Caught in the Net--The Development and Production of an Original Playscript

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Caught in the Net—The Development and Production of an Original Playscript
Caught in the Net—The Development and Production of an Original Playscript

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in Drama

by

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Bachelor of Science in Mass Communications, 2009

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This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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ABSTRACT

The Department of Drama at the University of Arkansas provides students with the opportunity to take part in classes, workshops, stage readings, and productions as part of its new play development process. The purpose of this thesis document is to clearly and concisely track the process of developing, rehearsing, and producing the world premiere of Caught in the Net, a play involving an African American woman whose life is forever changed when she enters into an online relationship. The document also includes research information, the play’s most recent draft, and production photos. The play was presented by the University Theatre and Theatre Squared for the 2013 New Play Showcase at Nadine Baum Studios at the Walton Arts Center in Fayetteville, Arkansas.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey would not be possible without the guidance and patience of Dr. Roger Gross, Professor Emeritus and Robert Ford, Director of the MFA Program in Playwriting. I am also thankful for the Department of Drama for their commitment to the African American voice and new play development. I would also like to thank the many actors and actresses who have helped development of this and other plays of mine. Finally, special thanks are due to my fellow MFA Playwrights, Todd Taylor, Adam E. Douglas, Justin Blasdel, Rachel Washington, Brittany Taylor, and Dan Borengasser.
DEDICATION

My thesis is dedicated to the following people Dr. Mark G. Henderson for introducing me theatre and for seeing a gift in me that I did not see in myself. Keith and Clinnesha Sibley for helping me cope with graduate school and living in Fayetteville. Last but certainly not least, my wife Alicia for being my rock. God does not always choose the qualified, but he always qualifies the chosen.
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Caught in the Net—The Development and Production of an Original Playscript

SYNOPSIS

Caught in the Net is the unique story of how one woman’s seemingly innocent mistake affects both her livelihood and friendships. The play centers on Faith Morgan; Faith is single, thirty, and she teaches fourth grade. She has spent most of her life doing things “by the book,” and to those that know her this approach has made her predictable. A year before the play begins; Faith decided to submerge herself in her profession and places her love life on hold after being left at the altar on her wedding day. For her, this was the best way to cope. She’d convinced herself that by doing this she could maintain a sense of normalcy in her life.

The play takes place at Faith’s apartment in Chicago, Illinois. It opens with Faith in the midst of an online conversation. In this scene, you get a glimpse of the world in which she lives. She appears to be cautious and conservative in her chat with the online person. After a moment, you begin to see how one might become intrigued with him. He appears to be genuine, humorous, and quite charming. All these things appeal to Faith subconsciously and she slowly begins to lower her defenses. That is, until he solicits a picture from her which snaps her back into reality.

On Faith’s 30th birthday, her roommate and childhood friend Mallory Burnet planned a night on the town to celebrate. Mallory, a sixth grade teacher, wants desperately for Faith to come out of her self isolation. She figures a girl’s night out will be exactly what Faith needs. Mallory also convinces other friends Kristine Payne and Jessica Armstrong to join them. This proves difficult because Kristine is a stay-at-home mom in every sense of the word and Jessica is
a lawyer striving to prove her worth to her law firm. With these demanding roles, getting all four women together would be a daunting task.

In scene two it is Thursday night, Faith’s birthday. A couple of things make this night different. One of them obviously is that it is Faith’s birthday and the second is the fact that it has been nearly a year since the four ladies have been out together. Because of this rarity, Mallory’s stakes increase and she knows this is probably one of the last chances she will have to get Faith out with the rest of the group. To her disappointment, Faith enters the scene unprepared to join her and the other ladies. This gives Mallory the opportunity to fight for what she wants which is to have the foursome go out like old times.

During the second scene, it is discovered that Faith has not been as lonely as everyone thinks. They find out she has involved herself in the world of online chatting. The ladies have mixed feelings about Faith’s new venture. They immediately realize how badly she needs to get out of the house. Everyone is on board with the plan to get Faith out except for Faith herself. After constant back and forth arguments, Mallory suggests leaving without Faith. When Kristine objects to this decision, Faith assures her that it is fine with her. In the third scene, later that same night, chats between Faith whose screen name is Sole and Daydreamer heat up. She decides to take provocative pictures of herself and send them to him.

In the fourth scene, Mallory, Jessica, and Kristine return from their night out to find the apartment empty. They throw around various suggestions to explain Faith’s whereabouts. The trio concludes that Faith must be at the coffee shop, but then Kristine notices Faith’s laptop is open. This is gives her suspicion for a couple of reasons. One, Faith never leaves her laptop unattended. Two, not only was it unattended it was also open. The ladies gathered around the
laptop and read the sexual messages between Faith and Daydreamer. Before they could fully grasp what was going on, Jessica gets a call from Faith who has been arrested.

The fifth scene of the first act opens with ladies returning from the jail. At this point, it is unknown as to the reason why Faith is arrested. Jessica enters with a complete change in her mood. Other than Faith, she seems to be the only one appearing to have been affected by the jail visit. When it is revealed that Daydreamer is underage Kristine and Mallory are stunned. Almost immediately after the revelation, Kristine decides it is time for her to leave.

Kristine, who is going through a messy divorce, chooses to keep Faith from seeing her fifteen-year-old son. For the past ten years, Faith and Brandon (Kristine’s son) have spent the weekends prior to school starting together. This bombshell rocks Faith’s world. She didn’t see this coming nor did she think Kristine would be the one doing it. Meanwhile, Mallory begins to question the legal methods of Jessica. She notices the change in Faith’s attire and the interviews she has done. To Mallory, it seems quite odd that Jessica was starting to make the case more about her. She chooses to confront Faith and in a way to alert her to what’s actually going on. In her eyes, Faith is being naïve to her surroundings.

When Jessica takes on Faith’s case, she began to sense what it could do for her career. At a male dominated firm, Jessica always feels she has something to prove. She does her job exceptionally well and desperately wants to display her abilities. Though it is unfortunate that Faith was put into this situation, Jessica sees it as her golden opportunity to prove to the partners that she deserves more responsibilities within the firm. She constructs a masterful plan against Maurice (Daydreamer) and his mom Melissa. In her mind, it is probably the best defense anyone
can put together. When she presents it to Faith, she’s met with opposition. This disagreement causes Jessica to rethink her whole approach to the case.

In the moments leading up to the final scene, a number of things happen. Mallory comes to the realization that she must fight for her best friends. Kristine takes a hard look at herself and discovers that she was wrong about Faith. Jessica constructs a defense that is sure to get Faith off. The play ends just as it started with four friends together for one another.
The genesis of the idea for the script came from a number of different sources. It is a well-known fact that the social media is a large part of our daily lives. I wanted to use that aspect for this play. We all are familiar with how popular Twitter and Facebook are. If you add those sites to the list that includes E-Harmony, Christian Mingle, and Match.com everything you want is just a click away. You literally can find the “perfect” mate on these sites. It is effortless to discover their likes, dislikes, turn-ons and turn offs, etc.

Today, people are more open than ever with one another via the social media. For example, Twitter allows a person to say how exactly how he or she feels at any given moment. Most people do not take the time to think about things before it is tweeted. Also, Twitter gives others the ability to know what you are thinking. When a person has an audience, there is a need to include them in your daily thought process. With Facebook and Twitter, people are instantly thrust into the lives of others. Since we have become open books, information about ourselves have become public records. Granted, some people still abide by the belief of privacy, but the vast majority has the innate need to self disclose. The more options the sites give you to talk about yourself, the more you reveal. I felt the need to incorporate this element into the play because it was applicable. Almost everyone can relate to someone who has or had a relationship with a person they met online.

The most interesting aspect of this is that these are real relationships. They aren’t created as a hobby or some form of recreation. The individuals involved are utterly and completely dedicated to the other person. MTV created a reality television show entitled Catfish. The term “catfish” is accepted jargon for when a person creates a fake online profile in order to
fraudulently seduce someone. In Faith’s case, Daydreamer pretended to be an adult in order to become Faith’s romantic interest. Much like the individuals in the television show, Faith was dedicated to this person whom she had never met. A lot of her time and energy was spent chatting with someone she believed to be an adult male.

