Tell me what the hell you want.

TOMMY

Mr. Madison sent me.

SOLANDRA

For what?

TOMMY

One of our men was put away last night. Someone squealed on us. The streets say it's you.

SOLANDRA

That's impossible. I don't know anything about what y'all got goin'.

TOMMY

Bull Shit. I know you have stuck your neck into somethin'.

SOLANDRA

Got proof? (*BEAT*) Gotta have proof if you want to make claims.

TOMMY

I'm just here to warn you. Madison don't like for his money to be at jeopardy. Don't come between that man and his money. It won't be nice when he comes to visit ya.

SOLANDRA

That's all.

TOMMY

Just be smart, Solandra.

SOLANDRA

Bye Tommy.

TOMMY

Stop tryin' to push me away.

SOLANDRA

I don't have any reason to keep you here. If you ain't interested in voting, keep it movin'.

TOMMY

Let Jimmy know I want to see him.

SOLANDRA

I'm sure he'll see you before I see him.

TOMMY

Maybe you're right. (*BEAT*) If you weren't so mean, I would make you my wife.

SOLANDRA

Honey, not even in your wildest dream.

TOMMY

Imma get you one of these days, Solandra Green.

SOLANDRA

I would love to see that happen.

TOMMY

We'll see.

TOMMY exits.

SOLANDRA

It's time for a sistah to take stand. She's been silenced for too long. She can't take the suppression anymore—she's exploding. Years of pain. Finally coming to surface. Shirley Chisolm is my candidate for President. She should be yours too. If you're tired of being a number, act today. The time is now.

End of Scene

APPENDIX C.

Production Draft

RISE

CHARACTERS

Nefertiti Green- African-American. Female. Age 23. Educator and Activist. The “Queen” is a Jacksonian and a prominent educator within the inner-city community of St. Marie. She belongs to Santiago...Shango.

Soleil Dandridge- African-American. Male. Age 26. THEE Artiste. She is a woman of the night...Not a prostitute, Honey. She is a drag queen. She was born as Mark Mason. She’s connected to the Ancestors. The Messenger. Dance Ability Needed.

Santiago Pierre/Shango- African American. Male. Age 28. Leader and St. Marie Panthers’ Captain. He is the “King” to Nefertiti. Healer of the St. Marie Community.

“King” Jimmy Green -African-American. Male. Age 27. The King/Drug Pusher. Brother of Nefertiti. A man with the hopes of gaining back what he is owed. He was once the “Savior of the Ghetto.”

Angie Foster- African-American. Female. Age 23. Businesswoman/Hustlah. She is the daughter of a hustler. She wants to run the city of St. Marie...Then, maybe.... the world. She is her father’s daughter.

Mr. Jacob Madison- European-American. Male. Age 55. The Man/ “Owner” of St. Marie. He is the head of the drug ring in St. Marie. Killer of the community—Pushing those narcotics into the hands of the citizens.

Tommy Romiti- Any Race. Male. Age 26. Son of a fallen drug lord. He works for Madison. Madison’s highest-paid man.

Dispatcher/ Announcer (Voice Overs)

Chorus

The Follower - Drug Pusher and Community Member

The Leader- Drug Pusher and Community Member

Shunna – Santiago’s Baby Mama and Community Member

Lady Donna- Angie’s Side Kick/ Prostitute and Community Member

ACT ONE

PROLOGUE

February 9, 1972. Abandoned School on the Street Corner of CARMICHEAL AVENUE and NEWTON DRIVE. Next to the school is an apartment building. NEFERTITI and SOLEIL live in this apartment building--roommates. Apartment 3. There is a window. THE ENSEMBLE enters with parasols. Sound of Drums and Winds—Chilly Night. SFX: EXHALING. SOLEIL sits on her throne like Yemaya—flowing like the ocean—a goddess. She stamps herself—center. The Ensemble is assembled and ready for Parade. SFX: BRASS BAND MUSIC. The ENSEMBLE celebrates. They march. SOLEIL marches J-Sette style.

SOLEIL

Welcome to St. Marie...The Place to be.... I'm the Grand Marshall of this function...Soleil Dandridge is the name... And freedom is my game... Climb aboard the riverboat...And join the second line...Celebration reigns over the city...thousands of bodies dancin'...Livin' life carefree.... But the ghetto bleeds with tears...Black Panthers marchin'.... with a balled fist—the fist is loosenin' its grip...But today, our focus is on Mardi Gras...a historic tradition born in the streets of Mobile, Alabama...then it spread over to Louisiana...In the city of New Orleans...eventually trinklin' down to St. Marie...We all look forward to Fat Tuesday...Carne Levare ...ridding ourselves of the meat...But this year, the protesters roam the streets... The Orishas roam the crowd...Taking human form...shielding the Black Panthers...Oya and Shango...some forces push against them...But they keep pressin' on. Marchin' into the future. Cryin' out a chant..

As they parade, SOLEIL dances as the ensemble follows her. A Moment. SOLEIL and the ENSEMBLE begins to chant

SOLEIL Cont.

Say We Shall Rise...

ENSEMBLE

We Shall Rise...

SOLEIL

I said...Say We Shall Rise...

ENSEMBLE

We Shall Rise...

SOLEIL

Say We Want Freedom...

ENSEMBLE

We Want Freedom...

SOLEIL

Say We Want Freedom...

ENSEMBLE

We Want Freedom...

SOLEIL

We Want It Today...

ENSEMBLE

We Want It Today...

SOLEIL

We Need It Today...

ENSEMBLE

We Need It Today...

*SOLEIL and the ENSEMBLE
Chant as they exit.*

End of Scene

SCENE ONE

Setting: THURSDAY, February 9, 1972. CARMICHAEL DRIVE AND NEWTON AVENUE. NEFERTITI sits on MAMA NADINE's throne. NEFERTITI is typing at her typewriter. MAMA NADINE was her grandmother. There is a table in front of the throne—draped in purple and blue. The table has a sign—center front—that reads "FREE READINGS". SOLEIL enters from the inside apartment.

SOLEIL

Heffa, what are you doin' at my table?

NEFERTITI

I'm workin' on a Thank-You letter for the Oakland Panthers. Thankin' them for comin' to visit us down at the community center the other day. Santiago still won't tell me what him and the Brothers talked about. Said it's a surprise. *(BEAT)* He shall been big on surprises lately. Do you know that he didn't even come stay with me last night? And I know he ain't stay at his apartment. Too many feds over there. So, that leaves one place he can be. *(PAUSE)* Over there with Shunna.

SOLEIL

Don't go gettin' your panties all twisted up, Sugah. You know that man is gonna want to be around his kids. You knew all of that before you forgave him. So, don't go throwin' a pity party.

NEFERTITI

I don't want pity. I want my man to come home to me. So, until he comes here. I won't go to the center.

SOLEIL

That center is your second home. You know you won't be able to stay away. Those kids at the center gonna miss you after too long.

NEFERTITI

That may be true. But a woman must stand her ground. And I won't be ignored. By no man.

SFX: GUNSHOTS. NEFERTITI and SOLEIL flinch. After a moment, they forget about it.

SOLEIL CONT.

(*BEAT*) These folk stay shootin'. Probably some gang members. (*BEAT*) Why can't I be in Paris? That would be cute. Me and Two little Frenchmen. Marvelous, I say.

NEFERTITI

You can't go to Paris unless you take me.

SOLEIL

But Shango...

NEFERTITI

You mean Santiago?

SOLEIL

That's what I said. I'm sure he wouldn't want you to leave. Besides, I don't need no passengers. Because once I'm in Paris. I won't come back. Couldn't pay me to come back to "Sweet" America. America ain't fit for a queen like me. (*BEAT*) "Gai Parie" is the place for me.

NEFERTITI

I bet it's beautiful there. I would love to go to the Eiffel tower with Santiago.

SOLEIL

Sounds like a dream. (*BEAT*) Can you move out my throne and take that typewriter with you? Thank You.

NEFERTITI

The throne doesn't belong to you.

SOLEIL

Mama Nadine—

NEFERTITI

Always gave the throne to the eldest female member of the family. That's what my mama told me. And as the eldest granddaughter. The throne is mine.

SOLEIL

Let's get one thing straight. I'm the eldest granddaughter...some might say grandson...But they don't know better. (*BEAT*) However, Mama Nadine bestowed the throne and its wisdom upon me. This throne got more history than you know. It's not for show.

NEFERTITI

But shouldn't it belong to me?

SOLEIL

Are you the chosen one? (PAUSE) No...I think not. So...get up.... Pull up a chair.

NEFERTITI pulls a chair to the table. SOLEIL moves the typewriter.

NEFERTITI

Lawd....why you got this table set-up?

SOLEIL

It's Mardi Gras season, honey. I'm just living my vendor fantasy. Might as well monopolize off the tourist.

NEFERTITI observes SOLEIL's sign.

NEFERTITI

What happened to the free readings?

SOLEIL

Chile, ain't nothin' free in this world. As a showgirl, I've learned a thing or two. I've learned that 'I am the product'. I'm what people pay to see. Dat's what I had to learn. So from now on, I'm gettin' paid for my talent and gifts.

NEFERTITI

Can I get a reading? I ain't got money until pay day.

SOLEIL holds a stone and shell in hand.

SOLEIL

Of Course, Miss Jackson State College 1970-1971 will forever hold a seat at my table.

NEFERTITI

All that seems like a distant memory. So much has changed in a short time. Only thing that stands out now is seeing those bullet holes embedded into Alexander Hall. (BEAT) Some send off those policemen gave the Class of 1970. Just as bad as that shooting up at Kent State. But of course...the news coverage at little ole JSC was little to none. I mean...WLBT was there. But that little footage barely made it to the rest of the world. I think it's just because it's a black school. I hate to throw race into it. But these policemen opened fire on innocent people. Killed two. (BEAT) You remember Phillip Gibbs...? (BEAT) I saw when the bullets hit his flesh. I was standing over at B.F. Roberts. Just a year shy of obtaining his degree. And all of it came to an end. Those policemen killed a father. Cause Phillip had a little boy. Now, the little boy gotta grow up without his father. Only memories the boy will have of Phillip are pictures and whatever

stories his mama or Phillip's family tells him. And the other boy, James Green, was just walking home from his job...A graduating senior at Jim Hill High. Two futures lost at the barrel of a gun.

SOLEIL

(*BEAT*) See...why you had to bring up that memory? Talk about the good moments. Like the beautiful Black men of JSC, honey. I used to live for walking up that Plaza and seeing all those Black educated men. Like Hollis Pippin...Oh Darling.... I wish that fine ole Hollis would stop his games and come live here in St. Marie.

NEFERTITI

That boy was not concerned with you at all. But he was handsome. One of the best dancers at JSC.

SOLEIL rubs the stone and shell together.

SOLEIL

Hollis is "The Best", Honey. Don't get it twisted now. (*BEAT*) Hollis...Hollis...Hollis! What a beautiful specimen with talent and chocolate skin. Beautiful brown eyes. And dat tight lil' bootie.....Lawd...let me stop getting' myself worked up. Miss Soleil is awaiting her king. And that will forever be Hollis Pippin.

NEFERTITI

(*BEAT*) Are you gonna keep shuffling that shell and stone?

SOLEIL

I'm bout to pop you in the head. You can't rush Soleil. I'm doing work. (*BEAT*) Here.

SOLEIL hands the shell and stone to NEFERTITI. NEFERTITI takes them.

SOLEIL Cont.

Rub those together. (*BEAT*) I've been thinking about Mama Nadine a lot lately. Been seein' her in my dreams. Some days I wish she was here. Answer some of the questions that I don't know the answers to.

NEFERTITI

My mama told me that it wasn't no reason in me learnin' that "voodoo stuff". Cause the only guidance I needed could be found down at the church house.

SOLEIL

Aunt Dahleen wasn't the brightest woman. And that's why you don't need to be sitting on this throne. This throne holds knowledge older than our family's existence in St. Marie.

NEFERTITI

Soleil. Don't be bad mouthing my mama's name now.

SOLEIL

R.I.P. Auntie. But there's good and bad with everything. Just like Christian men coverin' their faces with white-hooded robes. That ain't nothin' but evil. *(BEAT)* Voodoo comes from the word Vodun...which means spirit. All that voodoo doll crap...looks good on television. But that ain't what Mama Nadine taught me. That voodoo magic...that's not what I do.... Mama Nadine taught me how to appreciate bein' alive...reminded me of where our roots lie...

NEFERTITI

You got to know Mama Nadine better than me. I was only five when she died.

SOLEIL

I wasn't that much older than you. Just five years your senior. *(BEAT)* Mama Nadine told me things. Things that I didn't understand. But I remembered them and carried those words with me.

NEFERTITI

Well...I'm a Christian...ain't nothin' you can do to change that. *(BEAT)* But what do you see?

SOLEIL

I'm seein' "the lady that dons gold". I would speak her name...But it will escape you... "The Lady" appears to be angry. Which could mean a few things. You could be pregnant.

NEFERTITI

(BEAT) Ain't no babies coming out of me. No time soon. I enjoy my moments with the kids down at the center. And Santiago got the twins. But to deal with a kid on a day to day basis and raise them in this crazy world. That's too much responsibility.