I felt it was only a matter of time before social media and theatre embraced. The play *Speech & Debate* written in 2006 by Stephen Karam used the chat room as a device for the play. When I read the play, I immediately loved the idea and wanted to someday use it in one of my scripts. I would not be surprised if more playwrights fused some part of the social media with their plays. As theatre artists, I believe we have to keep up with the changing of the times. Audiences will gravitate to plays that embrace the world they live in. It is my hope that this play and my plays to follow do exactly that.

I am reminded of a conversation I had with my mentor that gave me the idea for this play. He told me about a friend of his who had been involved with an under age female. This friend met a young woman on the internet at a time when the internet and chat rooms were fairly new. People were excited about this invention and wanted to become part of the world. At the time, the young woman said she was eighteen and an online relationship soon developed. They became intimate and he later found out that she was underage. When the authorities got involved, the guy could not believe what had just happened. This incident caused him to become depressed. Everything he had worked so hard was on the verge of being taken away. He had just gotten a job as a professor at a small university. The lawyers for the victim began to apply pressure on him. They proposed serious jail time unless he agreed to a plea deal. Deeper depression soon set in and he isolated himself from the world. From that day forward, this guy
was not the same. Nearly ten years went by before he allowed himself to be comfortable in a relationship.

My mentor shared with me that as his friend it was increasingly hard on him. He did not know what to say or do that could ease this guy’s worries and fears. It had gotten to a point where his friends felt the guy was suicidal. The guy would talk about his life being over and there was no point in him living. My mentor told me that he felt he did not do all he could for his friend. He recalls saying all the standard words of encouragement but still had some resentment. Because of his ignorance of the law, the guy took the deal to avoid jail time. He ultimately had to register as a sex offender, lost his professor job, and moved out of state.

I thought it was an interesting story and I knew I wanted to tell it. A normal guy, who had never been in trouble (not even a parking ticket), gets his life turned upside down. The fact it took him nearly ten years to recover was simply amazing. There were certain aspects of the original story that I wanted to change. At face value, it would’ve still been compelling. Had I written the story as told, I believe it would have worked out fine. On the other hand, I wanted to tell my own story.

The first and most important change was to make the male who committed the crime a female. My reasoning behind this was based on societal standards. It is a belief that in most criminal cases women are viewed differently than men. This viewpoint greatly affects the outcome. From sentencing to public perception, men and women are treated differently. Granted, I did not write this play for that reason alone. I wanted to place a female in the almost identical position and see what would happen. Making the lead a female to me would instantly make my audience care more for her. Whenever men are in these situations, they are instantly branded
monsters. Besides, you find a lot more of these incidents involving men than women. I wanted to go against the proverbial grain and make the story about a woman who commits this act.

The next change I wanted to institute is what would cause her to seek love via the internet. I asked myself a couple of questions. What would make a person, especially a woman; look for love on a dating site? How bad would that incident have to be in order for a dating site to be an option? I determined that a broken heart was probably the number one reason a woman would visit a dating site. I did not want just a regular break up. I had to find the heart and go deeper. It was there where I would find the true essence of this character.

What is one of the most important days in any woman’s life? As it would happen, I am participating in this day. On July 27, 2013, I will be getting married. The amount of time, energy, and money that’s gone into this day is unbelievable. Everything has to be perfect and nothing left to chance. People from every stage in your life want to be included in this day. Choices, from colors to how many tiers for the cake, have to be just right. This is an important day for any couple, but it is especially important to the bride-to-be. For many women, her wedding day is probably the single most important day in her life. It is a day that she looks forward to and wants to share with the world. She has practiced for this moment since she was a little girl. What is the worst thing that could happen to her on this day? The worst thing that could happen to her is to be left at the altar. I chose this as being the basis of why my protagonist enters into the world of online dating.

The final installment for this play would be the support system for my protagonist. Traditionally, I have written plays about the African American family. Many of the stories, in plays such as Delta Secret and Keeping My Brother, centered on a southern black family that
deals with crisis. In the end, the message was always the same. No matter what happens family will always stick together. This message exists in all family dynamics no matter the race. Because of this, many of my plays pushed forth that sense of family unity. I believe I could write those types of stories forever. They are universal and there will always be an audience for them. Even though I am known for this, I wanted to do something different. It was not that I was tired of this storyline. I have always been a writer who wanted to challenge himself as an artist. Family dramas are what I did, but it was not what I wanted to be known for. I wanted to be viewed as a writer of compelling, heartfelt, and genuine stories.

Writing the family dramas prepared me to write this play. Plays are about relationships and often the best relationships to write about are family ones. Learning how to structure the early plays made it easy for me with this play. Following a character’s need and super objective gave way to the story I wanted to tell. Incorporating subtext within my family dramas allowed me do it with ease for this particular script. Dialogue was probably the one thing from the family dramas that had the greatest impact on this story. Some recurring issues I struggled with were characters saying exactly how they felt, speaking in truisms/colloquialisms, and using idioms. I had not mastered the art of language within dramatic structure. Through numerous revisions, I got better and made those mistakes a lot less. Things that were once considered weaknesses in my writing became strengths. Whenever I use these once fatal flaws, it is a character choice and not the playwright’s inability to construct fluid dialogue. After getting over this learning curve, my plays got better. The play I have created could not have been written without making and learning from my mistakes with the family dramas.
I have always wanted to write a play with an all female cast, but I had to avoid some easy pitfalls being a man writing for women. I did not want to write them as stereotypes. I was always conscious about this during the writing process. At certain junctions of the development, I presented parts of the script to different women. I would specifically ask about the dialogue. It was important to me for these female characters to speak and act like women. I wanted to write a play that the audience would think was written by a man who captured the essence of women.

To do this, I had to create women who were completely distinct from one another. Their differences had to go beyond their occupations and speech. I had to put myself into the hearts and souls of these women. I had to be familiar with their inner workings. If the character names were removed from the script, it should be readily known which female character said what. Through much research and talking with women, I found that a group of female friends are very different. The common bond or core of the friendship is where the heart of the group lies. Their individualities should be important to them as I was told, but the friendship sometimes takes precedence. I found that the strength within these friendships is built on the sacrifices of the individuals in the group. In order for the sisterhood to be strong, there has to be some give and take. Each woman in the group understands and agrees to this sacrifice without thinking. The objective for them is to have a long and successful friendship. Much like men, it is only when that agreement is broken that the friendship experiences turmoil. The fascinating aspect is that even in turmoil true friendships will reconcile.

It was important for me to surround my protagonist (Faith) with a sound support system. In talking with women, I was told the more different the individuals are the better. Each woman had to bring something to the group that none of the others could. You need the sensitive friend
to bring heart and connection to certain matters. There is a place for the logical and practical friend who thinks and sees things in black and white. A friend who is like the mother of the group is a key aspect. No friendship is complete without the somewhat honest and bold friend who doesn’t bite their tongue. This person is probably the most loyal because all that matters to them is the group. They view friendship with the utmost respect. For a crime as serious as having sex with a minor, you would need an unbelievable support system. As the play shows, even strong bonds have their ultimate test, but the friendship and love these women share prove to win out.
RESEARCH CONDUCTED

When it came to research, I really had my work cut out for me. Initially, I knew that some research was needed. I had no idea to what extent. The first thing I had to figure out was the legal age of consent. This information was important because it would dictate where my story takes place. For the story to work, the victim had to be a certain age. I wanted it to be believable that Faith could have actually thought the guy was older. He had to be legally underage, but look older than he really was. I chose to make him seventeen years old. This age was essential to the subplot of the character Kristine. She has a fifteen-year-old son, who Faith absolutely adores. Kristine is in the mist of a heated divorce and she finds herself going to the extreme of protecting her son by keeping him away from Faith. The closeness in the ages made perfect sense from the standpoint that a mother will protect her child if she senses danger. Only a few states recognize seventeen as the legal age of consent. Thus, I chose to set the play in Chicago. The rich cultural atmosphere also provided a perfect background for the story. Places such as Simeon High School, Michigan Avenue, and Garfield Park are mentioned. Including events like The Taste of Chicago (“The Taste”), the Bud Billiken Parade and Picnic (“The Bud”), and the Jesse White Tumbling Team gave the play a place of reference.

The next bit of research was for the character of Jessica. She is a lawyer and I had to make sure she seemed authentic. I had to watch television shows like “Law & Order” that dealt with the legal world. I had to talk with several different attorneys about how to approach a case like this from a legal standpoint. It was important that I explain to them the situation and ask what arguments both sides could make. To my surprise, under the scenario I presented, there was actually a legal move that could work. This provided me with a way to redeem the character of
Faith and not have her go to jail. Doing the legal research had a profound impact on the play.

Looking at previous drafts, I could tell how much more concise and thorough it made the play.
EVOLUTION OF PLAY

The evolution of this play has seen its fair share of revisions. Every script written within the graduate playwriting program goes through a script development. This class consists of other grad playwrights, actors, local playwrights, and head of the program. In this process, we sit around a table and read each other’s scripts. During this time, we construct notes to be given to the playwright. Before the notes are given, guidelines are laid. When reading a script my mentor poses two questions to facilitate feedback. What moments did you find engaging or working well with the play? This question often helps the playwright understand if an idea they struggled with went over well. It also allows them to expound on moments that peers found fascinating but wanted more.

The next question is what moments did you find confusing or were not sure about? In the structure of the class, playwrights are able to hear why certain moments need more clarity. A lot of times these questions are ones the playwright has also. Sometimes questions arise because of missing information within a particular scene. Other times, a moment is clothed in so much exposition that it just needs to be trimmed. The playwright is also allowed to ask questions of those in the room about the play. I think is this the most important aspect of the development process. As a playwright, I take creative liberties within a play and I question if what I intended is generally understood. When actors are available, the scripts are best served. The actors are able to give feedback from an actor’s point of view. These responses are along the lines of character motivations, spine, and need. Having actors allows me to see what beats are needed.
In the first draft, I was concerned more about the story itself than the structure of the events. There was a sense early on that the structural things would coincide with the story. With that thought in mind, I began to write the play. I set out to write a drama with comedic elements. The first draft didn’t quite follow that blueprint. Upon having my first draft read in my graduate playwriting class, there were several glaring issues. One of the issues was differentiating the four women. For the first time as a graduate playwright, I had female playwrights to consult in class. They suggested the women needed to be individualized more. To me, that was a huge issue. If the women in class felt strongly about these women being the same, I had to work on this issue immediately. This also caused me to return to interviewing more women.

I asked why the group felt the women were so similar. The basis for this thought centered on their language and mannerisms. As the conversations continued, one peer was intrigued about a story about four African American women. Because of this, the discussion of their race came about. Initially, I had no preconceived idea that this story was about the friendship of four African American women. That was the story I wanted to avoid telling. Granted, there was nothing wrong with that story. It just was not the one I wanted to tell. This process was about stepping out of my comfort zone and traditional style of writing. I typically write about the black experience. This was not something I dislike doing, but I often wondered if I had the ability to do something different. With this play, I wanted to try my hand at just that. After reading and discussing the play with my peers, I cared about the story more than the races of the individuals involved. To lose that battle but win the war on the structural issue was worth it.

The structural issues had to be fixed before the story could go through proper revisions. With the help of my professor, I identified a few of those issues. I discovered I was not writing
the story I thought I was. The two were not far from each other; however some adjustments had to be made. I also discovered that the things in my head caused me to drift considerably. For example, I felt the need to expound a great deal upon the problems in Kristine’s divorce. In the first draft, I took the time to fully show just how messy the divorce had become. The problem was that the writing was done unconsciously. I had to become more deliberately conscious to figure out how to get the story in my head onto the paper.

We also discussed whether I had constructed enough material to begin proper revisions. At face value, I had one-hundred and thirty-six pages of material. Of that material I had to figure out what was absolutely crucial. What were the memorable parts? What aspects of these four women’s lives drew my peers into their world? It all hearkened back to what my playwright professor first asked in development. What was working? The things that worked were the relationships between the women, Faith’s involvement with Daydreamer, Kristine thinking Faith would harm Brandon, Mallory’s skepticism of Jessica’s legal maneuvers, and Jessica’s making the case more for glory than Faith’s acquittal. Based on my peers’ responses, I had to generate material from that. This was not something that could be taught. These events served as principle factors for the story I wanted to tell.

Looking back at the first draft, I noticed I had tried to include literally everything in the story. Information such as how the women met was covered in great detail. This became a structural problem in itself. I was trying to fill up the pages by including everything I could think of. I had to realize that story was only about one thing. It was about how one woman’s seemingly innocent choice directly affects her life and friendships. I had to trust that I knew how to drive this storyline. It could not be achieved by including everything I knew. I had to learn that, instead
of being comprehensive, I had to be consistent. By limiting the exposition of background information and focusing on the real story, I had a better chance of creating a story the audience would eagerly follow.

Another structural issue happened because I was not quite sure of the story I wanted to tell. When this happens, you run into all kinds of trouble. I completed the first draft and presented it to my peers in the playwriting class. Since I did not fully know the story I was writing, I was far more open to feedback than I would be had I known the story. I lost time and focus by pursuing writing the story some else suggested rather than discovering the path I wanted to travel. As appealing as it may be, the story others wanted me to write could not be written by me. It was not the one I had in mind and had connected to.

In the first draft, the structural concerns included issues with the dialogue. It was felt by my peers and at times by me that there was too much bantering. The banter wasn’t done in such a way that it furthered the story. It was humorous but it was missing an event. When I realized this potential flaw, I immediately went back to the scenes where this was most prevalent. I had to answer the often reliable Passover Seder question. What makes this night different from any other night? It came to me that not only did I have to make this night Faith’s birthday, but also the night her friends find out about her online chatting. Instituting these two things immediately had an impact on the story, especially the dialogue. It not only centered the story, but it gave the characters a specific need that they could fight for and not be crippled by the bantering. Once I placed those key elements into the play, I began to work on differentiating the characters. In order to do this, I spent time with each one. You could say I went on a date with my characters and got to know them. I sat back and listened to them educate me on who they really were. I had
never done this before with any of my other plays, possibly because the previous scripts were so male dominated.

My first theatrical date was with Faith. Questions began to flow through my brain. What does she look like? What are her likes and dislikes? What does she find pleasure in? Where kind of pain has she experienced? Finally, what is her story? I learned a great deal about Faith as a woman but most importantly as an African American woman. She grew up in a single parent home on the Southside of Chicago in the Dearborn projects. Her mother worked a lot but always found time to look over her homework or attend PTA meetings. She lived a pretty simple life. Upon attending Northwestern, she met Derek. He had amazing looks and brains to match. She instantly fell for him. For most of their collegiate career, they were quite the item on campus. No one had ever made Faith feel the way Derek did. He was everything she needed and wanted in a guy. Faith chose to allow him to be her first. After that, they were inseparable. As their college days swiftly passed, they approached a junction in their relationship. Faith wanted to stay in Chicago and give back to her community. She became a teacher in order to help the inner city youth. Derek got accepted into law school at NYU. They agreed that a long distance relationship was worth trying.

Contrary to popular belief, absence doesn’t always make the heart grow fonder. In Derek’s case, it made his heart go wander. In a kind of spur-of-the moment decision or probably out of guilt, he proposes to Faith. It was at that moment her life felt complete. She had a job as a 4th grade teacher, which she absolutely loved. The school had recognized her as teacher of the year. And finally, the man of her dreams wanted to give her his last name. On her wedding day, Faith was nervous but it wasn’t because of the day. She hadn’t heard from Derek since the
rehearsal and began to worry. To everyone’s pure shock, Derek never showed up and didn’t give Faith an explanation.

Faith never experienced a hurt quite like that before. As a result, she withdrew for awhile from all social activities. She began to concentrate primarily on her career because it was the only thing that she still felt a connection to. It wasn’t until a late night of watching movies that things began to change. An appealing commercial about meeting your ideal soul mate on Singleschat.com peaked Faith’s interest. Never in her wildest dreams did she think anything could happen from being on this site. The fact that the general conversations on the site where sexual in content made her strongly consider disabling her account. Just when she was about to, a message from “Daydreamer” made her reconsider. The thing that appealed to Faith about him was his genuine honesty. He wasn’t about trying to impress her. It was his vulnerability and sensitivity towards her that garnered the attraction.

My next date was with Mallory Burnet. I knew right from the start that she was a fire cracker. The girl never knew the meaning of decorum when it came to speaking ones mind. I found her to be a delightful character. You could really love or hate her and frankly she wouldn’t care. Being raised by a single poor mother, Mallory always felt the need to assert herself as a person not to be messed with. There are two things Mallory cares about the most, her friends and herself. Being the only girl out of four boys, she had to be tough, but she always wanted a sister. She found that in Faith. Mallory may not have agreed with Faith’s dating decision, but she respected and defended it.