SOLEIL

Responsibility....You're afraid of responsibility. *(BEAT)* You got all the capabilities. Back in Jackson you were a one-woman show. And you know how tough it is on 1400 J.R. Lynch Street. But your past provides answers to your future. *(BEAT)* That's all you get with a free reading. Hand them over.

SOLEIL reaches her hand out to receive her shell and stone.

NEFERTITI

Hold your ropes now...There's gotta be a little more you can tell me.

SOLEIL

..... You're coming into womanhood. That's as much as I can tell you.

NEFERTITI

But I'm grown already.

SOLEIL

Womanhood is a journey...ain't got much to do with you feelin' grown. Life lessons are on their way. That's all. *(BEAT)* Have I ever lead you in the wrong direction?

NEFERTITI

You told me that dying my fro blonde would be cute. Had all my hair laying on the floor. Still ain't grew back.

SOLEIL

Beauty is pain. *(BEAT)* I need to finish my wig for my show on Friday. And oh...I got good news. I have an interview tomorrow. So, I should be able to contribute more here soon.

NEFERTITI

That's great news, Hun. But don't feel like you're obligated to get a job. Your drag money helps a lot. Plus, if it wasn't for you, I would've been homeless in Jackson. You moved with me and paid all the bills. Just so I can focus on school. *(BEAT)* But I wish we would've just stayed here in St. Marie. Still can't believe the city done replaced Mama Nadine's house with a liquor store... *(BEAT)* I know Jimmy is gonna be mad at me. He should be back here any day now.

SOLEIL

Chile forget Jimmy, you got a scholarship and a chance to educate yourself. *(BEAT)* Let's get inside. Rain might be on the way.

SOLEIL removes the sign from the table. She removes the table cover. She folds the items and place them in the seat of the throne—then picks up the throne. NEFERTITI grabs her typewriter.

NEFERTITI

(BEAT) You mind if I leave this table out here? We are campaigning in the morning.

SOLEIL

If it's still out here in the morning, help yourself. Cause I ain't about to move it back. *(BEAT)* You might as well set that typewriter up in the living room while I finish up my costume for The Masquerade Ball. This Friday at Peace Nightclub. It's gonna be fabulous. And you're gonna be there. I got some extra masks.

NEFERTITI

I gotta check with Santiago.

SOLEIL

Well Hopefully he can take a break from the revolution and escort you.

NEFERTITI

My Santiago never takes a break. But I will see what I can do.

*NEFERTITI and SOLEIL exit
into the Apartment Building.*

End of Scene

SCENE TWO

SAME NIGHT. ANGIE appears with her Richard Nixon mask. She hides. A moment. THE FOLLOWER and THE LEADER enter the Abandoned building. They appear as drug pushers. The LEADER has the suit case in hand.

THE FOLLOWER

You sure that's what Tommy said.

THE LEADER

Yeah, I'm sure man. He said once we make the exchange come back to the office.

THE FOLLOWER

I ain't got time for this, Man. I got a birdy waiting for me. She's outta sight man.

THE LEADER

Man....you can't pull these hoes.

THE FOLLOWER

I can pull the hoes. All my hoes are on a string. And I'm ready to go pull some strings—if you know what I mean.

THE LEADER

I don't know what you mean. *(BEAT)* Man...think about all the other hoes that will be on your dick aftah we make it big time. Just think man. If we get this dope peddling thing right. Madison will trust us to handle bigger deals.

THE FOLLOWER

Me and my boy. Madison's men. We gonna be big time, Baby.

THE LEADER

To be big time, we gotta start acting like the big timers. Let these hoes fall where they may. Your first concern gotta be the money.

THE FOLLOWER

I can have my mind on the money and still grab me a hoe or two on the side. Say man, where this clown at? Does he know "the spot"?

THE LEADER

He knows “the spot”. He’s probably just running behind.

THE FOLLOWER

Man, I don’t trust that shit. Something might be up. I got a feeling. *(BEAT)* I done heard the legends of Jimmy. He’s a cutthroat muthafucka. Do you even remember what he looks like? And I heard in the streets that Jimmy wasn’t due til tomorrow.

THE LEADER

Tommy got the word straight from Jimmy. He will be here tonight. *(BEAT)* Jimmy ain’t hard to spot. He got style.... Dat’s how you can identify him. Just play it cool, man.

SANTIAGO enters dressed like King Jimmy. SANTIAGO is giving you classic JIMMY. He is wearing KING JIMMY’s signature shades. He has a suitcase in hand. The suitcase is filled with money—a scam.

SANTIAGO

What’s happenin’ , fellas?

THE FOLLOWER

Oooo Weee! You sharp, man. Looks like prison done treated you good.

SANTIAGO

Well you know brother. Just a little something simple. Prison ain’t stop nothin’. I’m still the freshest in these streets. Dig it.

THE FOLLOWER

Show ya right. Your “bounce-back” game looks solid to me.

THE LEADER

Kill dat noise. *(BEAT)* Let’s get down to business. You got da money?

SANTIAGO

You got the product?

THE LEADER

Yeah just hand over the cash and we’ll hand you the product.

SANTIAGO

Say man. King Jimmy don't just hand over the cash like that. Naw Brutha, dat's not how I do bizness. Gots to see what I'm buying man.

THE FOLLOWER

Well show us the cash.

SANTIAGO

Y'all don't trust the King? I can take my money elsewhere.

THE LEADER

You ain't gotta do that, King.

THE FOLLOWER

Look, Mister King. We just got to make sure everything is legit. Ain't nothing against you. We're just following orders.

*SANTIAGO ponders for a moment.
He opens the suitcase and shows the
money.*

SANTIAGO

Is my money good enough?

THE FOLLOWER

Show the man the product. I don't know why you gave him a hard time.

THE LEADER

Just shut up fool.

*THE LEADER grabs the suitcase
with the product. He cracks it open.*

THE FOLLOWER

MM-HHMM. What you think bout dat, King?

*SANTIAGO examines the product for
a moment.*

SANTIAGO

Looks good. But what's this right chea?

*SANTIAGO points at the product.
THE FOLLOWER looks closer.*

THE FOLLOWER

Looks fine to me.

SANTIAGO

Look a little bit closer.

THE FOLLOWER looks again. He touches the product.

THE FOLLOWER

I don't see nothin'.

SANTIAGO

There it is.

His hand is still on the product. SANTIAGO slams THE FOLLOWER's hand in the briefcase. SANTIAGO knocks THE FOLLOWER off his feet. THE LEADER charges at SANTIAGO. SANTIAGO is quick on his feet. He clips THE LEADER. But SANTIAGO will always be victorious. He pulls out hand cuffs. He cuffs both boys together.

SANTIAGO

You gentleman are a threat to this community. And I cancel out threats.

THE FOLLOWER

You ain't King Jimmy!

THE LEADER

Yeah, who are you?

SANTIAGO

I'm the one and only, Jimmy Green, Baby. In the flesh.

THE FOLLOWER

You's a got damn lie. I know you ain't the King.

SANTIAGO pulls the men up to their feet.

THE LEADER

Where you taking us?

SANTIAGO

To the landfill. That's where we put the trash.

THE FOLLOWER

Ay Man, what you gonna do with our stuff?

SANTIAGO pulls out a trash bag. He puts the drugs in the bag.

SANTIAGO

This is trash. And it's going out with the two of you. Let's go.

SANTIAGO and the boys exit. They bicker as they exit. ANGIE appears from hiding. She observes. She follows SANTIAGO's tracks.

End of Scene

SCENE THREE

*FRIDAY, February 10, 1972.
Morning. MADISON's Office. There
is a throne and a safe. TOMMY
breaks the news.*

TOMMY

The boys have disappeared, Boss.

MADISON

Disappeared? And where's the product? My product.

TOMMY

Not a trace of anything.

MADISON

You're kidding me, right? I thought all bases were covered. Who keeps stinging us?

TOMMY

The Panthers. That's my only lead. Only if I had proof.

MADISON

I thought they'd be gone by now. Do you have any names in connection?

TOMMY

Uhh... Haven't been able to track them down. They're quick and speedy. The "In and out" type of cats.

MADISON

Don't you think you should get on that? I don't pay you to sit around. Get on it, Today.

TOMMY

I will, Boss. I'm doing the best that I can.

MADISON

Are you? Because if you were you would have names. I don't need anyone throwing a wrench in my operation. I've been a part of this community too long. I have given plenty of the "coons" a chance. Why are they comin' after me? Can you at least answer that for me?

TOMMY

I'm working hard to find out, Boss. You know you can count on me. Have I ever let you down?

MADISON

3 Times so far. We haven't even made it to Fat Tuesday. This is usually my most profitable season. At least I got the liquor store as a new attraction for the negroes. *(BEAT)* The entire ten grand gone.

TOMMY

.....I'm sorry, Boss.

MADISON

I'm not happy about this, Tommy. We must do something about it. Before you know it, everyone will be labeling me weak. Then, they will say that I can't control my business.

TOMMY

The streets are talking.

MADISON

What are "they" saying? Seems to me like you don't know. Seems to me that your sources aren't viable. *(BEAT)* When you went down to the prison, Jimmy told you his release date.

TOMMY

Not exactly. He kind of dodged the subject. But the day before yesterday, I received a call from him. Called my home phone. Told me that he was being released on Thursday and needed his package. I don't know how he got my number.

MADISON

You sure it was Jimmy you talked to on the phone?

TOMMY

It sounded like him.

MADISON

It sounded like him? That's your answer. *(BEAT)* Any fool has enough sense to tell you what you want to hear. Did you track the number to see if it was a call from the penitentiary?

A moment.

MADISON CONT.

Damn it. I tried to give you more responsibility. Thought maybe I'll pass my throne to you. But you're giving my drugs away. *(BEAT)* You've been no help ever since they fired you from the police force. Use your connections with law enforcement. Do what's necessary to get the job done.

TOMMY

I'm doing what I can. But it's not as simple as you're making it.

MADISON

If you want to keep your job, you will make it simple. If I didn't promise your father to protect you, you can bet that you would be gone. You're not even half the man that he was. One of the best policemen to serve St. Marie. You're dishonorable as his heir. *(BEAT)* Maybe King Jimmy's still mad about taking that fall for me. Could be some big payback scheme. *(BEAT)* I'd hate to send his ass away for good this time.

There is a knock at his door.

TOMMY

You're expecting someone?

MADISON

Oh Yes...Miss Foster. Let her in.

*TOMMY opens it to find
ANGIE.*

MADISON CONT.

Come in, Miss Foster.

ANGIE enters.

MADISON CONT.

(BEAT) Tommy, nip this little situation in the bud before it gets out of hand. And we cannot have problems. I won't stand for it. You still got those keys to the store?

*TOMMY pulls the keys from
his pocket.*

TOMMY

Yes, sir.

MADISON

One more fuck up and you'll be handing them over. *(BEAT)* I got it from here.

TOMMY exits.

MADISON CONT.

Miss Foster. Don't you look beautiful today.

ANGIE

You're quite handsome yourself, Jacob.

MADISON

You need anything? You know I can get you whatever you want. If you keep doing things like you did the other night, I won't even offer anymore. You can just take what you need.

ANGIE

I aim to please.

MADISON

I'm thoroughly pleased. What do you have planned?

ANGIE

Nothing important. But I need to talk to you about something. (*BEAT*) I know who's stingin' you.

MADISON

Angie, you mustn't worry yourself. It's the Black Panthers. We know... We're just going to do a little exterminating.

ANGIE

Santiago Pierre to be exact. The captain of the St. Marie Panthers. The Panthers have been doing some undercover work. Pierre was dressed as King Jimmy when he attacked your men. The streets say Jimmy was released today—the tenth.... You know what else I heard? The Panthers have a place where they are keepin' your men. No word as to where. But then again, there are rumors that these men might be dead now. But you can bet your coins... Santiago is at the head of it all.

MADISON

Santiago did this all by himself, huh? Where did you get that from?

ANGIE

I don't reveal my sources for free, Mister Madison. You're a business man. I'm sure you understand that.

MADISON

Oh sure. I understand...

ANGIE

And get this... The building where you guys handle your transactions... On Carmichael Avenue and Newton Drive. The Panthers are turning it into a school. They've been trying to keep traffic

away from the building. Which would explain your loss. *(BEAT)* They have struck a deal with some liberals in the State Legislature. Dr. Bernard Anderson.

MADISON

(BEAT) Bernard and I have mutual friends.

ANGIE

Dr. Anderson is an ally of the Panthers. He's helped them find donors to aid the construction of the school.

MADISON

So, my money is probably goin' into that school fund. *(BEAT)* Who shared this information?

ANGIE

Again, Mister Madison. I must conceal that data.

MADISON

C'mon now, Angie. Didn't I pay you enough the other night? *(BEAT)* Sweetie...Just give me the source. So, I can get my team on it. I wouldn't want to believe that you're just pullin' my leg.

ANGIE

I'm no stranger to the drug world. My daddy used to deal before they locked him away. Ran the streets over across the bridge in St. Joseph. That empire has been decimated by that "no-count" revolutionary—Harold Dixon. Caused the Panther takeover in St. Joseph and St. Marie. Now, Pierre holds the baton.