Mallory looks up to Faith because she’s everything Mallory is not. Because of this, Mallory holds Faith to a higher standard. Based on a lack of understanding, the misconception of
Mallory would be that she’s promiscuous. She is, in reality, in a very committed relationship. Her constant references to sex are just part of everyday speech. Mallory is very keen on sourcing the inner lives of others. She knows what they’re feeling and bases her responses around that. Her comments may appear to be off the cuff, but they are very much pre-meditated. I especially enjoyed creating her character because she is a lot deeper than her words would suggest. It’s easy to brand her as a loud mouth, ghetto, and inconsiderate woman. She is a woman with a lot of heart.

Jessica was probably the one character I truly had to get to know. I would say she’s the quintessential example of someone who truly made it out of the ghetto. She excelled at all academic levels without breaking a sweat. Her drive to be the best was evident in everything she did. This foundation was laid by her father who pushed her to be great. When Jessica joined the firm of Fisk and Martin, it was noticed quite early that she was one of the best young legal minds. It was also noted that she thought quite highly of herself. Jessica paid her dues her first year or so with the firm. She began to notice a lot of the firm’s cases going to less experienced male attorneys. The women in the firm were content with their status, but Jessica wasn’t going to be one of them. This posed a dilemma for her. She could quit and join another firm and become a big fish in a small pond. Or she could suck it up, buy her time, and become a bigger fish in an already big pond. Jessica always felt the need to prove she was more than just a girl from the projects. Growing up, Faith and Mallory looked up to Jessica. To them, she carried herself differently than others. It was almost like she didn’t belong in the projects. As for Jessica, she loved Faith and Mallory because they weren’t intimidated by her intellect nor did they judge her wanting more out of life.
The final date was with Kristine. I would categorize her as your typical southern girl raised by both her parents. This stable upbringing was important to the character makeup of Kristine. She valued family and the sense of togetherness. In talking with most women, it was important to have one friend who joined the group late. This just brings in a different perspective. It is also unique how the others treat this person. He/she isn’t in on the inside jokes or experiences that occurred prior to their arrival. Also, this person finds themselves the butt of a lot of the jokes.

Kristine brought a dynamic to the friendship that none of the other women had. She was a wife and mother. Her level of responsibility was something each of them loved and respected about her. Kristine moved to Chicago from Mississippi with her husband Marcus and then two-year-old son Brandon. They married young because of the birth of the child. It was Kristine who put her dreams on hold so that Marcus could pursue his. He was given an opportunity to move to Chicago for a new job. Shortly after moving, Kristine decided to enroll in a couple of classes at Northwestern. This is where she met Faith. A connection was built because of Faith’s ability to stop Brandon from crying. Kristine didn’t know anyone and Faith introduced her to Mallory and Jessica. By building a sisterhood with these three women, Kristine started missing home a lot less. The marriage of Marcus and Kristine began to deteriorate. Her friends rallied behind her to show their support. Kristine didn’t want anything from the divorce other than their son.

The many drafts I went through each had a positive impact on the development of the story. With each reading, I found something else to improve with the play. In the second draft, I struggled with things like dialogue but my differentiation of the characters improved. The next thing I had to work on was creating events for each scene. Every scene needed to have something
revealed or discovered. Moments in a particular scene lead to an event. Usually, the event happens towards the end of the scene. This was done by determining what I wanted to happen in each scene. For example, in the final scene of the first act, Kristine admits she fears Faith would do harm to her son. In this scene, Faith had been waiting for Kristine to bring Brandon over for their annual day before school outing. When Kristine came over, Faith was concerned as to why she was late and without Brandon. The real reason for her lateness was avoided until Faith pressured her to tell the truth.

The biggest event was revealed early in the second act. I wanted to have Faith struggle with an even deeper issue. Until this point, she had been professing her innocence. What if she wasn’t as innocent as she had claimed? What if she had an inkling that Daydreamer might have been younger? I chose to have her reveal that for a brief moment she thought he was underage. Because of how he made her feel, she dismissed this thought and continued the relationship. This proved to be a big turning point for the story.

My peers agreed Faith’s own doubt about Daydreamer’s age worked extremely well. It was suggested by my professor that such a big revelation would best be revealed later. I thought about this note thoroughly. Since it was such a big deal, I concluded that having it at the last possible moment would work well. In the third the draft, I saw the perfect place for it. Later in the second act, in scene five, Jessica reveals her defense to Faith. She planned to convince the court that Faith was the victim of a hoax, and that Maurice (Daydreamer) and his mother were attempting to gain financially at her expense. She based this on his disciplinary problems in school and his mother being in debt. To Jessica’s dismay, Faith did not want her to proceed with
this defense. After constant questioning, Faith reveals to her that she had a moment where she thought he was underage.

As a playwright, it’s important to embrace the process of script development if you want your play to reach its full potential. Each time I had to do a revision I was not sure what the finished product would be. The many changes felt good while writing them, but I still had doubts about whether or not they would work. I guess the doubt came from either not fully knowing the story or trusting the story.

By the fourth draft I had a good idea of the story I wanted to tell. A lot of the information I wrote in the previous drafts was either eliminated or trimmed. For example, in earlier drafts, I wanted to show how much Faith loved teaching. I wrote a whole scene detailing her love for teaching. The scene was pretty good, but it did not work from a structural standpoint. It actually slowed down the rhythm of the play. I wanted to continue driving the action of the play and this scene did not necessarily do that. I had to figure out a way to do this without losing much. I decided to go back to the beginning and institute small moments throughout to display how she felt about her profession. For example, I wrote that Faith had once won teacher of the year. It was important to show how her students felt about her as well. In the second act, Mallory comes home after the first day of school. She explained to Faith that because of her absence her new students had created chaos.

The final showing of her impact as a teacher came later in that same scene. It was mentioned during the chaos around a student named Benjamin “Benji”. He had a bit of temper and Faith helped him control it. When word got around about her case, students began to talk. On this particular day, Benji gets into a fight with another student who talked negatively about Faith.
Mallory broke up the fight and questioned Benji about the fight. He explained that he was fighting because he wanted to stand up for his teacher.

With all the rewrites and edits, I had no earthly idea how the production would go. My cast was a really talented group of women, but I wasn’t sure if we had enough time for them to grasp the play fully. One of things that I loved about my cast was their openness to new things. This process is hard on a playwright but it must be even harder on an actor. One day you have one version and two days later there’s another. My cast never had a problem when we made cuts to the script. They understood it was part of the process. I did so many rewrites that I wasn’t sure what to expect from the audience. During the rehearsals, I continued to second guess some of my decisions. There were moments that I felt should’ve been expanded and some trimmed down. I wasn’t sure, but I just had the feeling. The true test would come before an audience.
AUDIENCE AFFECT

The attempt on my part was to create a play that would educate as well as inspire. For the first time in my writing career, I was doing something different. It went over well in class and during the script development, but audiences can be unpredictable. Once opening night hit, I just tried to sit back and enjoy the production. The one thing that shocked me was the turn-out I received. For a Wednesday and Thursday night, I couldn’t believe what I witnessed. To top it off, they absolutely loved the play.

The feedback afterwards even had some encouraging aspects to it. People who had seen my first play, Keeping My Brother, commented on how much my writing had grown. They mentioned that the stories and character development had improved greatly. I was especially proud to hear the women applaud me for writing such compelling female characters. They felt a connection to each character and were able to follow their needs.
CONCLUSION

When I entered the program back in 2010, there were a lot of things I did not know about playwriting. It is safe to say that I was extremely raw. I struggled that first year because everything was so overwhelming. A lot of the technical terms being thrown around were something I had never heard before. Honestly, I was not sure if I would make it or if I belonged. The one thing I refused to do was quit. I wanted to become a better writer and I knew that could only happen by sticking with the program. Things began to slow down for me and my understanding of the art grew. When I was able to teach others how to construct a play, that’s when I knew I had come full circle. Though my time here is concluding, I am extremely grateful to those who saw the potential in me.
CAUGHT IN THE NET

By Prince Duren
CHARACTERS

Faith Morgan 30 teacher
Mallory Barnet 30 teacher
Kristine Payne 30 secretary
Jessica Armstrong 30 lawyer

TIME
Present

PLACE
Chicago, Illinois

Playwright's Notes: The songs mentioned in this play are not copyrighted. It is suggested to use the online chat as a voice over possibly.
ACT 1 SCENE 1

The wee hours of the night. All the lights are off. A living room. It’s your typical apartment. The layout should reflect a perfect mesh of the personalities of the residents. There should be some teaching material throughout the room. Something relative to fourth grade.