MADISON

Wait...Foster. David Foster.... You're King David's daughter. *(BEAT)* Your father was a good man. A man of honor. I did business with him before his sentence. That drug bust in St. Joseph will go in history. But he's always been good to me. Never tried to harm my business. Unlike others.

ANGIE

And the same can be expected from me. *(BEAT)* I'm not trying to run a game or do anything dangerous. Been in the drug game since I was thirteen. Daddy had made it into a family business. When he got locked away, my brothers pushed me to the side. Sayin' that they don't believe that a girl has a place in the drug scene. That's why I'm here.

MADISON

I can make use of you. *(BEAT)* I need a Madame. I'm looking to collect a stable of girls. Only the type of girls you can see at the Playboy Mansion. And you can help me with that.

ANGIE

That's the job for me. That's not what I want to do for the rest of my life. I know the game like the back of my hand. *(BEAT)* Drug money gave me a chance to live. So, I'm going to handle Pierre. I'm gonna track him down and let him know how it's gonna be. He doesn't know how many lives he's ruining. Your empire will be a thing of the past like St. Joseph if you don't get on it.

MADISON

I'll get Tommy on it. Don't want you bruising those delicate hands.

ANGIE

My hands be like brick. No delicacy in my stroke. *(BEAT)* I want to off Pierre with these hands. It doesn't seem like Tommy does enough around here. You need someone that's going to bring results. The first time. You've had three incidents. I could've knocked that whole thing out in one night. If I get a hold of Santiago, could I work for your team?

MADISON

(BEAT) No woman will ever work for my team. Now I told you.... I need a Madame. That can be your job. Making sure all the young ladies pay us for managing their "careers".

ANGIE

But Jacob. I've been doing some heavy think—

MADISON

I appreciate the inside information. Let's just leave it at that. *(BEAT)* Thanks for coming.

MADISON points towards the door. A moment.

ANGIE

(BEAT) Anytime.

MR. MADISON pulls out a tote bag filled with money. He sits it on top of his desk.

MADISON

Take this with you. *(BEAT)* Take some of it and get you one of those suites at The Waldron. The Presidential suite. And leave a key at the desk. The rest is yours.

ANGIE

You mean it?

MADISON

Anything for you.

ANGIE grabs the tote bag.

ANGIE

See you later.

ANGIE exits the office. LADY DONNA stands outside on the street corner. LADY DONNA is a cheap “street walker”.

LADY DONNA

Is that Angie Foster?

ANGIE stops in her tracks.

ANGIE

I’m sorry.... Do I know you?

LADY DONNA

It’s me...We went to St. Mary’s together back in St. Joseph. *(BEAT)* Sister Abernathy’s class. Seventh grade.

ANGIE stares—puzzled for the woman’s name.

LADY DONNA Cont.

Donna Marion....They call me Lady Donna.

ANGIE

Donna! Oh...you look.... good girl. How have you been?

LADY DONNA

Moved here after St. Joseph fell apart after that big bust. *(BEAT)* Livin’ the glamorous life of the streets. Imma celebrity around these parts.

ANGIE

Oh...Watch out now! Wouldn’t want to mess with you. *(BEAT)* Good seeing you.

ANGIE begins to walk off.

LADY DONNA

You're working for Madison?

ANGIE stops.

LADY DONNA CONT.

I've always wanted to be a Madison Girl. Carry nice duffle bags. Be afforded life's luxuries.

*ANGIE doubles back to
LADY DONNA.*

ANGIE

I work for myself. I'm not a Madison Girl.

LADY DONNA

I'm looking for work. I can do anything. I've done everything to get Madison to notice me. I spread eagle right here on this corner—with no panties. Still nothin'. He wouldn't look my way. Please help me. *(BEAT)* Every business woman needs an informant.

*ANGIE begins to move.
LADY DONNA stops her.*

ANGIE

Hmm, an informant huh? *(BEAT)* Do you know anything about Santiago Pierre?

LADY DONNA

That fine ole Black Panther that calls himself cleanin' up the streets. Need me to sleep with him and find out some information?

ANGIE

That won't be necessary. *(BEAT)* I have something else in mind. Take a walk with me.

*LADY DONNA moves closer
to ANGIE. They exit. A
Moment. KING JIMMY
enters. KING JIMMY's
clothes look a mess—out
dated in style. He knocks on
Mr. Madison's office door.*

MADISON

Who is it?

KING

It's the King. King Jimmy.

MR. MADISON freezes. After a moment.

MADISON

...Come on in.

KING JIMMY opens the door. He enters.

KING

How goes it, Madison?

MADISON Cont.

I've seen brighter moments. *(BEAT)* Good to have you back, Jimmy. I'm sure you've heard of my misfortune.

KING

I'm fresh from the prison yard. My threads confirm it. What misfortune do you speak of?

MADISON

Then, it wasn't you. *(BEAT)* We experienced a sting last night. The perp was posin' to be you. And I was under the impression that maybe you wanted to cause suffering for me.

KING

One thing about King Jimmy, my word is good. I don't turn my back on my words. Cause that's all the honor I got in this world—my words. *(BEAT)* Tommy came to visit me in the prison. Hit me with the deal that you've offered. And like I told him, I plan to start anew in California. That's what I'm gonna do. Cause I want my own kingdom. St. Marie ain't got nothin' for me. After I settle a few scores, I'm out of your hair.

MADISON

That's a relief. Cause I know our blood was bad in the past. But I hope that is all buried under the bridge. *(BEAT)* The heat was on my back. I couldn't jeopardize losing my business. But do know your act of valor and honor is appreciated.

KING

All I've come for is what you promised me. I understand your misfortunes. But that shouldn't affect our deal.

MR. MADISON writes down the address of his liquor store. 309 Lafayette Street.

MADISON

To maintain integrity, I shall obey my word. Even if it pains me.

MADISON hands the piece of paper to KING JIMMY. KING JIMMY reads the paper--His childhood address.

KING

(*BEAT*) 309 Lafayette Street...This is my grandmother's home address.

MADISON

I had no clue. But there's no more houses on the 300 block of Lafayette. (*BEAT*) That's the address to my liquor store. Go there. Tommy should be somewhere around there. Get what you need from him.

KING

You can't just reach in that safe and give me what I need.

MADISON

This safe holds nothin' of value. Go to the store and you will find what you seek. (*BEAT*) Is there anything else?

KING

(*BEAT*) Naw...I guess we're even after this.

MADISON

You're going to love California. Hollywood is the best. Those women will fall all over a guy like you.

KING

(*BEAT*) I'll be sure to check it out. Good Day, Madison.

MADISON nods his head to KING JIMMY. KING JIMMY exits.

MADISON

One problem down. One more to go.

End of Scene

SCENE FOUR

FRIDAY February 10, 1972. CARMICHAEL and NEWTON. Near the Abandoned Building. NEFERTITI has a table set up—Urging the community to Vote for Shirley Chisolm as the Presidential candidate for the Democratic Party. The table is covered with a patriotic table cloth. There are pamphlets and buttons on the table. She NEFERTITI is standing at the table.

NEFERTITI

Vote Shirley Chisolm for President! Shirley C. is the next Pres. To be. Come and register if you have not, folks.

LADY DONNA enters. She wears sunglasses—but there is no sun.

NEFERTITI CONT.

Good Morning! Are you a registered voter?

LADY DONNA observes the environment.

LADY DONNA

I sure am.

NEFERTITI

Oh...what precinct?

LADY DONNA ignores the question. Picking up a pamphlet.

LADY DONNA

How long you've been living here?

NEFERTITI takes this in.

NEFERTITI

That's not important. *(BEAT)* Shirley Chisolm is the best candidate to elect. If you're still tryin' to make-up your mind. Unbought and Unbossed. The sistah ain't corrupt like the others.

LADY DONNA

I probably won't vote. But Nixon will get it again anyways. Everybody knows that. And he's pulling the troops from Vietnam. A definite win. *(BEAT)* You're a Black Panther, huh?

NEFERTITI

I'm more into the liberation of women. Progression of womankind is a big issue in this country. Always got somebody trying to hold us back from greatness. You know how it is.

LADY DONNA

Oh, I'm with you Sistah. (BEAT) When's the last time you've seen Santiago?

NEFERTITI ignores the question.

NEFERTITI

Can I ask you a question? (BEAT) Why don't you vote if you have the right? Women fought so hard in the suffrage movement. Susan B. Anthony would be rolling in her grave.

LADY DONNA

That's not what I asked.

NEFERTITI

I know what you asked. And it's clear that you care nothin' about politics.

LADY DONNA

Is this where Pierre lives now?

NEFERTITI

(BEAT) Who sent you? They must not want results. Cause you're terrible at this. If you're not wanting to register, I wish you a blessed day.

LADY DONNA

You're Jimmy Green's sister, right? Nefertiti, is it?

NEFERTITI

My name is Soleil...Soleil Dandridge.

LADY DONNA

Oh okay....What a nice little name you got. Well tell Nefertiti that I was lookin' forward to meeting her today.

NEFERTITI

I'll be sure to tell her your name...Miss..

LADY DONNA

You do that. Good day.

LADY DONNA throws the pamphlet down. She walks off.

NEFERTITI

I didn't get your name.

LADY DONNA exits. NEFERTITI ponders. A moment. TOMMY enters. NEFERTITI meets TOMMY at the eyes. TOMMY makes his way to NEFERTITI.

TOMMY

Nefertiti Green. I haven't seen you in years. Just passing through. Came to see how Carmichael and Newton was holdin' up.

NEFERTITI

It's holdin'. *(BEAT)* Well...it's chilly today. Might want to get a move on. Clouds starting to look a little grey.

TOMMY

I got a question. See, I have a little dilemma. Maybe you can help me out, Sweet Heat.

NEFERTITI

I don't know what we would have to discuss. Haven't seen you since Jimmy got his sentence. And that's how it needs to remain.

TOMMY

Hey Now...I'm not trying to ruffle your feathers. Just need you to tell me what you know about the Panthers.

NEFERTITI

(BEAT) The St. Marie Panthers came to St. Marie back in 1969. Under the leadership of Harold Dixon....

*NEFERTITI reaches a postcard that reads:
ELECTION 1972.*

TOMMY

People say that you're Pierre's girl. *(BEAT)* You know I've always wanted you. Thought you were one of the finest women in St. Marie. Santiago can't afford a woman like you. You need a man with connections. I could have you living in a place better than this. Fine furs. Beautiful jewels. The works. *(BEAT)* All you gotta do is turn over Pierre to me.

NEFERTITI

I'm no fool. Material things ain't eva meant a thing to me. *(BEAT)* You betrayed my brother as a friend. So, you would be foolish to think I would eva consider you as my man. I'm more than pleased with the King that currently rules my castle.

TOMMY

I'm a man who believes in fairness.

NEFERTITI

Get to the point...I have things that need tendin'.

TOMMY

I come for matters of business. There's been a scheme going on. We believe that your boyfriend has a connection to a series of drug stings. My guys were supposed to be meeting with King Jimmy last night. But the guy turned out to not be Jimmy. *(BEAT)* I haven't had any reason to come after Pierre before. But he is making a lot of people unhappy. Do you know where I could find him?

NEFERTITI

You can get out of my face.

TOMMY

Cooperate with me and everything will run smoothly. Just let Pierre know that he's a wanted man. Don't want anything bad to happen.

NEFERTITI

Nothin' bad will happen.

TOMMY

Only time will tell. Pierre's days are numbered. He's got more enemies than allies.

NEFERTITI

Could you leave?

TOMMY

Just think about what we discussed. Good luck with your campaigning.

TOMMY waves "Goodbye" as he exits. NEFERTITI moves from the table. She looks off into the sky with her hands held in prayer. End of Scene

SCENE FIVE

A Few Moments Later. NEFERTITI walks back to the table. After a moment. SANTIAGO enters.

SANTIAGO

Your King has returned, Queen Nefe.

NEFERTITI

(To Santiago) You were supposed to be here two hours ago. Asked you to bring donuts. Sholl don't see them nowhere near ya body. *(BEAT)* And what's happenin' with these sunglasses?

NEFERTITI reaches for SANTIAGO's sunglasses. SANTIAGO dodges her. NEFERTITI removes SANTIAGO's sunglasses.

NEFERTITI

Eyes redder than a cherry.

NEFERTITI shoves the sunglasses into SANTIAGO's chest. NEFERTITI puts her hands on her hips.

NEFERTITI Cont.

Use your common sense, Santiago. That marijuana is only makin' you a target.

SANTIAGO

Ain't nothin' wrong with weed. It's gonna be legal one day. And it helps with my stress. Once "the world" has beat me down, "Mary Jane" picks me up.

NEFERTITI

If you're gonna be promoting a drug-free community, shouldn't you practice not using drugs. *(BEAT)* Act as a leader and be an example, my King.

SANTIAGO

(BEAT) But I don't care what people think. It's not like I'm doing negative things to this community. Just ridding it of problems that have plagued it for years. Just like St. Joseph. St. Marie will be made anew. And once the city is rid of the scum, Imma light up the fattest blunt to celebrate. *(BEAT)* Why wasn't you at the center yesterday?

NEFERTITI

Resistin' female oppression. (*BEAT*) And wonderin' why you didn't come home. I was here waitin' on you. We made love—sweet passionate love. Then, you left me. Probably traded my bed for Shunna's.