The only visible light comes from a laptop glaring on the face of FAITH, 30, sitting wearing well worn sweat pants, T-shirt (which is obviously too big), and the most colorful ultra outrageous pair of tube socks. Her hair is in rollers and she wears nerd glasses. A half eaten sandwich and juice are next to her on the table. She stares at her laptop screen. She is in the middle of an instant message chat.

Faith’s screen name is “Solé,” the unseen stranger she is communicating with is “Day Dreamer” The names appear in two different colors. The following silent scene, an “instant message” online conversation is projected. A few seconds should pass in between messages to appear as though the other person is typing. When it’s time for DayDreamer to type, the word “typing” should appear at the bottom of screen to indicate he’s typing.

DAYDREAMER
I can tell you feelin’ me, though.

SOLÉ
After three weeks?

DAYDREAMER
Talking to me all day and night kinda gives you away.

SOLÉ
Well, I’ll stop.

DAYDREAMER
Don’t do that. I look forward to talking to you. If we stopped, I don’t know what I’d do.

SOLÉ
I guess you like it too. I suppose I can keep going.

DAYDREAMER
Damn right, girl. See we vibing really hard and you don’t wanna messed that up.

SOLÉ
I don’t?

DAYDREAMER
We like a perfect verse over a tight beat.
Faith sits away from the computer. She covers her mouth with her pillow and lets out a soothing exhale. After a moment she gives herself a few “Girl, get a grip” shakes.

**DAYDREAMER**

Solé? You there? Hello?

Daydreamer enters a series of emoticons. Something like crying, tears, and embarrassed. Faith sees this and mouths “Awwww” and enters shy smiley face.

**DAYDREAMER**

I’m listening to a song that makes me think of you.

**SOLÉ**

Really?

**DAYDREAMER**

Yep. It’s called “Stress Reliever”.

**SOLÉ**

I wish I could listen to it.

**DAYDREAMER**

Word?

**SOLÉ**

The name sounds catchy.

**DAYDREAMER**

It might sound corny.

**SOLÉ**

It won’t.

Daydreamer types a nervous emoticon. Faith sees it and mouths “Aww”. She types a smiley face. Faith closes her eyes, inhales and exhales deeply. A link shows up with the song “Stress Reliever” by Authentic.

**DAYDREAMER**

That’s the link. Listen to it. Tell me what you think.

*Faith clicks on the link. Just when she’s starts to really enjoy it, she quickly snaps back to reality and turns off the song.*
SOLÉ
Good song. Made me feel nice inside.

DAYDREAMER
Oh really? How nice?

SOLÉ
Very.

DAYDREAMER
Gimme details.

SOLÉ
Just know it was nice, okay?

DAYDREAMER
Can I be yo’ stress reliever?

Beat.

SOLÉ
I don’t know, can you?

DAYDREAMER
I feel I got what it takes.

She types a smiley face.

DAYDREAMER
You smile a lot, don’t you?

Beat.

SOLÉ
Beats crying. I’ve done enough of that.

DAYDREAMER
You ain’t gotta worry about that happening with me.

SOLÉ
How come?

DAYDREAMER
Because a sexy woman like you shouldn’t be crying.
Faith sits back again.

SOLÉ
You’ve never seen me. How do you know I’m sexy?

DAYDREAMER
You type sexy.

Faith covers her mouth with the pillow and screams.

SOLÉ
HA!!! TYPE SEXY! THAT’S FUNNY!

DAYDREAMER
Send me a picture so I can see if I’m right.

After a moment she shakes her head and closes the laptop.

LIGHTS FADE.
ACT 1 SCENE 2

The next night. MALLORY, 30, wears quite provocative clothing (nothing trashy but definitely sexual) stands in front of a mirror dressed for a night out. She is doing some finishing touches. Maybe making sure her hair is in place, putting lipstick on, straightening her bra etc. Definitely making sure she’s the picture of perfection. Music plays in the background. Kelly Rowland’s “Kisses Down Low” or, something similar to these songs. She dances and sings the chorus. Faith enters wearing a robe. All she can do is shake her head at Mallory who doesn’t see her. Faith turns off the music.

What the hell?

Must you do all that.

All what?

Grinding and gyrating.

Oh God. gyrating, really?

It’s a little much, don’t you think?

You ain’t seen nothing yet. Wait until you see me tonight, girl.

I guess.

You could really learn a lot from me.

I don’t think so.

Don’t knock it ‘til you try it.
FAITH
I’d rather not, thank you.

MALLORY
Suit yourself. It might do you some good for somebody to come dust off those cob webs.

FAITH
You get enough dusting for the both of us. Any more dusting and you’ll need an out of order sign.

MALLORY

FAITH
Shut up.

MALLORY
Girl, we gonna have so much fun tonight. Normally, I don’t do Thursdays, but I just feel this one is gonna be epic--

FAITH
Since when have you not gone out on Thursdays--

MALLORY
I try not to is what I’m saying, but this one is different. I gotta really let my hair down tonight--

FAITH
Like you don’t any other time.

MALLORY
Will you hush? Like I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted. With school starting in a week, I gotta get the last bit of summer outta my system. Therefore, I’m gonnaa getting it in as much as I can.

FAITH
I wish you wouldn’t get it in so much. You’re a sixth grade teacher, for God’s sake.

MALLORY
Teaching is what I do. Not who I am. Everyone isn’t made to be teacher of the year like you, Faith.

FAITH
You could if you slowed down a bit.
MALLORY
Chile, I ain’t trying to hear that noise tonight. Whatcha need to be doing is getting ready. You know how you can be sometimes.

FAITH
Huh?

MALLORY
Huh, my ass. You know what I’m talking about. Anytime we want to go out somewhere, you put on one of your routines. *(Whines)* Why we gotta go out tonight? I don’t feel like having smoke in my hair. Can’t we just chill at home?” Just a damn shame.

FAITH
I don’t say all that.

MALLORY
There’s no way we’re staying in tonight. Hell, I’m trying to shake a tail feather. Besides, I bought this Miraculous Bombshell from Vicky Secret and I’m gonna put it to work.

She admires her breast.

FAITH
Eh, could you not do that? Look, I already have everything planned out for us.

MALLORY
What? Why would you do that?

FAITH
Because I felt the need to have some input.

Really.

MALLORY

Faith takes out a note pad.

FAITH
Yes. I think you all are going to like it. It won’t be your typical three day thing. It’ll be something different each day. For the four us. Just like old times.

MALLORY
Mmmmm. Something exciting?
FAITH
Yeah, you could say that.

MALLORY
Hmmm. Something different. The four of us. And it’ll be just like old times. The strip club.

FAITH
Ah...eww....no. What? We never did that.

MALLORY
Hell, we should’ve.

FAITH
Anyway. Look, I’ve already got everything planned out.

Faith takes out a stack of board games from a drawer.

MALLORY
Whatchu doing with those?

FAITH
Check this out. We could play Clue. Taboo. Then Phase Ten--

MALLORY
Wait a minute. Do I look like I wanna play games? Whoa. Hold that thought. Are we taking shot while playing?

FAITH
What? No.

MALLORY
Well then. Hell naw.

FAITH
Let me finish. Tomorrow, we’ll all wake up and make breakfast. Do eat other’s nails. Catch up on Scandal. And that’s just Friday. Wait until you hear what I have planned for Saturday.

MALLORY
You gotta be kidding me.

FAITH
Hey, it’s my birthday and I should be able do what I want. You know, it’s not everyday a girl turns twenty-nine--
MALLORY
And in your case two years in a row.

FAITH
Shut up.

MALLORY
I damn near had to beg Kristine to come out tonight. And you know how she can be. So, I suggest you get with the program by the time they get here.

FAITH
But, Mal listen--

MALLORY
Ah, ah, ah, I don’t wanna hear it.

FAITH
Where you going?

MALLORY
To hell, if I don’t pray.

Faith begins setting up one of the board games. JESSICA (on the phone) and KRISTINE, 30 enter dressed for a night out. Jessica in classy attire. Kristine is much more conservatively dressed.