SANTIAGO

Cool it, Baby. (*BEAT*) I got up early and went down to the prison to visit Brother Harold. After that, I went down to the center to do my job. I had a lot of things happenin', Baby. (*BEAT*) And there was a shootin' at Shunna's pad. I went to survey the damage. And I stayed over to protect her and the kids.

NEFERTITI

...Where are the twins? Are they okay?

SANTIAGO

They're fine. Shunna's got them at the center...in day care.

*SHUNNA enters with a folded flier.
SHUNNA hips flutter as she walks.
She extends the flier to SANTIAGO.
He accepts it.*

SHUNNA

Santi... You left this down in the meeting room. (*BEAT*) Nefertiti.

SANTIAGO

Thanks. You can go now. Go get the twins and take them home.

SHUNNA

I'll stick around. They're in good hands. Maybe I can give a hand with campaigning.

NEFERTITI

Oh no...don't need any extra volunteers. Thanks though.

SHUNNA

(*To NEFERTITI*) But I insist. Santi, did you tell her?

SANTIAGO

Shunna could you lea—

SHUNNA

(*To NEFERTITI*) I got three bullet holes decoratin' my front door. I was so scared. But Santi consoled me. So, I'm better.

NEFERTITI

You don't say...

SANTIAGO

Shunna, what you go and say somethin' like that for.

SHUNNA

(*To SANTIAGO*) Nefertiti knows I'm only teasing. You're not man enough for me. I need a man like Brother Huey. (*BEAT*) Is there something I can do to assist?

NEFERTITI

You can just go home. That'll be enough for me.

SANTIAGO

You can go down to Thibodeaux and get some donuts.

*NEFERTITI looks at SANTIAGO like
"You done lost yo rabbit ass mind".*

SHUNNA

Anything for my Santi! (*BEAT*) I'll be back, Nefe.

SHUNNA exits.

NEFERTITI

Those donuts could've stayed where they're at. Then dat hussy talkin' about you consoled her.

SANTIAGO

Look, what Shunna and I had ended with those twins. Yes...I slipped while you were at Jackson State. But you gotta believe in me, Nefe.

NEFERTITI

Time will tell it all.

*SANTIAGO hands the flier to
NEFERTITI.*

SANTIAGO

Stop searchin' for what you don't see. (*BEAT*) Read that for me.

NEFERTITI

Coming Soon the St. Marie School.

SANTIAGO

Finally did it. No more usin' that broken-down community center. *(BEAT)* This is what's been keepin' me away. *(BEAT)* I'm looking for a lead teacher. So, if you know someone, let them know.

SANTIAGO pulls NEFERTITI into his arms. NEFERTITI pulls away.

NEFERTITI

I'll check around.

SANTIAGO

You're not excited? *(BEAT)* Baby, we about to be the most respected Black folk in St. Marie. And my queen gets to put that degree to greater use. Speak names into these kids ears like Crispus Attucks. The first man to ever die in an American war—a Black man. Yet, we hear nothin' about his sacrifice. We are goin' to ring his name like a bell. But I can't do it without you. I'm the lighting and you're the wind.

NEFERTITI

If they don't lock you away like they did Harold.

SANTIAGO

What are you talkin' about my queen?

NEFERTITI

Nothin'. *(BEAT)* It's probably nothin'. I know it gotta just be a misunderstandin'.

SANTIAGO

Nefertiti Green...Don't hold back from me. If you know something that I need to know, you owe me dat much.

NEFERTITI

(BEAT) Tommy came by.

SANTIAGO

What he say was his reason for comin'?

NEFERTITI takes a moment. She knows SANTIAGO's temper.

SANTIAGO Cont.

Nefe, Speak da truth. Ain't got time for charades or any games.

NEFERTITI

He told me what he thinks you've been doin'. But I guess I want to hear it from you. What have you been doin'? I know it's something. And what about this shootin'? The shooter probably was hoping you were at Shunna's. *(BEAT)* Santiago, you're not tellin' me somethin'. Please tell me...

SANTIAGO

I'm not gonna worry your head with my problems. Everything is under control.

NEFERTITI

I hope you know what you're talking about. Cause Tommy sounded like he knew somethin'. Said you were posing to be my brother.

SANTIAGO

(BEAT) Tommy don't know what he's talkin' about.

NEFERTITI

Santiago, I think he knows more than you do.... He said, "Your days are numbered."

Pause. A Moment.

SANTIAGO

He said that. To you.

NEFERTITI

I'm scared for you. See that's why I didn't want to say anything. Speaking it into existence. That's all I'm doing now. *(BEAT)* You're gonna be like Phillip Gibbs. Dead with only the kids to carry your name.

SANTIAGO

I don't eva want ta hear something like that come from you again. *(BEAT)* These people only comin' aftah me because of my message. I'm tired of these pushers havin' the lives of others at their fingertips. *(BEAT)* Madison is the one that bought your grandma's house and land. Put up that illegal eviction. But don't worry, I'm gonna right those wrongs.

NEFERTITI

(BEAT) He owns that liquor store...?

SANTIAGO

Madison is one of the biggest forces behind the gentrification within St. Marie. And the government ain't tryin' to stop him. Cause they want this neighborhood to be dead in the future. But we have to do somethin' bout it. Gotta use our gifts for the betterment of the people. *(BEAT)* Sometimes, I wish we could just leave this place behind us. Start anew and raise the twins. Just you and me.

NEFERTITI

Shunna ain't gonna want to give up those babies. And I wouldn't expect her to. They're barely a year old.

SANTIAGO

She can come visit them. Shunna wants freedom. Cause she got more life to live. This would be doin' her a favor. Gonna raise both of my children to be drummers. Drummin' lead me to where I am. Followin' the rhythms of my ancestors that drummed before me. That's what I want for my kids. Finish what I didn't at Southern University. *(BEAT)* Didn't get that degree. Cause the rhythm led me towards revolution. But my kids will hold a degree. *(BEAT)* And woman, you can't be lettin' society get to you. We must fight for our sanity in this insane world. That's how we'll stay strong for the twins. Got to do it. It's our responsibility.

NEFERTITI

(BEAT) Responsibility.

*Memories of the way things
used to be hits Nefertiti—
right in the head. After she
lands on Earth again...she
speaks.*

NEFERTITI CONT.

(BEAT) 309 Lafayette Street. Two generations grew up in that house. Mama Nadine built that house with her bare hands. You know that? My grandmother built it. By herself with no help from a man. And now it's just gone.

SANTIAGO

Don't walk around carrying that load. They knocked down all those houses over on LaFayette. *(BEAT)* Gentrification is affectin' us all. This is only the beginning. Already ain't enough jobs around her.

NEFERTITI

Oh, speakin' of jobs. *(BEAT)* You know Soleil is a dancer. And she needs work. I've been thinkin'. What if he taught at the new school?

SANTIAGO

(BEAT) You think that's a good image for the kids. To see some man crossdressin'—wearing female garments. Boys don't need to be exposed to that.

NEFERTITI

It can be a class for the girls. Majorette-styled dancin'. Just like how they dance at Jackson State. It shouldn't affect the boys. (BEAT) You got a problem with Soleil's sexuality?

SANTIAGO

It ain't got nothin' to do with his sexuality. But they would have to be subjected to seeing a "disgrace" every day. It's bad enough that his apartment will be right next to the school. So, I say no.

A moment.

SANTIAGO CONT.

Say...can I get my sweetness? I know a man gets some smooching after a deed like this.

*SANTIAGO goes in for a kiss.
NEFERTITI blocks him with
her hand.*

NEFERTITI

You can't put those lips on me after you just spoke those nasty words. (BEAT) If you don't hire Soleil, I will not work as the Lead Teacher.

SANTIAGO

.... Dang Woman...why you gotta go and make it hard for me?

A Moment.

SANTIAGO Cont.

I will hire him. But only if he goes by his name, Mark, and wears male clothing. (BEAT) Now, can I get my kiss? You know you want to kiss me.

NEFERTITI

Gone and kiss me before I change my mind.

*SANTIAGO and NEFERTITI
embrace. SOLEIL enters.
SOLEIL appears as MARK
(himself out of drag). But
SOLEIL is never really out of
drag. And MARK is SOLEIL.*

But don't call SOLEIL by the name MARK. SOLEIL spots the couple making out. She sings.

SOLEIL

Oya and Shango. Shango and Oya.
Protect the world. Together as one.
As one.

*NEFERTITI and SANTIAGO
fix themselves.*

SANTIAGO

Hey Mark, Man.

SOLEIL

My dear, Santiago. Effective as of January 1st. I am to be addressed as Soleil. New year, new me. Nefertiti should have told you. You've been my brother-in-law for almost two years now. And I would hate to end our kinship over a name.

SANTIAGO

(To SOLEIL) But I just called you Mark the other day.

NEFERTITI

Just say Soleil.

SOLEIL

The one and the only...Miss Soleil Dandridge, Hunty. No one greater than I. Except for God. I'm just following the orders of the highest. Spreadin' my dust. Lettin' it fall where it may. But clearly that's a problem. *(BEAT)* After the day I've had, you might as well keep on truckin' with that foolish talk. I was merely creating banter my dear, Santiago. So, I'm just gonna put this conversation on mute. *(BEAT)* Well Nefe...looks like I'm still unemployed. Done had five interviews—count them—five interviews since January. Can't even be a little measly cashier at Thibodeaux Bakery.

SANTIAGO

....That's what you wore?

SOLEIL

Ain't nothin' wrong with what I got on.

SANTIAGO

Everything is wrong, man. You will never get a job dressin' like that. You must present yourself as a man.

SOLEIL

I'm not changin' how I dress for nobody. Like the song says...Express Yourself. Trust me it's more than the clothes. *(BEAT)* People see the rhythm of my walk and run the other way. Don't take the time to evaluate my experiences. This case is no different.

SANTIAGO

But you were born a man. Soleil is just some character you have created. Just like being gay is a choice. You chose all of those things for yourself.

SOLEIL

I wouldn't believe Mister Party Captain would talk like that. *(BEAT)* Didn't you choose to run for that position? So a job title is equal to my sexuality... *(BEAT)* Let me school you, Darling. When I was six, I dreamed about this boy named Russell McDonald. Everybody called him Rusty. But he was far from that, chile. In my dream, he gave me roses, honey. Had me smilin' ear to ear. I couldn't wait to go back and tell the lil' girls at school about it. See that's a choice. I chose to tell you that story. But guess what? I didn't choose to have that dream. And I did not choose to be fabulous...I just am. *(BEAT)* Let that sink in.

SHUNNA reenters empty handed.

SHUNNA

Y'all will never believe what happened down at Thibodeaux's. They wouldn't hire this dude because he was gay. And he flipped out. Knocked down pastries and all. So, I couldn't buy any.

Everyone looks at SOLEIL.

SHUNNA Cont.

Oh...Didn't know that was you.

SOLEIL

You know the owner had the nerve to tell me that I was banned.

SHUNNA

.... You damaged all his goods for the day. Bettah be glad he didn't press charges.

SOLEIL

I wish he would've pressed charges. He left me jobless strictly based on my sexuality. So, it's an even deal. *(BEAT)* When I was younger, I wanted to fight for my country. But I realized my

country nor my people gave two damns about people like me. But Santiago...Use the Panthers to change people's perception of gay people. These young boys and girls are watchin' y'all. Cause y'all are the "blueprint" of what Black people will need to be in the future. True heroes. But I challenge you to push the Panthers, my dear Shango.

SANTIAGO

Shun Go? (*BEAT*) Who dat?

SOLEIL takes a moment.

SOLEIL

Santiago....That's what I said. (*BEAT*) Come down to Peace Night Club tonight. The show starts at eleven-thirty. Nefertiti knows how it goes.

SHUNNA

A night out at the club would be nice.

NEFERTITI

Don't you have kids to raise.

SHUNNA

I can find a sitter.

SANTIAGO

Your concern need to be on Assata and Bakari. Ain't no use of you comin' out. (*BEAT*) I must go, Nefe.

SOLEIL moves out of the couple's way. She sees something brewin'.

NEFERTITI

But you promised that you would stay and help me register voters.

SANTIAGO

Gotta go meet with some carpenters about the creation of the school. (*BEAT*) Shunna can stay and help you. Baby, I'll make it up to you.

SANTIAGO kisses NEFERTITI on the cheek. NEFERTITI half-smiles. SANTIAGO exits. NEFERTITI and SOLEIL stand side by side—starring at SHUNNA like "You still here?"

SHUNNA

So...Nefe. What can I do to help you?

NEFERTITI

Leave. Now.

SHUNNA

But Santi told me to help.

SOLEIL

But you heard the Queen. She said leave. *(BEAT)* Scatter, Little Kitty.

SHUNNA

And what if I don't.

SOLEIL

You'll get scratched out by Big Kitty. That's me.

SHUNNA gathers herself.

SHUNNA

(BEAT) I'll see you "guys" tonight. 11:30 right?

SHUNNA exits like she has slayed her prey. NEFERTITI and SOLEIL slit her into pieces with their eyes.

End of Scene

SCENE SIX

SAME DAY. ANGIE stands outside of MR. MADISON's office. She is waitin' for LADY DONNA. MADISON sits at his desk—writing on a notepad. TOMMY enters with a brown paper bag in his hand.

TOMMY

What are you doin' out here? *(BEAT)* You're a new hire?

ANGIE

Just enjoyin' the breeze. *(BEAT)* Shouldn't you know if I'm new to the staff. Doesn't Madison share those type of things with you?

TOMMY

Oh...you must be the new Madame. *(BEAT)* Madison ain't ever found a mistress as fine as you.... Miss Foster.

ANGIE

I'm nobody's mistress.

TOMMY

You're Madison's Mistress now.... a Madison Girl.

ANGIE

Shouldn't you take your boss his food. Before it gets cold. Would hate for him to have to send you back to run more errands.

TOMMY

I don't run errands. *(BEAT)* This is a peace offering.

ANGIE

Well get to offering, "Errand" Boy.

TOMMY goes into the office. Givin' ANGIE nasty looks. He exits into the office. He heads to MR..MADISON's desk. TOMMY hands MR. MADISON the brown paper bag. MR. MADISON sits the bag on top of his safe. MADISON acknowledges TOMMY with a gesture. TOMMY

*exits. MADISON continues to write.
OUTSIDE: LADY DONNA enters.*

ANGIE

Lady Donna. I've been out here for almost an hour. What happened?

LADY DONNA

I tried to scrap up all the gossip I could on that Santiago. But he is hard to find. I did go to the voter registration drive. *(BEAT)* She's smart, Ang. One of those college girls...seems to me. And she gave me nothing. I'm sure Santiago spends his nights with her. But she wouldn't answer not a thing.

ANGIE

She's probably trained. Panthers used to folks tryin' to shut 'em down.

LADY DONNA

She saw through me like a broken blind. So, I got nothing. *(BEAT)* Can I get my pay?

LADY DONNA puts out her hand.

ANGIE

I will pay you when your job is complete. As I see it now, you haven't told me anything. So...you don't deserve not one damn penny.

LADY DONNA

I did what you asked me to do. Not my fault that the woman didn't want to talk.

ANGIE reaches into her purse. She pulls out a twenty dollar bill. She hands it to LADY DONNA.

ANGIE

Take this. This should cover what you seek.

LADY DONNA takes the money.

LADY DONNA

I'll settle for less I guess.

ANGIE

I don't need any lip action from you. Got it?

LADY DONNA

Okay...Boss Lady. *(BEAT)* So, what's the next assignment?

ANGIE checks her surroundings.

ANGIE

I want you to handle someone for me. *(BEAT)* Tommy Romiti.

LADY DONNA

Not really into sleepin' with white guys. But if that job must be done. I will complete it.

ANGIE

I don't need you to offer up your vagina. I need you to kill Tommy Romiti. And get the keys to the liquor store.

LADY DONNA

The keys I can handle. But kill him?? Lady Donna keeps her hands clean.

ANGIE

I'll pay you with the entire bag that Mr. Madison gave me today. It's just holdin' up space in my hotel room.

A moment.

LADY DONNA

Let us Pray.

LADY DONNA bows her head.

LADY DONNA Cont.

Lord...forgive me for what I'm about to do. But I just want to "come up" in the world. I promise I won't do anything like this again. No more street-walking or nothing after this one. *(BEAT)* Amen.

ANGIE

Let's freshen you up a little. *(BEAT)* Come with me.

LADY DONNA

Yes...Boss Lady. I'm stickin' with my girl, Ang from Catholic school. You a baaaddd woman.

ANGIE and LADY DONNA exit. A moment. SANTIAGO enters from the opposite direction of ANGIE and LADY DONNA. SANTIAGO enters with his gun(Parasol). SANTIAGO stands outside of MADISON's Office. He paces.

SANTIAGO

If Madison wants me, he's gonna come and get me. Cause I'm tired of bein' walked on in this community. Time to stand up to these drug lords. Let them know that our community is not theirs'. This here is a battle—my battle. And I must fight it alone. (*BEAT*) This goes out to “The Man”.

SANTIAGO raises his gun (parasol). SANTIAGO shoots at the building. MR. MADISON jump up from his throne. SANTIAGO takes off his beret. He places it on the ground. He runs off with the gun in hand. He exits. MADISON runs outside. He sees no one. MADISON picks up the beret. He reads the inside of the cap.

End of Scene

SCENE SEVEN

Same Night. THE WALDRON'S PRESIDENTIAL SUITE. The main setting act as a background. The setup consists of a couch—exquisite in taste. There is a coffee table which holds ANGIE's bag of money. A door. LADY DONNA sits on the couch as ANGIE puts on the finishing touches. ANGIE is in her lingerie. ANGIE passes her hand-held mirror to LADY DONNA.

ANGIE

All done. Thank me later.

LADY DONNA

Oh my...! Angie, you have made me beautiful.

ANGIE

I wouldn't say beautiful. But marketable—definitely. Now, all you got to do is get the keys to Madison's liquor store.

LADY DONNA

And you think he's just gonna give that up.

ANGIE

You said you could do anything. *(BEAT)* Bein' a seductress isn't for everyone. Either you got it or you don't. And I'm sure there's plenty of fine things I can buy at Chanel with that sack of money.

LADY DONNA

Say now...Lady Donna can get the job done. *(BEAT)* Besides, that money already has a home. I'm gonna be livin' the high life once I fuck his brains out and then blow his top back.

MR. MADISON appears to be in his office. Sittin' on his throne. TOMMY stands by his side. MR. MADISON rips a piece of paper—ANGIE's address. TOMMY takes it. He exits. MADISON calls ANGIE. SFX: Phone Ring. ANGIE steps forward. She answers.

ANGIE

Hello Jacob.

MADISON

Miss Foster, I know I was supposed to be your visitor tonight. But I have a business proposition.

ANGIE

What's the job?

MADISON is holding PIERRE's beret. The inside reads Santiago Pierre...

MADISON

I want Santiago Pierre dead. My headquarters has been shot. And at this point...Pierre's taunting me. So, he must die tonight. I've given Tommy your room information. He has a few stops before he gets to you. But I need you to be a witness to the death of Santiago Pierre. My problems will go away if he can't breathe anymore. I'm going to take a rain check on our rendezvous.

ANGIE

Oh sure. I understand. *(BEAT)* I won't disappoint you, Jacob.

MADISON

Don't get any blood on your hands. As a respect to his kindness to me. *(BEAT)* Tommy will handle the shootin'. If anything goes wrong, your job is to contact me. You got it?

ANGIE

Crystal clear. *(BEAT)* Thank you, Mister Madison.

ANGIE hangs up the phone. MR. MADISON hangs up. END OF PHONE CONVERSATION. MR. MADISON exits. ANGIE grabs the bottle of Grand Marnier.

LADY DONNA

Pour me up...

ANGIE pours Grand Marnier into her cup and THE FOLLOWER's cup. They drink.

ANGIE

Men are easily tricked. See how easy that was. Didn't even have to ask for Tommy. Madison has offered him up. (*BEAT*) Fools. They underestimate the strength of a woman. Treat us like delicate flowers. But truth be told my heart is a cactus.

KING JIMMY knocks at the door.
ANGIE walks towards the door.

ANGIE Cont.

Who's there?

KING JIMMY

It's me. King Jimmy.

ANGIE

Go in the bedroom. And stay until I tell you to come out.

LADY DONNA

Okay Boss Lady.

THE FOLLOWER exits into the bedroom. *ANGIE* unlocks the door.

ANGIE

King Jimmy.

KING JIMMY

I'm back at it, Baby.

ANGIE runs into *JIMMY*'s arms. She kisses him. She pulls him into the room. She shuts the door.

KING JIMMY Cont.

I guess you missed me.

ANGIE

You ain't got to ask a question like that. I've been goin' crazy without you, King Jimmy Green. Can't nobody run a block like you.

KING JIMMY

If you missed me that much, why didn't you come pick me up this morning?

ANGIE pours herself a glass of alcohol. She takes a sip.

ANGIE

I've been busy all day. I've been working out deals that will allow us to take over this city. *(BEAT)* Protectin' your image. The image that Santiago Pierre is tryin' to tarnish.

KING JIMMY

(BEAT) Madison told me about Santiago. You know about that?

ANGIE

I saw it all happen last night. I sent a message to his baby mama. I was tempted to shoot her and his kids. End all chances of his blood line continuing existence in St. Marie. He ain't gonna stop until the empire falls. To top it off. He just shot up Mister Madison's office. *(BEAT)* I must kill him tonight.

KING JIMMY

I want to kill him. He is destroyin' my name. Tamperin' with my business affairs. *(BEAT)* I'm so sick of these revolutionaries. He wants a revolution...Imma give it to him.

ANGIE

King Jimmy, this is your first day back. I will handle this. It's my duty.

KING JIMMY

(BEAT) I still haven't stopped to see my little sister. I'm sure I'll bump into him. You haven't harmed Nefertiti, have you?

ANGIE

I have kept myself away from your "Queen". As you wished. *(BEAT)* Jimmy...trust me. I'm gonna bring you back to the top. Got Madison wrapped around my finger. My next plan is to take over his liquor store. He's pushin' weight outta there—heavy weight. And I want my hands on the action. *(BEAT)* We could rule this city together. Hand in Hand—together. Maybe I'll birth you a baby or two. Solidify our bloodline. *(BEAT)* Rule St. Marie with me. It'll be like my dad's days in St. Joseph. Put the power back into the hands of the Black drug lords. I consider you my King. I will put my life on the line if it guaranteed a seat amongst your greatness.

KING JIMMY

(BEAT) No sentiments are due to me. Just charge it to life. Cause I work alone. Everybody knows that bout Jimmy, Baby.

ANGIE

Look at you. *(She points)* How can the King be dressed in garments as such?

KING

I can be butt ass naked and I would still be King. Then, I would scoop up some leaves to cover up the pipe. And take a few and make me a crown. I make “the clothes”. They don’t make me.

ANGIE Cont.

Nonsense. Follow me. There’s a box laying on the bed. (*BEAT*) I went down to Flemington’s Menswear. Picked you up something. Top of the line. Only the best for the King. Try it on to see if it’s to your liking.

ANGIE caresses JIMMY. She tries to lead him to the bedroom. KING stops in his tracks.

KING

Say you ain’t tryin’ to pull a quick one on me. Bribing me with gifts. (*BEAT*) You’re the only person that knew my actual release date.

ANGIE

You don’t trust me?

KING

You’re King David’s daughter. (*BEAT*) Dat muthafucka was lethal in prison. Ain’t nobody botherin’ him. I can bet you that. He makes his cellmate work as his slave. He spits on ‘im and all that. Somethin’ got a hold on that man. I’m just hoping that you ain’t got the same thing holdin’ you.

ANGIE

I wish people would stop comparing me to him. He’s a man. I’m a woman. I just play my “role”.

KING

I see...you’re playin’ your “role”. Mister Madison must be on his way over? I’m sure he’s got good money on your sugar bowl.

*JIMMY exits into the bedroom.
LADY DONNA enters from the bedroom. She sticks her head back into the bedroom.*

LADY DONNA

(*To King Jimmy*) Hey Sexy...

ANGIE

Your mind need to be focused on the task at hand.

LADY DONNA

Sorry, Boss Lady.

ANGIE

King Jimmy is off limits. His seeds belong to me.

LADY DONNA

Don't be stingy, Boss Lady. All the girls in the street say King Jimmy is the best pipe layer in the business. Can't hold him back from his duties.

ANGIE

Keep your cooch to yourself. Or you will die.

LADY DONNA pours another drink.

ANGIE Cont.

Don't drink up my Grand Marnier. It's worth more than you can afford.

After a moment, JIMMY reappears in his immaculate suit. ANGIE notices.

KING

You dig it, Baby?!

ANGIE

Oh, I dig it.

THE FOLLOWER

I dig it, too. King Jimmy.

THE FOLLOWER pours herself a glass of Grand Marnier.

ANGIE

(To THE FOLLOWER) Lady Donna...go back into the bedroom. I'll let you know when your gentleman arrives.

LADY DONNA exits with a switch. Staring at KING JIMMY as she walks away—at a slow pace.

ANGIE

The bedroom now.

THE FOLLOWER exits with the glass of alcohol in hand.

KING

(BEAT) Who is that woman?

ANGIE

That's Lady Donna. She works for me. But if you would work with me—as a team. She would be workin' for us.

KING JIMMY starts to exit. ANGIE follows him. He opens the door. He turns to ANGIE.

KING

Us? I'm not used to the sound of that. (BEAT) Can you book me a room here?

ANGIE

Your room key is at the desk. Tell them you're "Mr. M". And here.

ANGIE walks over to the bag of money. She counts out \$500. She reaches it to him.

KING

For what?

ANGIE

You can't be out here without money. That's not befit of the King.

JIMMY takes the money.

ANGIE Cont.

I'm got some business to take care of. I'll meet you on Carmichael and Newton.

JIMMY exits. ANGIE shuts the door. She basks in her glory. LADY DONNA peeps her head out of the bedroom.

LADY DONNA

I'm sorry, Boss Lady. Didn't mean to embarrass you in front of company.

ANGIE

If you want a future with me, you will conduct yourself with decorum.