FAITH
Grab a seat.

KRISTINE
I didn’t know we were playing games--

Jessica gives Kristine a quick look. She in turn mouths “sorry”.

JESSICA
Un-huh..un-huh..whoa whoa, Martin. He can’t do that...No, I said he can’t do that. You’re not listening...No, you’re not. You hear me because you have ears, but you’re not listening.

Jessica notices that Faith isn’t dressed. She stares her up and down.
JESSICA
Un-huh...I heard what you said. Listen to me for a second. Un-huh. No. Listen. I’m only going to say this once. If he goes over there, he’s trespassing. Simple as that. And that’s violates his probation. You know this, Martin. The terms of the agreement is in the folder I put together for you...*(Rolls her eyes)* It’s in the file cabinet next to the wall. Third drawer.

Jessica covers the phone again.

JESSICA
Ughhh. You see what the perks are when you can stand to pee.

KRISTINE
Be nice. You know what they say about you.

JESSICA
Shut up. *(On Phone)* Hey, Martin?...Won’t you let me take his case? C’mon. Please...You know I can do it... You said it yourself...I know, but...un-huh...I’ve been ready...See, Mr. Fisk...Fine...Yeah, I understand...Right. See ya’ Monday.

She hangs up. Jessica sits staring at her phone. There is silence in the room.

Beat.

FAITH
You okay?

JESSICA
Yeah, I’m fine.

FAITH
You sure?

JESSICA
I said I was fine, okay. Drop it.

FAITH
Dang okay.

KRISTINE
It’ll be fine, Jess. There will be other opportunities--
JESSICA
Didn’t I just say to her that I was fine? Look, if Martin wants to do it solo, it’s on him. I could really careless. I’ll get my chance.

KRISTINE
Think of yourself as diamond in the rough. Just waiting to be discovered.

JESSICA
Anyway. Can we just get this party started?

Mallory enters carrying two outfits on hangers.

MALLORY
I thought I heard your mouth. Faith, you can put on either one of these outfits and call it a day.

FAITH
Who told you to go in my closet?

MALLORY
Now see. That ain’t whatchu need to be worried about. Just choose one and lets go. I ain’t got time to be playing around with you.

FAITH
You just don’t listen, do you?

JESSICA
This is what happens when a group sets a specific time to leave. There’s always one or more in that group that holds everyone up. See, I knew messing around with--

MALLORY
Hold up, now. I need you to pump ya’ breaks. First of all, I’ve been ready. Notice the ensemble I’ve put together. Fabulous? I know. Secondly, you’d already be there if you had listened to me in first place.

JESSICA
What sense would that make, Mal? We’re all going to the same place. The smart thing to do is to come together.

MALLORY
Third, I’m not the one who’s not ready.

They all look at Faith.
FAITH
What? Okay, listen. I didn’t ask for all this. I wanted to spend my three day birthday weekend at home with my girls. Just exhaling.

MALLORY
If I wanted to exhale, I’d watch the movie.

FAITH
I made a list and everything. On Saturday, I planned for us to visit the Farmer’s Market. Hit a yard sell or two. Maybe rent a few Redbox movies--

JESSICA
I didn’t set aside my weekend to act like I’m sixteen again.

FAITH
C’mon y’all. Don’t be like that. It’ll be really relaxing. We should try it.

MALLORY
Once I hit menopause, I’ll add it to my bucket list.

KRISTINE
I think it sounds great. I really didn’t want to be around all those people anyway.

MALLORY
This is The Taste all over again.

FAITH
Here we go.

MALLORY
You got that right.

FAITH
It was unbelievably hot that day. C’mon. You know how I feel about the heat.

MALLORY
I wasn’t hot.

FAITH
When it comes to my clothing, I don’t go by the belief that less is more like you.

KRISTINE
Even though I went, it was a tad bit humid that day.
Hush Kristine.

Well, it was.

Although, I haven’t been keeping track, you did miss The Bud.

In Faith’s defense, she did go with me and Brandon to see Jesse White.

That’s because Marcus tired ass stood you up.

At least, she was there.

Don’t do me. That’s was suppose to be y’all’s “family” night. Besides, what I look like seeing some damn tumblers.

I just don’t feel like doing the club thing, okay?

I hate to say this, but Mal said you weren’t going to go.

Told you. She’ll talk all the talk. But when it comes time to do the do, she’ll moonwalk her ass out of it better than Michael. Y’all know Faith. If we don’t know anybody else, we know her.

Now, what’s that suppose to mean?

You heard what I said.

I could’ve stayed on the phone with Brandon had I known this was going to happen.

How is he?
KRISTINE
He’s getting so big. Seems like I’m buying new shoes every month. Mom said he’s down there
eating everything in sight.

FAITH
She’s probably enjoying it.

KRISTINE
I’m sure. I gotta show you the picture he sent me.

FAITH
Now, you be sure to have him here Sunday.

Kristine searches through her phone for a picture.

KRISTINE
That’s all he’s been talking about is y’all’s back to school tradition.

FAITH
He looks so handsome. Those little girls are going to be fighting over him.

KRISTINE
Dear God, I hope not.

MALLORY
Enough of this. Faith what’s your problem? I mean, Jesus Christ, are you kidding us right now?

FAITH
What are you talking about?

MALLORY
This. Sitting at home. Doing nothing. It damn near pathetic. No wait. It is.

KRISTINE
I don’t think it’s that bad.

MALLORY
Shut Kristine. It is. You don’t live with her. She needs to replace this couch with a man and be
on that.

KRISTINE
Now Mal. If Faith wants to--
MALLORY
It’s been over a year. I mean, don’t you think you’ve had enough healing time?

Everyone is silent.

Beat.

FAITH
Don’t go there.

MALLORY
Someone should because I’m tired of seeing you lounge around this house. At some point, you gotta get out and mingle. I betchu Derek ain’t--

I said don’t got there.

JESSICA
Alright chill, Mal. You’ve gone too far. That’s just the way she is. You know that. I know that. Even Kristine knows that.

MALLORY
All I’m saying is none of us have a reason to be desperate--

FAITH
I’m not desperate. I’m not seeing anyone because I choose not to. It has nothing to do with Derek or anyone else. And I would appreciate if you drop this conversation.

MALLORY
I ain’t dropping a damn thing. Obviously, the rest of y’all scared to speak your minds.

JESSICA
Wait a minute. I have no problem saying what I have to say.

MALLORY
I don’t hear you talking.

JESSICA
Hell, Faith is grown. I don’t care what goes on between her legs and neither should you. This is her night. If she wants to sit here and knit oven mitts, it’s her choice.

Beat.

MALLORY
I’ll be so glad when you get to try your own case.
JESSICA
What hell do you mean by that?

MALLORY
Maybe when that happens you’ll get a backbone and--

JESSICA
Let me tell you one thing--

KRISTINE
Can you guys not do this tonight? I mean, it’s Faith’s birthday and as her friends we should do what she wants to do.

FAITH
Gosh. I didn’t know this was going cause such a problem.

JESSICA
No problem here.

MALLORY
Whatever.

KRISTINE
Faith, what is it that you want to do?

FAITH
What I want to do may not seem “fun” to you, but for me it’s very therapeutic.

MALLORY
So is sex.

FAITH
Why do I bother?

KRISTINE
Faith, you mind if I use your laptop? I need to check Brandon’s flight time. Marcus took the internet off my phone.

FAITH
Sure.

JESSICA
You said Marcus was picking him up.
He’s busy.  

KRIStINE

Doing who, I wonder.  

MALLORY

Please don’t say that.  

KRIStINE

Whatever.  

MALLORY

It’s really no problem, honestly. It’ll give me a chance to spend some extra time with my baby.  

KRIStINE

As Kristine reaches for the laptop, Faith suddenly remembers what she was doing on it and quickly grabs the laptop from her.

KRIStINE

What’s wrong?  

FAITH

This laptop can act funny sometimes. Let me make sure it’s running okay.  

MALLORY

She’s not handicap.  

FAITH

I’d rather do it. It’ll be faster. Better yet, how about you just use my phone?  

KRIStINE

That’s fine with me.

Faith reaches for her phone. As she hands it to Kristine, Mallory grabs the laptop.

MALLORY

Let’s see what you’re trying to hide. Please let it be porn.  

JESSICA

Are you really doing this, Mal?  