TOMMY knocks at the door.

TOMMY

Angie Foster. It's Tommy Romiti. Open up.

ANGIE

It's showtime. The gun is behind the couch.

ANGIE cont.

You do know how to shoot a gun, right?

LADY DONNA

It's not hard, is it?

ANGIE

(BEAT) I'll shoot once you get the keys. The code word is bingo.

TOMMY knocks at the door again.

ANGIE cont.

Go ahead and open the door.

LADY DONNA

But I wanted to shoot him in climax.

ANGIE

Lady Donna, Get the door.

ANGIE runs off into the bedroom—grabbing the gun (parasol) on her way. THE FOLLOWER goes to the door. She opens it.

TOMMY

(BEAT) You're not Angie.

LADY DONNA

Lady Donna— a good friend of hers. *(BEAT)* She's in the shower.

TOMMY

May I come in.

LADY DONNA

Of Course...She told me to make you comfortable. So, dat's what Lady Donna is gonna do.

LADY DONNA grabs TOMMY hands leadin' him to the couch. She flings him onto the couch. She sits in his lap.

LADY DONNA Cont.

Tommy Romiti....you're Madison's main man...ain't you?

TOMMY

Excuse me. I don't know you to share this info.

LADY DONNA

Don't be bashful. I've seen you 'round town. I think you're the cutest thing on these streets. And when I see a man handlin' his business. It makes me moist. You want to feel my moisture? It's sweeter than a cupcake.

TOMMY

Lady...I just come to pickup Angie. Not for this.

THE FOLLOWER

Aww...Come on.... You gotta know cannot resist my offer. (*BEAT*) I will let you inside of "my castle".

TOMMY

Your castle...?

LADY DONNA

The front entrance is a little tight so be gentle.

TOMMY

I'll be extra gentle.

TOMMY and LADY DONNA rub on each other. LADY DONNA sneaks his keys from his pocket while he is groping her. She moans to distract him.

LADY DONNA

Bingo! That's my spot. Yes...That's my spot.

TOMMY

You like that, huh?

ANGIE enters from the bedroom with her gun (Parasol) in hand.

ANGIE

And you're gonna like this.

TOMMY

Oh shit...

TOMMY pushes LADY DONNA off him. TOMMY runs toward the door. ANGIE shoots him. TOMMY falls to the floor. LADY DONNA holds out the keys. ANGIE takes them.

ANGIE

Good Work, Donna. *(BEAT)* Let's get rid of his body.

LADY DONNA walks over to the table and grabs the bag of money.

LADY DONNA

You are on your own. Lady Donna's job is complete. The keys are in your hand. *(BEAT)* Maybe you shouldn't run an empire just yet. Well...Good luck.

LADY DONNA tries to exit. ANGIE raises her gun. She shoots. LADY DONNA falls dead.

ANGIE

This empire is mine...and no one will stop me.

ANGIE picks up the money. She stands—victorious.

End of Scene

SCENE EIGHT

Same Night. SOLEIL appears in the window of her apartment. She is wearing her robe. She is getting ready to go out and have a funky-good time. She is jamming to Mr. Big Stuff by Jean Knight. She's letting it hang loose! Singing along. SANTIAGO enters causin' raucous. SOLEIL overhears. She turns off her record player. SOLEIL steps outside of the apartment.

SANTIAGO

I fucked up...I fucked up...Damn it! *(BEAT)* Fuck.

SOLEIL

What's goin' on out here? *(BEAT)* You're interruptin' my music. And I don't like to compromise when it comes to my R&B.

SANTIAGO falls to his knees. Letting out a roar.

SANTIAGO

(BEAT) Take a seat.

SOLEIL points to her throne.

SANTIAGO

Don't feel like sittin' down. I'm just gonna go inside. Nefertiti needs me.

SOLEIL blocks the entrance. She points to the throne.

SOLEIL

Sit Down.... You heard me, turkey.

SANTIAGO sits on the throne.

SOLEIL Cont.

So I ask again.... What's goin' on?

SANTIAGO does not respond. A moment.

SANTIAGO

I've fucked it all up. The school. *(BEAT)* Ain't no excuse for what I've done. But it had to be done.

SOLEIL

Explain...My mind won't rest until I know. And If my mind isn't at rest, that means my mouth won't be a rest. I'll be liable to tell Nefertiti almost anything to free my mind.

SANTIAGO

I gotta shield her from this one. She ain't gonna deal with it, lightly. *(BEAT)* I got some inside information about Jimmy's deal with Mr. Madison from Brother Harold Dixon. So, I wanted to take matters in my hands. That's all I can share.

SOLEIL

(BEAT) Can I do a reading on you? I won't even use tools. Just my hands. The ancestors speak through me. Just place your hands in my hands. And leave the rest to me.

SANTIAGO extends his hands to SOLEIL. SOLEIL places her hands on top of his. SOLEIL's body surges—a revelation.

SOLEIL Cont.

Oh no, Santiago. It don't look good. But I can see what I can do. I'll give up an offering. And ask Mama Nadine for the answers. *(BEAT)* Don't you know this world is out to punish men like you. You are one of the chosen. Which means any chance these folks get to end you...best believe they gonna get the job done. *(BEAT)* We are gonna go to the club and ain't gonna be 'round here mopin'. Then, you'll get to enjoy Nefertiti's company. That's probably all you need right now.

A moment.

KING JIMMY enters. SOLEIL and SANTIAGO freeze—like a ghost is present.

KING

Good Evenin'...

SOLEIL

Jimmy Green...They finally let you outta that cage.

KING

Feelin' freer than I've eva felt before. *(BEAT)* I see you still runnin' round here like some faggot. Are those my sister's clothes you got on? Why don't you go make ya self-useful. Go tell Nefe that Big Brotha Jimmy is back in town.

SOLEIL

If you came back to make our lives hell, you can just go on back to the jail cell.

KING

(BEAT) Go get Nefertiti now. I command you.

*SOLEIL calls for NEFERTITI—
inaudibly.*

SOLEIL

Oh Nefertiti...You have company. *(BEAT)* Better hope she heard me. I don't do repeats. *(BEAT)* If you need me Santiago, I'll be packin' my drag bag. Stay protected.

*SOLEIL exits. A moment. KING
JIMMY eyes SANTIAGO.*

KING

Mister Santiago Pierre...

*KING JIMMY steps towards the
throne.*

KING Cont.

I've been hearin' a lot about you, man. Cleanin' up these streets, huh? Mister Militant Leader.

SANTIAGO

.... I do what I can.

KING

You do what you can...*(BEAT)* It's time for you to stop. Cause King Jimmy don't need no static. I hear you've been messin' with Madison's business. Tryin' to get my name back in the streets. *(BEAT)* Stop what you're doin', man. If you like livin'.

SANTIAGO

All I ask is for you not to bring harm to Nefertiti. She's my biggest concern in this matter.

KING

I wouldn't do a thing to hurt my baby sis. I'll protect her with my life. *(BEAT)* Can't say the same for you.

SANTIAGO

Do what you gotta do. Ain't no one here to stop you. No one here to object. You could kill me right now. And walk away. And no one will know.. (BEAT) Kill me, King Jimmy.

KING JIMMY reaches his stretched hands towards SANTIAGO's neck. NEFERTITI enters from the apartment. She is fully dressed for the club with her purse in hand.

NEFERTITI

Jimmy? That's you?

KING JIMMY drops his hands. NEFERTITI and JIMMY share a hug.

KING

You're lookin' good sis. Beautiful just like Dahleen was.

NEFERTITI beams.

NEFERTITI

(To Jimmy) How long you been out here?

KING

Just a little while. Been catchin' up with my brother-in-law.

NEFERTITI

(To Santiago) I ran you a bath. It's waitin' for you.

SANTIAGO stands up from the throne.

SANTIAGO

Okay Baby. (BEAT) Jimmy.

KING

Brotha Africa.

SANTIAGO throws up his fist. He exits. A moment.

NEFERTITI

Jimmy, I haven't heard from you in two weeks. Didn't even tell me what day you were gettin' out. I could've came and picked you up.

KING

I didn't want much buzz about my release date in the streets. *(BEAT)* Why you livin' in the slums? And why is the house a liquor store?

NEFERTITI Cont.

(BEAT) Soleil and I were living in Jackson. We came to check on the house, and it was boarded up. We went down to city hall. Tried to stop the demolition. But they told me that I could do nothing about it.

SOLEIL and SANTIAGO enter from the apartment. SANTIAGO carries SOLEIL's luggage.

SANTIAGO

But Nefertiti ran me a bath.

SOLEIL

Okay well...you're just gonna be musty. *(Beat)* Cause it's now 10:31. And it's time for us to go. Say Good Bye to that visitor of yours. We're headed to the car. Come on, Santiago.

SANTIAGO

Don't be long, my queen.

SOLEIL and SANTIAGO exit.

KING

Where y'all headed?

NEFERTITI

Peace Nightclub. *(BEAT)* You got a place to stay?

KING

Yeah, Baby sis. I got a place to lay my head. I'll be in California soon. That will be my new home. *(BEAT)* Go on and get to the club. Enjoy yourself.

NEFERTITI

If you need me, you can find me here. I pray that your journey to California is smooth.

KING

Solid...

NEFERTITI hugs JIMMY.

NEFERTITI

Be safe, Brotha. And say goodbye before you leave.

KING

Will do...Sis.

*NEFERTITI exits. KING remains.
ANGIE appears out of the darkness.*

ANGIE

She's a beautiful girl.

KING

Angie, Don't sneak up on me like that.

ANGIE

I told you I would be here. *(BEAT)* I got the keys to Madison's Liquor store. We got access to all his product.

KING

Damn...you're not wastin' no time. *(BEAT)* We got a party to crash. Peace Nightclub.

ANGIE

I hear it's a masquerade. Which will make this an easy task. *(BEAT)* And I'm gonna make sure Santiago doesn't breathe another breath. Let's get movin'.

*ANGIE exits into the bedroom. KING
JIMMY follows.*

END of SCENE

SCENE NINE

*SAME NIGHT. CLUB-DANCE
FLOOR. ANGIE and JIMMY stand
behind the bar. Working in disguise.
ANGIE is dressed as NIXON.
JIMMY Wears a feathered mask.
They are working as bartenders. The
Ensemble appear as party goers. A
Dance Line forms. SOLEIL and
SANTIAGO cut a rug. The center of
attention. A moment.*

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Alright Ladies and Gentlemen! Peace Night Club brings to you... SOLEIL DANDRIDGE. Give her some of yawl's time!

*SOLEIL enters with The Leader and
The Follower pulling up the rear.
They perform one of her pieces. It is
to be performed as a choreopoem.
The movement should be reflective of
Disco Dance/ J-Setting. Brass Band
Music acts as the underbelly.*

SOLEIL

Rhythm Started with Shango and Oya.

Shango gave Oya rhythm.

And together they danced.

Danced from sun up to sun down.

Celebratin' life and abundance.

And they danced.

In the rhythm of Love,

In the rhythm of Peace,

In the rhythm,

They danced.

In darkness they danced.

Together, they gave light.

Spreading enough love

To light the room.
Shango's Ways became
Oya's Ways.
They were one.
But "The Lady that dons Gold" grew jealous.
Oshun be her name.
She's jealous of the prosperity of love
Between Shango and Oya
So, she concocted the voodoo that she do.
And put that "thang" on Shango.
Talkin' about dat voodoo..
Dat spirit...dat mean ole curse..
Watch out Shango...Do you hear me?
Watch out, Oya girl.
The Soldiers are up ahead.
Watch Out, They are collectin' bodies.
Shango...
Oya...
Keep the rhythm.

*The Crowd applauds. SOLEIL exits.
Music switches and fades. Some of
the Ensemble remains on the dance
floor—groovin'. SOLEIL wows the
crowd. They applaud her. She waves
like Miss America as she sashays
prancin' towards her friends.*

NEFERTITI

Yes Ma'am. Soleil, Darling!

SOLEIL

Mama always give da kids what dey need.

NEFERTITI

And this hair??

SOLEIL

It grows from the scalp, you know?

NEFERTITI

Ain't finna play with you.

SANTIAGO

Great performance, Soleil. Nice seein' you do somethin' that brings you joy.

SOLEIL

You called me, Soleil...You bettah get on board, Honey. Cause Soleil Dandridge about to be a household name.

SANTAIGO

Once we get the school goin' you can teach the girls to dance like that. We can make you the dance teacher. And you can wear whatever you would like. No more judgement.

SOLEIL

(*BEAT*) I thank you, Brotha. But you both need to know. Teachin' is not in my cards. So, Imma stick with my Paris fantasy with my lover, Hollis.

NEFERTITI

I'm just so happy that my little family is here together—

SHUNNA approaches SANTIAGO and NEFERTITI. She lifts her mask. Cutting NEFERTITI off.

SHUNNA

Santi! Can I get a dance?

SANTIAGO

Shunna, I thought I told you to stay at home.

SHUNNA

I only follow orders from my man. (*BEAT*) Are you my man?

SOLEIL

Chilllee.... (*BEAT*) Let me go grab my coins backstage.

SOLEIL exits.

NEFERTITI

Look heffa, I'm tired of you disrespectin' me.

SANTIAGO

I got this, Baby. *(BEAT)* Shunna...just give it up. I don't want you.

SHUNNA

But the other night.

SANTIAGO

I gave you a hug and held you while you cried. But nothin' more than that. And you know it. *(BEAT)* You don't have to leave the club. But just keep your distance. If it's not about the twins, there is no further conversation.

SHUNNA

(BEAT) I wish I would've gotten pregnant by somebody else. A real man.

SHUNNA walks off—switchin' those hips.

SANTIAGO Cont.

(To NEFERTITI) I'm gonna go grab some drinks. Any preference?

NEFERTITI

Just give me somethin' sweet.

SANTIAGO approaches the bar. He goes up to KING JIMMY—disguised as a BARTENDER. ANGIE—also disguised—stands beside him.

KING JIMMY

What can I get for you?

SANTIAGO

I need one pina colada and a beer.

KING JIMMY

A strong man like you is drinkin' the beer right? What kind, Man?

NEFERTITI reenters. She recovers from her “vomit moment.” She heads to their table and takes a seat.

SANTIAGO

Miller will do me.

KING JIMMY

We got that comin up.

SANTIAGO turns away. Takin’ in the atmosphere. KING JIMMY sits the pina colada on the bar table. ANGIE pulls out a poisonous substance—substitute with something that can be consumed and dissolves. She puts it into the beer. SANTIAGO turns back around—doesn’t see a thing.

KING JIMMY Cont.

Aight Man...that will be three dollars.

SANTIAGO pulls out a three-dollar bills from his wallet. He tips the bartender.

SANTIAGO

This here is for you to keep. Thanks, Brotha.

SANTIAGO grabs the drinks and heads toward NEFERTITI.

KING JIMMY

Naw...Thank you.

ANGIE stands by JIMMY. SANTIAGO hands NEFERTITI her drink.

NEFERTITI

Thanks Santi. I’ve really enjoyed this night.

SANTIAGO

Let’s take advantage of this time.

NEFERTITI sips her drink. SANTIAGO sits their containers on a nearby table. He takes NEFERTITI's hand. They dance.

NEFERTITI

I'm excited about this school. *(BEAT)* I'm ready to get to work. And I wouldn't want no one else to be on my side.

SANTIAGO

Give me a kiss.

SANTIAGO and NEFERTITI share a kiss. A Moment.

SANTIAGO Cont.

Baby, I've done some things. What I've done is gonna help the community. But it might hurt me. I wish I could explain. *(BEAT)* If anything happens to me. Cremate me.

NEFERTITI

Cremate you...why are you talkin' about death?

SOLEIL

I got my money. So, we can leave now.

SANTIAGO picks up his beer. He chugs it. Sits down the bottle.

NEFERTITI

Wait we're leavin' already.

SOLEIL

My feet are barkin' like bull dogs. I need to get out of this drag. ASAP.

NEFERTITI Cont.

Okay...Let's go baby. You can explain these community changes you're talkin' about.

SANTIAGO quivers. His speech is slurred.

SANTIAGO

Ooo...ka...yy....My...Queen.

SANTIAGO falls to the ground as he tries to stand. He is dead.

SOLEIL

Shango...!

NEFERTITI and SOLEIL run towards SANTIAGO's corpse. ANGIE and KING JIMMY exits.

NEFERTITI

Santiago, What's wrong? Wake up, my king. Wake up for me...Please.

The Ensemble crowds around the scene. Shaken up. SOLEIL touches SANTIAGO's face.

SOLEIL

He's gone, Nefertiti.

NEFERTITI

Stop playin'. This isn't a fun game anymore. Get up. I need you. *(BEAT)* St. Marie needs you.

SHUNNA runs over.

SHUNNA

What's wrong with him?

SOLEIL

Little Kitty, call 911. Go now.

SHUNNA exits. A couple of the ensemble members run off to get help. SOLEIL comforts NEFERTITI as she grieves.

SOLEIL Cont.

It's gonna be okay, Nefe. *(BEAT)* I'll be your Shango now. I will protect you.

End of Act I.

ACT II

SCENE ONE

Saturday. February 11, 1972. Sound of Thunder. SFX: BRASS BAND MUSIC—Slow Tempo. CARMICHAEL Drive and NEWTON Avenue. THE ENSEMBLE harmonizes to the rhythm of the music. SOLEIL leads a processional routine. SOLEIL stands to the left of SHUNNA--carrying an urn. THE LEADER holds a framed picture of SANTIAGO.” THE FOLLOWER waves his feathered fan, and TOMMY (As an Ensemble Member) makes the parasol dance. SOLEIL breaks into song.

SOLEIL

We have lost...The King...of St. Marie.
King Shango ain't no longer here...
But we'll march...on into eternity...
As we claim... our true destinies...

ALL

We have lost...The King...of St. Marie.
King Shango ain't no longer here...
But we'll march...on into eternity...
As we claim... our true destinies...

THE ENSEMBLE begins to harmonize again. THE ENSEMBLE disperses—exiting off. SOLEIL plants herself center—holding the urn.

SOLEIL

Oya was incomplete without Shango.
No reason to fight against the evils of the world.
Cause her rightful place is near the side of
Shango, Warrior King.
No more are those days.

In her bed, she has remained.

NEFERTITI's ROOM. A mattress and a vanity—with chair. NEFERTITI's Nubian Wig sits on a mannequin head. SOLEIL enters NEFERTITI's room. She places the urn on her table. She walks over and sits on the bed. She rubs NEFERTITI's face.

Sunday. February 12, 1972. NEFERTITI's ROOM. SOLEIL enters NEFERTITI's room—carrying Mama Nadine's Throne. SOLEIL observes NEFERTITI. She then touches the throne—seeking the spirit of Mama Nadine. A prayer.

SOLEIL Cont.

Mama Nadine...bring the spirit of the ancestors upon your daughter.

She needs answers. She has not risen today.

And the Earth was not the same without her presence.

Now is the time to awake her.

Now is the time...

SOLEIL kisses NEFERTITI's forehead. She exits.

BEFORE DAWN. Monday, February 13, 1972. NEFERTITI's ROOM. NEFERTITI has not moved. SHUNNA enters with the baby's bag on her shoulders. SOLEIL enters.

SOLEIL

You are wrong for draggin' these babies out before dawn.

SHUNNA

You gotta get her up. I got a brick thrown through my window last night. With a note that said... "Your kids are next". And I didn't know what to do. So, I packed my things. How long has she been asleep?

SOLEIL

It's been three days since her eyes last saw the world.

SHUNNA

They say her own brother caused this. Which I don't put it past him. You know Tommy Romiti and some prostitute was found dead over there by that liquor store. *(BEAT)* Folks tryin' to blame it on Santiago. But I know for a fact that he ain't do it. He didn't have the time.

SOLEIL

(BEAT) That ole Legba... Jimmy is a trickster... So I'm sure there's another hand holdin' his wand.

THE LEADER

I'm afraid for the future of St. Marie. They might kill us all. *(BEAT)* I am leavin'. Got my things packed and waiting on the Greyhound. But I don't want to take the twins with me. Cause I fear for their safety. Then, my mind been all over the place. It ain't right for me to subject the twins to my ill-mind. *(BEAT)* Can I leave them here? I know they'll be safe here cause you know voodoo... You can just cast a spell or something. I need y'all to do this for me.. *(BEAT)* This is what Santiago would want.

SOLEIL sighs.

SOLEIL

Little Kitty. You better be glad I liked Santiago. *(BEAT)* Fine... but help me wake Nefe up. So, we can tell her.

SOLEIL and SHUNNA tug on NEFERTITI.

SHUNNA

Nefe... wake up.

SOLEIL

Come on now, Sleepin' Beauty.

NEFERTITI does not move.

SOLEIL

I give up. I've done everything to try and get her up again. *(BEAT)* Just leave them. Don't miss your bus.

SHUNNA hands NEFERTITI the baby bag.

SHUNNA

(*BEAT*) Their 1st birthday is around the corner. There's two lockets in this bag. One for Assata. One for Bakari. One holds my photo. The other holds Santiago's. Give Santiago's locket to Assata. Give my locket to Bakari.

SOLEIL

Just be careful, Little Kitty. (*BEAT*) Your kids will be safe.

SHUNNA hugs SOLEIL. SHUNNA exits. SOLEIL places the baby bag on her shoulder.

SOLEIL CONT.

Come on, Mama Nadine.

SOLEIL exits.

DREAM MODE. Sound of Thunder...SANTIAGO appears as SHANGO—donning his red and white. SANTIAGO calls NEFERTITI.

SANTIAGO

Oya....My Sweet Oya. I need you to wake up. Cause there's work to do, woman.

SANTIAGO nudges NEFERTITI.

SANTIAGO Cont.

Come on now. You can't lay around today. The village needs you, Oya. Warrior Queen.

SANTIAGO shoves NEFERTITI again. NEFERTITI awakes—a little disgruntled.

NEFERTITI

Soleil....I'm not gettin' up. Just leave me alone.

NEFERTITI meets SANTIAGO—SHANGO— eye to eye. NEFERTITI jumps out of her skin.

NEFERTITI Cont.

...Look I don't know. What kinda demon tricks you tryin' to pull...

SANTIAGO

Woman, are you feelin' okay? It's Shango. Warrior God. Your King... *(BEAT)* Have you seen the twins? I can't find them around here. Are they with Oshun?

NEFERTITI quivers.

NEFERTITI

.... Santiago..

SANTIAGO

It is, I, Shango.

NEFERTITI

But you're dead...

SANTIAGO

Oh my Sweet Oya....You know you and I will keep on living. Protectin' the sky side by side.

NEFERTITI

I'm not following...

SANTIAGO

An evil force is gonna reign over the kingdom if you don't get up. Get out there, Oya. And find the twins.

SANTIAGO pulls on OYA.

NEFERTITI

The Twins...? Assata and Bakari...

SANTIAGO

You must protect them. *(BEAT)* We must go now... But I must separate myself from you.

*NEFERTITI latches onto
SANTIAGO.*

NEFERTITI

But my King...I don't know what paths to take. You're the leader...

SANTIAGO

My Sweet Oya.... The kingdom is yours to defend.

SANTIAGO exits.

NEFERTITI

Wait....Wait....!!!!

SOLEIL reenters.

SOLEIL

Girl, what you yellin' about in here? Bout time you woke up.

NEFERTITI

..... I just saw Santiago. *(BEAT)* Where's the twins?

SOLEIL

Shunna just left. I gotta talk to you about something. Sh—

NEFERTITI

Where they at? I gotta go protect them.

SOLEIL

Honey, you're not making sense.

NEFERTITI

The twins...I gotta protect them. That's what Shango say.

SOLEIL

Shango.....

NEFERTITI

They gotta come live with me. That's what gotta happen.

SOLEIL

Shunna left them here. They are in the living room. Asleep. She's leavin' town. And she's afraid that Jimmy is the reason behind Santiago's death. *(BEAT)* And I know that to be the truth. The messages read clear to me now.

NEFERTITI

You mind repeating that to me....

SOLEIL

Jimmy murdered Santiago.

*NEFERTITI rises from the bed. The
ENSEMBLE chants off-stage.*

NEFERTITI

ENSEMBLE

The revolution has come...Time to pick up
the gun...(4X)

(*BEAT*) Jimmy Green....You will pay for this.

SOLEIL

He's at the Waldron...On the fourth floor...I saw it in my vision.

*NEFERTITI snatches the wig of the
mannequin.*

SOLEIL

Nefertiti Green....You bettah not walk out this room. We need to find a baby sitter. Cause I want
to go.

NEFERTITI exits.

SOLEIL Cont.

Nefe....Come back....

SOLEIL Exits.

End of Scene

SCENE TWO

Same Day. Waldron Suite. ANGIE and KING JIMMY are livin' it up. There are cocaine lines on the table and weed. A bottle of Grand Marnier. Two glasses on the table. A record player. SFX: Pimp/Hustler Music. They are livin' it up. Out of their minds. NEFERTITI enters. She knocks on the door with her gun in hand. She hides the hand (with the gun) behind her back. JIMMY turns off the music. (Music fades.) JIMMY looks through peep hole.

KING

Who is it?

NEFERTITI

It's Nefe. Your baby sis. Open up...It's urgent.... I need your help with something.

JIMMY motions for ANGIE to hide the drugs. ANGIE begins to clean off the table. JIMMY unchains the door. NEFERTITI kicks the door open.

NEFERTITI

You did it. Didn't you?

NEFERTITI shoots the gun. JIMMY and ANGIE ducks.

KING

What are you talkin' bout girl?

NEFERTITI

You know what I'm talkin' about. Santiago is dead. And I hear that you be the person that I should talk to.

KING

I don't know what you talkin' bout.

NEFERTITI

Stop lyin', Jimmy. You're wrapped up in the game. If you didn't do it, you know who did?

KING

I don't know nothin', girl. Can't you hear straight? I ain't the one you need to be talkin' to...

NEFERTITI places the gun at her brother's temple.

NEFERTITI

I will kill you, Jimmy.

ANGIE

He said he don't know. Get that gun away from him.

NEFERTITI

(To Angie) This is family business...So you stay in your place.