MALLORY

Single chat dot com.
FAITH
I hate those pop ups.

MALLORY
Pop ups my ass.

FAITH
I was just checking it out. I saw the commercial and decided to take a look.

MALLORY
A damn shame. I knew it was bad but not like this.

JESSICA
Faith, maybe you need to go out with us. I mean, have a nice glass of Moscato. We don’t have to be around Mal’s ratchet crowd. We could go to nice. Conservative. Intimate lounge. Listen to some Neo-Soul. And who knows? You might meet a nice gentleman friend.

MALLORY
Is this the reason why you’re always up late at night?

FAITH
That’s none of your business.

MALLORY
Un-huh. I guess I got my answer.

KRISTINE
Brandon’s flight gets in around noon tomorrow. Listen Faith. Whatever you do online is your business. Just be careful. You know, there are some real creepy people out there in cyber space.

FAITH
Thanks girl. But seriously. It’s really nothing. I’m not going to do anything crazy.

MALLORY
Trust me. We know that.

Beat.

FAITH
What’s that suppose to mean?

MALLORY
You doing something crazy? I’d have better luck hitting the lottery without a ticket.
FAITH
Just because you’ve never seen or heard of me doing something crazy doesn’t mean I won’t.

MALLORY
And on that note. Ladies, I suggest we go out without Faith.

What?

KRISTINE
You heard me. Let’s leave her here.

KRISTINE
Whoa. Whoa. Wait a minute. What about Faith?

MALLORY
What about her?

KRISTINE
I mean, we can’t just leave her here all alone.

MALLORY
She’s a big girl.

FAITH
Don’t worry about me, Kris. I’m going to be fine.

KRISTINE
But, it’s your birthday.

FAITH
And I want y’all to enjoy yourselves. For me.

KRISTINE
It won’t feel right, though.

FAITH
Alright. Fine. I’ll tell you what. Go out. Have an amazing time. Come back here. Everyone spends the night and tell me all about. Do that for me, okay?

KRISTINE
You sure? What are you going to do?
MALLORY
I’ll tell you. She’s going to sit on this couch. Chat with her cyber boo. Probably make a sandwich and drink juice.

FAITH
I’m not dealing with you, Mal.

MALLORY
Don’t hate me because I’m right.

JESSICA
Alright. I guess we can go. If you get lonely, just call us and we’ll come right back.

Mallory gives Jessica a look of “You must be crazy.” They exist. Faith sits alone.

LIGHTS FADE.
ACT 1 SCENE 3

A couple hours later. Faith lies on the couch with her laptop on her lap. She is chatting.

DAYDREAMER
So they know nothing about me?

SOLÉ
Oh God, no.

DAYDREAMER
You ashamed of me?

SOLÉ
Beat.

DAYDREAMER
No, it’s just complicated.

SOLÉ
That’s cool. My boys know about you.

DAYDREAMER
Really?

SOLÉ
Yeah, they be cracking jokes on me. I don’t care though.

DAYDREAMER
What do they say?

SOLÉ
That you ain’t real. That you might be a dude.

DAYDREAMER
Oh no.

SOLÉ
They call me Manti Te’o.

DAYDREAMER
Awwww. That’s so mean.

SOLÉ
Yeah, but I can take it. Cause I know you real.
Trust me. I am.

Send me a pic to prove it.

I don’t know about that.

It’s just pic. It’s not like I’m asking for a kidney.

Lol! I hope not. Hospitals give me the hibbie jiffies.

I’ll go first. Will that make you feel better?

You really don’t have to do that.

I want to. Life’s about taking chances, right?

I suppose.

I want you to trust me. And the only way for that to happen is for me to trust you first.

I guess.

A picture of a tall, dark complexion, bald head guy appears. His shirt is off. He’s toned. It’s important that he has the proverbial “baby face”. Faith looks at the picture from different angles. Up close. Far away.

You’re pretty handsome, sir?
DAYDREAMER
Word?

SOLÉ
Oh hush. I’m sure you’ve heard that before.

DAYDREAMER
Actually, I haven’t. Glad you noticed, though.

SOLÉ
By the way, you didn’t have to take off your shirt.

DAYDREAMER
It was just spontaneous kinda thang.

SOLÉ
I see.

DAYDREAMER
You ever did something like that?

SOLÉ
Oh God, no.

DAYDREAMER
It’s a first time for everything.

SOLÉ
No way.

DAYDREAMER
Why not?

SOLÉ
I’m just not like that.

DAYDREAMER
Not your style, huh?

SOLÉ
No. Sorry.
DAYDREAMER
It’s cool. I kinda figured that.

SOLÉ
You did?

DAYDREAMER
Oh yeah. I been peep that about you. I was just testing you, I guess.

SOLÉ
Testing me?

DAYDREAMER
Yeah. Just throwing out a suggesting. You know, to see if you’d be down.

SOLÉ
Oh.

DAYDREAMER
It’s cool, though. I kinda predicted you weren’t gonna do it.

Beat.

SOLÉ
Would you say I’m predictable?

DAYDREAMER
Sort of. Not that it’s a bad thing. You just a wee bit on the old-fashioned side, though. But that’s cool.

Beat.

SOLÉ
Oh.

DAYDREAMER
Yeah but it’s cool. I still like you.

SOLÉ
I can be unpredictable. Just because I haven’t doesn’t mean, I can’t.

DAYDREAMER
Right. Lol. Sure you can, but like I said. It’s cool, though.

Faith stops typing. She stares at the laptop.
Beat.

DAYDREAMER

U there?

Faith doesn’t respond.

DAYDREAMER

Hello?
Faith doesn’t respond.

DAYDREAMER

Solé?

Beat.

Faith takes picture of just her face and sends it. Daydreamer types a kissing emoticon. She sends an emoticon of a tongue sticking out.

DAYDREAMER

See, that’s wasn’t so hard.

She starts at the laptop. Then closes her eyes. She inhales and exhales deeply.

Beat.

She slowly lowers the top of her robe. Revealing only her shoulders. Then quickly raises it.

She shakes her head. With a subtle smile, she lowers the robe again. Then positions the laptop. She hesitates before finally taking the picture.

Beat.

DAYDREAMER

More.

She touches herself. Another exhale. She slowly lowers her robe. She has on her bra and panties. She takes another picture.

DAYDREAMER

I wanna feel you.

LIGHTS FADE.
ACT 1 SCENE 4

Mallory, Jessica, and Kristine enter. Everyone has had their fair share of alcohol. Each one should have appear as though they’ve done different degrees of sweating.

KRISTINE
If Marcus thinks he’s going to take my son from me, he’s got another thing coming.

MALLORY
(Calling) Faith, we back. Get that ass up.

JESSICA
Must you be so rude?

MALLORY
I can’t wait until tomorrow night. You know, Friday is ladies night at the Rooftop.

JESSICA
I’m not going without Faith. It’s weird celebrating a birthday without the actually person there.

MALLORY
Hell, I had fun. She was there in spirit. That should count for something.

KRISTINE
Marcus would have a cow if he knew I was at a nightclub. And you know what, I don’t care.

MALLORY
Listen at you. That’s the Kristine Payne I’ve been praying to my lucky stars for.

KRISTINE
I don’t care, right Jess?

MALLORY
So much for your liberation. (Calling) Faith, get down here. I know you ain’t sleep. You probably up there trying to see if your computer boo can make ya’ dot com.

JESSICA
Hush nasty. Listen Kris. When I get through with Mr. Marcus--

MALLORY
Don’t call him that.

JESSICA
Why not?
MALLORY
Makes me think of the porn guy. You know, the one with the hat--

JESSICA
I don’t want to hear anymore. Look Kris. You’ll be fine. Trust me.

Beat.

MALLORY
Y’all think he’s sexing his lawyer?

JESSICA
Probably.

KRISTINE
She was beautiful.

MALLORY
Ah, ah, ah, don’t you dare compliment her. That bitch is the enemy. Her and that whore he’s humping now.

KRISTINE
I’m just being honest.

MALLORY
Save your honesty for confession.

JESSICA
I get goose bumps thinking about how I’m going to bury him. He thinks he’s going to get over on us.

MALLORY
Well, you know I’m gonna be there. Just to rube it in his fat ass face.

KRISTINE
I can’t lose my baby, y’all.

MALLORY
You won’t girl.

KRISTINE
We’ll pack up and move to Mexico before I let that happen.
JESSICA
That won’t be necessary.