ANGIE

(BEAT) Bitch, you don't scare me. You come in here with a gun and think you're all big bad. Jimmy, you want me to cut her. Cause I shall could slice a hoe right now.

KING

It's cool, Angie. *(BEAT)* You would kill your own flesh and blood. Over some troublemaker?

NEFERTITI

My own flesh and blood is the one makin' the trouble. You barely been back forty-eight hours and somethin' done happened already.

KING

That ain't got nothin' to do with me.

NEFERTITI

Who do I need to talk to then?

KING

I can't help you with that.

NEFERTITI aims the gun (parasol) at the center of KING's face.

NEFERTITI

I will end it for you, Jimmy. Santiago was my world. We had plans togetha. Now I gotta push all of that to the side. And that ain't fair.

KING

I understand that you hurtin'. But I done experienced loss all my life. It's life. Just gotta accept it for what it is.

NEFERTITI

What you come back for, Jimmy? You ain't never brought nothin' but trouble. Time and Time again.

ANGIE

King Jimmy don't owe you no explanation. Business is business.

KING

Angie. I got this. *(BEAT)* I came back because this is home. But clearly home don't give two damns about me.

NEFERTITI

That's just part of the path you chose.

KING

The path I chose? You don't know the first thing about a path. Don't nobody know. Just gotta go the way life leads. You think you know more about life then I do. You don't know a damn thing, little girl.

NEFERTITI

Well clearly, I knew something different than you. I knew how much I was worth as a child. And that lead me on a path to righteousness. Because I chose to see the light while in the dark. *(BEAT)* And ain't you supposed to be goin' to California? The house wouldn't serve you any purpose even if it was still there. So, just forget about it and Give me the name.

KING

I don't know what ya talkin', Nefe.

NEFERTITI

Give me the name! If it's not you, you know who killed him. Just say it.

KING

Nefe, get that gun away from me.

NEFERTITI

Tell me the name.

KING does not respond. NEFERTITI raises the gun.

NEFERTITI CONT.

Unless you want your brains splattered on that wall.

KING

.....Madison. His office is at the end of Lafayette. Down a few blocks from the liquor store.
(*BEAT*) Put it down, Nefe.

After a moment. NEFERTITI brings the gun down.

NEFERTITI

You need to leave St. Marie. You hear me?

KING

You got it, Baby. You got my word.

NEFERTITI walks out after a moment. She slams the door as she exits. ANGIE walks towards the door.

ANGIE

(*BEAT*) What's this talk about California? You told her that's where you're headed? Is there something you need to be tellin' me? I thought we agreed that we would run St. Marie together. That was the point behind all of this.

KING

Look, King Jimmy don't owe nobody no explanation.

ANGIE

So, you're just using me?

ANGIE sinks into the floor—not literally.

KING

Ain't nobody gettin' used here. (*BEAT*) I made connections when I was away. Met this guy named Minister. Once he got released, he went out to L.A. He say he could set me up in L.A. So, I'm gonna take him up on that offer.

ANGIE

But you won't be King in a foreign land.

KING

All land is foreign to a man like me. But King Jimmy ain't neva had a problem with gainin' followers.

ANGIE

But Jimmy Green use your mind. These people aren't goin' to let you into the L.A. circle. We can take this empire from Madison. And I know exactly what I can do. The man gives me money without me opening my mouth.

KING

You sold your ass for that money. That ain't no free money. He's just another one of your customers.

ANGIE

That's all I'll ever be to you, huh? Just a common hoe.

KING

You turned a trick or two for me in the past. So I mean, it's not a surprise.

ANGIE

But I—

KING

Just go through with your little plan. I'm sure you know what you're doing. You're just like yo daddy. Filled with evil thoughts. Eviler than I could ever dream up. (*BEAT*) I'm gonna go drain the main vessel. Pour me another drink. I'll be tryin' to come up with a new strategy.

KING exits. ANGIE remains frozen for a moment. She picks up one of the glasses.

ANGIE

I'll fix you the best drink you've ever had.

ANGIE pulls out the tube of poison from her bra. She pours alcohol into the glass. Then, she pours the substance into the glass of alcohol. She swirls it around. She sets it on the table. KING JIMMY returns. He takes a seat. ANGIE picks up the glass of alcohol.

ANGIE

Here you go, King. *(BEAT)* I'm sorry for accusing you of bein' a traitor. My accusations are based out of my emotions for you. And as a professional, I must learn to control my personal feelings. Take this drink as a peace offering.

KING

Well, I accept your offering. At least you recognize your faults.

KING JIMMY drinks from the glass. ANGIE watches until he takes the last sip.

ANGIE

I'm sorry most grateful King Jimmy. How shall I repay you?

KING

We can...ga.ga..go..We can..go to...the the...the..(Repeat as needed)

KING JIMMY turns ill.

ANGIE

I can't understand you, Jimmy! Speak clearly.

KING JIMMY falls—he is no more. ANGIE stands to her feet.

ANGIE Cont.

Oh no...The King has fallen. *(BEAT)* Now the Queen Nefertiti must join him. Ain't no one gonna come between me and my empire.

ANGIE drags KING JIMMY's body.

END of SCENE.

SCENE THREE

*SAME DAY.MR. MADISON's office.
He sits on his throne. ANGIE knocks
on MR. MADISON's door.*

MR. MADISON

Come in.

ANGIE

I hope I'm not disturbing you, Mr. Madison.

MADISON

That's never the case with you.

ANGIE

I'm sorry about you losing one of your men. Santiago really did a number on old Tommy. Hate that he got a hold of Tommy like that. I was waitin' on Tommy to come to the Waldron. Then, someone told me what Santiago did to him.

MADISON

(BEAT) Who informed you?

ANGIE

Mr. Madison, that's not why I came.

MADISON

Give me your fuckin' source. I have a loss on my hand. Tell me who killed--

ANGIE

I think you may have trouble comin' your way. Which is why I hurried down here. Got some people upset about Santiago's murder.

*NEFERTITI enters. She walks up to
Madison's office door—She eavesdrops.
Carrying her gun—parasol.*

MADISON

Now Miss Foster. I don't have time for this type of shit. *(BEAT)* I didn't want your hands on Santiago. And clearly you disobeyed my orders. *(BEAT)* But if Tommy never made it to you. How did you find Pierre?

NEFERTITI pulls out black gloves from her purse. She puts them on. NEFERTITI knocks on the door. ANGIE goes to the door.

ANGIE

I'll open it.

ANGIE opens it. NEFERTITI enters with her gun (parasol) aimed.

NEFERTITI

The brothers and sisters of St. Marie are in mourning. I come seekin' the truth. Give me truth and no one will get hurt.

ANGIE

This is Nefertiti Green. King Jimmy's sister.

MADISON

Queen Nefertiti...Well, I must say your beauty exceeds every account I've ever heard. It's great to finally put a face with your name. *(BEAT)* You have posed yourself as a threat. And I don't take threats lightly.

NEFERTITI

I just want answers. We can handle this nice and sweet. Or we can do it rowdy and rough. The choice is yours. Dig it?

MR. MADISON

What information do you seek?

NEFERTITI

Are you the killer of Santiago Pierre?

MR. MADISON

(BEAT) Santiago Pierre killed himself. Messed with my money. And everyone knows that I do not play about my riches.

NEFERTITI

We know...You survive off the backs of the poor. *(BEAT)* Ruining our community and ruining our youth. Hiring our young boys to work as your flunkies. To take falls for you. You did it to my brother. Now, his head all screwed up. And you took the land that my grandmother worked hard for. And I'm here to tell you that it all ends today.

MR. MADISON

See my dear, that's where you're wrong. Today is the end for you. Not me. *(BEAT)*
Angie...Shoot this trouble-maker.

ANGIE

I got it covered, Boss.

*ANGIE takes the gun from
NEFERTITI. She shoots.
MADISON is shot.*

MR. MADISON

You....you've betrayed me.

ANGIE

I owe loyalty to no man. Don't bleed to bad on that throne because I want it.

MR. MADISON struggles with speech.

MR. MADISON

Stup..pid Biiitch.

*ANGIE shoots again.
MADISON leans over in the
throne—deceased.*

NEFERTITI

Go ahead and shoot me. Get it over with.

ANGIE throws down her gun.

ANGIE

(BEAT) I want to leave you clean.

*ANGIE pushes MR.
MADISON's corpse out of
the throne. She sits on the
throne. Using MADISON's
corpse as a foot stool.*

ANGIE Cont.

A new order is due here in St. Marie. And we will play by my rules. Santiago didn't play my rules. And the late great King Jimmy played me for a fool. But I think an educated girl like yourself. Got a better brain than those foolish men.

NEFERTITI

You killed Santiago....and my brother? *(BEAT)* I can't accept that.

ANGIE stands up from the throne.

ANGIE

Well I guess you'll just have to join them.

ANGIE runs towards NEFERTITI with her hands aiming for NEFERTITI's neck. NEFERTITI dodges her. NEFERTITI kicks ANGIE in her stomach. ANGIE grabs ahold of NEFERTITI...NEFERTITI breaks away. She trips ANGIE. ANGIE falls to the ground. Hurting her knee. NEFERTITI runs over to the gun. ANGIE tries to stop her. NEFERTITI sits on her and pulls a knife from her bra. She pulls ANGIE head upwards—using her hair.

ANGIE

Get off of me. You can't kill me. You don't have the heart.

NEFERTITI

(BEAT) You've guessed wrong.

NEFERTITI places the gun to ANGIE's head. She shoots. ANGIE is no more.

NEFERTITI

St. Marie is freed of low lives like you.

*NEFERTITI spits on
ANGIE's corpse.*

NEFERTITI Cont.

That's for Santiago and my brother, Jimmy.

*NEFERTITI observes the
scene. After a moment,
NEFERTITI exits.*

End of Scene

EPILOGUE

*Tuesday, February 14, 1972. MIDNIGHT.
NEFERTITI's ROOM. NEFERTITI sits
typing. SOLEIL enters.*

SOLEIL

The twins are asleep.

SOLEIL lays across NEFERTITI's bed.

SOLEIL Cont.

(BEAT) Your brain probably needs a break.

NEFERTITI

But the newsletter needs to be out in a few hours. If I gotta stay up, I'm just gonna do what I got to do.

NEFERTITI begins to peck at the typewriter.

SOLEIL

Darling.... step away from the key board. And come lay down on this bed. *(BEAT)* Right now.

*NEFERTITI steps away from the typewriter.
She plops herself onto the bed. Lying down
beside her cousin, SOLEIL.*

NEFERTITI

My emotions are swimmin' around like goldfish.

SOLEIL

You need to breathe. *(BEAT)* Can I admit somethin'? I'm in love with those babies. Especially that little Assata. That's my future Jaycette captain.

NEFERTITI

Her daddy would have the biggest fit.

SOLEIL

(BEAT) I'm sure Santiago wouldn't mind if his daughter made a name for herself in this world. If she went on to become a famous dancer, that would just be the reward for his sacrifice.

NEFERTITI

That would be something. And Bakari, a drummer just like his father. *(BEAT)* You know...what you said a few days ago been on my mind. About remembering my past. Back in Jackson, I was a part of SGA, two honor societies, NAACP, and even served as my sorority's president.

Actively serving all. That's what led me to Miss Jackson State College. *(BEAT)* I guess I haven't been grateful for all those lessons I learned. During that time, not once did I break. Not once did I want to give up. Cause I had the strength and belief that I was enough. But sometimes life can punch you in the gut. Make you lose sight.

SOLEIL

I told you... You had to find it for yourself. I bet you believe my readings now.

NEFERTITI

I've always believed them. I was just freaked out because the spirits drove Mama Nadine mad.

SOLEIL

That's not what happened. *(BEAT)* Mama Nadine got a hold of dat Black Magic. And that's what took her mind. *(BEAT)* But you got me to guide you. I won't steer you wrong. We gotta uphold our traditions. *(BEAT)* You are Oya...the reincarnation of her—To know her is to know yourself.

NEFERTITI

(BEAT) Can I have some time to think about it?

SOLEIL

Of Course...Imma get some beauty rest. *(BEAT)* These babies been keepin' me on my toes.

SOLEIL pulls herself to her feet.

NEFERTITI

You can bring them in here with me.

SOLEIL

Take this time to heal. *(BEAT)* Besides I'm just practicin' for Hollis. *(Pause)* Good Night...My Queen.

NEFERTITI

Goodnight My Love.

SOLEIL blows a kiss. SOLEIL exits. NEFERTITI sits up. She walks over to Mama Nadine's Throne. She caresses the throne. NEFERTITI gets in the bed. The lights dim. NEFERTITI appears to be asleep. A Moment. SFX: Orange Moon-Erykah Badu. SANTIAGO enters as SHANGO. He goes over to NEFERTITI. He kisses her forehead.

SANTIAGO

(BEAT) You are risin'. Risin' like water. Risin' with the winds. Keep risin', My fierce warrior queen.

End of Play.

APPENDIX D

PHOTOS

Courtesy of the University of Arkansas



Courtesy of the University of Arkansas



APPENDIX E

PERMISSION



J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences
Department of Theatre

To: Graduate School and International Studies, University of Arkansas
From: Ashley Cohea, Business Manager for Department of Theatre
Date: April 14, 2018
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