MALLORY
Oh, my God. I ain’t had this much fun in a long time. Hell, bring on the first day of school. Those little bastards will get it from me with both barrels.

JESSICA
Girl, you’ve had a wee bit too much to drink tonight.

MALLORY
I’m fine. If I had to do the line test, I’d pass with flying colors.

JESSICA
Sure you would.

MALLORY
Watch this.
Mallory walks a line. It looks as though she’s walking down a runway. At the top of the line, she snaps her fingers and turns.

JESSICA
Pass with flying colors, huh?

MALLORY
Don’t hate me because I’m fabulous.

JESSICA
Why do you have to be you?

MALLORY
Because I ain’t got time to be nobody else.

KRISTINE
Can I have my phone back?

MALLORY
Hmmm...I don’t know...Lemme think about that for a minute.

KRISTINE
Come on, Mal.
Give it to her.

Oh alright. The vibration was becoming a bit annoying after awhile.

Mallory reaches deep into her bra and takes out Kristine’s phone.

Just nasty.

It was in a safe place.

I’m sure. *(Finds robe behind couch)* Hey, isn’t that Faith’s robe?

Sho’ is. She’s always on my case about leaving things laying around. I’m about to wake her ass up now.

As Mallory heads towards the bedroom, Jessica picks up Faith’s bra and panties.

Wait a minute.

Oh, my God.

What in the hell?

Y’all thinking what I’m thinking?

Beat.

Bom-chicka-wah-wah.

Be quiet.

It was only a matter of time before her kitty cat was gonna be scratched.
KRISTINE (Whispers) Right now?

JESSICA

I don’t know. Maybe. Naw, can’t be.

MALLORY

God, I hope so.

KRISTINE

Oh my.

MALLORY

Look at y’all. Blocking. Knowing good and well her getting some is like seeing a solar eclipse.

KRISTINE

We should go. Faith needs her privacy. Besides, I don’t feel right being here while she’s...you know...doing it.

MALLORY

Are you crazy? I wanna see the guy. Damn that. I’m gonna see the guy.

JESSICA

Whoa. Whoa. Wait a minute. Let’s talk about this. You don’t who’s in there.

MALLORY

Does it really matter?

KRISTINE

Guys, I don’t think we--

JESSICA

Yes it matters. It could be someone she doesn’t want us to know about.

MALLORY

Like who?

JESSICA

I don’t know. Shawn maybe.

MALLORY

That charity case. Please.

Beat.
JESSICA

Could be Derek.

MALLORY

Better not be.

JESSICA

I could really careless who it is. Besides, I got some briefs to prepare. I’m going home.

MALLORY

Whose briefs you’re preparing tonight? Damn sho’ ain’t yours.

JESSICA

It’s none of your business.

MALLORY

I’m just saying.

JESSICA

Just shut up.

Beat.

MALLORY

We should go in there.

KRISTINE

What? No way.

MALLORY

Why not?

KRISTINE

Would you want someone barging in on you during sex?

MALLORY

Depends.

KRISTINE

On what?

MALLORY

If they’re invited or a late addition.
KRISTINE

Why do I bother?

MALLORY

Show of hands. Who’s in favor of crashing the party?

Only Mallory raises her hand. She exits. Kristine closes her eyes and covers her ears. Jessica can only shake her head.

MALLORY (OFF STAGE)

GOTCHA!!

Beat.

Mallory reenters.

MALLORY

She’s wasn’t in there.

JESSICA

Where can she be?

KRISTINE

Maybe she stepped out or something.

JESSICA

At three in the morning? With no clothes on? C’mon, Kris. Think.

KRISTINE

I was just throwing that out there.

JESSICA

Alright listen. Mal, you check upstairs. Kristine, you check out back. See if her car is out there.


KRISTINE

I’m starting to worry. Maybe, we should call the police.

JESSICA

I don’t want to get ahead of ourselves. Let’s think about this now. What are some places Faith could be at this time of night?

They sit in silence to think.
Beat.

MALLORY
Well, I know where I’d be--

JESSICA
And that’s why I said Faith.

MALLORY
I hope it’s good. That’s all I gotta say about that.

JESSICA
She probably went to that all night coffee shop over on Michigan. You know, how she gets into her feelings sometimes.

MALLORY
Wouldn’t it be more interesting if she’s getting some?

JESSICA
Be serious, Mal.

MALLORY
I am. Think about it. If she’s getting sexed and well might I add, wouldn’t that be better to think about instead of some coffee shop?

JESSICA
I’ll put my money on the original coffee shop premise. From a probability and plausibility standpoint, it makes more sense.

MALLORY
Whatever.

JESSICA
Let’s just go down there and keep her company. Tell her how sorry we are. How we were wrong for leaving her. How we want to play and do all the things she wants to. You know the usual.

KRISTINE
Faith never leaves her laptop opened.

JESSICA
Maybe, she just forgot.
And risk Mal snooping on it—

Watch it, girl.

No, I didn’t mean anything by that. It’s just not like here.

Kristine opens the laptop and begins to read.

Jess, you might want to come see this.

What is it?

This chat Faith was having with that internet guy.

I wanna see.

(Reads) “I wanna see the rest of you.” What does he mean by that?

Scroll down.

(Reads) “Take off your bra and panties.” Oh God, I can’t read anymore.

Hell, I can. (Reads) “I can’t believe you been hiding that under all them clothes. Makes we want unwrap you myself.” He’s a little freaky little something, ain’t he?

I don’t want know where this is going.

(Reads) “I’ve never done this before. I’m kind of nervous. Don’t be nervous. Just close your eyes and relax. Let your fingers do what you’ve always wanted someone to do to you.”
JESSICA
She sent him a picture.

MALLORY
Let me click on it.

JESSICA
This isn’t good. Sending pictures over the internet is never a good thing. It never goes the way you intended. Just ask Anthony Weiner.

KRISTINE
And that’s why I have a bad feeling about this.

MALLORY
Girl, I ain’t gay or nothing like that, but Faith has a nice body. Hell, if I was guy, I’d definitely do her.

KRISTINE
This isn’t a joke, Mal.

MALLORY
Girl hush. So what. Faith is a little kinky. Oh well. Let her have some fun. After all she’s been through, she’s needs this.

KRISTINE
I know last year was hard, but I don’t think this is the way to get over it.

MALLORY

KRISTINE
Definitely a few years younger.

JESSICA
Clearly. Sophomore or junior in college maybe. It’s hard to tell.

Jessica’s phone rings. She stares at it for a moment.

JESSICA
Who is this? (On the phone) Yes, I’ll accept the charges. Hello? Faith? Calm down. Calm down. Listen to me carefully. Don’t say anything. Absolutely nothing. Tell them you will be speaking to your attorney. Okay? I’m on my way.
She hangs up.

MALLORY

What happened?

JESSICA

Faith has been arrested.

MALLORY

What?

JESSICA

Yeah. I need to get down there.

MALLORY

I’m coming too.

They exit.

LIGHTS FADE.
ACT 1 SCENE 5

Early the same morning. Faith bursts through the door wearing a trench coat and jail issued scrubs. She picks up her robe, bra and panties and folds it and places it on the table. Jessica, Mallory, and Kristine follow behind her.

MALLORY
(Laughing) Wait a minute. Wait minute. Please tell the story again. It’s gets better every time you tell it.

FAITH
It’s not funny.

MALLORY
Like hell it ain’t. Look, I just spent the last four hours in a police station. The least you can do is give me what I’m asking for.

FAITH
I’m not in mood, Mal.

KRISTINE
You need something to drink, Faith?

FAITH
Yeah some water.

KRISTINE
Okay. Be right back.

Kristine exits.

MALLORY
You do realize you’re never gonna live this down, right?

FAITH
Shouldn’t you be going to bed?

MALLORY
I’m wide awake at this point. This is just a classic moment. It’s a shame I’m the only one enjoying it.

FAITH
Shut up.
MALLORY
I’m just saying. I mean, growing up it was always me getting caught as my mama used to say “tryin’ be grown” but now it’s your turn.

FAITH
You done?

MALLORY
I’m proud of you, though.

FAITH
Why is that?

MALLORY
You took a chance. Lived a little bit.

FAITH
I don’t know about that.

MALLORY
I mean, sure you ain’t squeaky clean, but who is these days. Show me a person with a halo over their head and I’ll show you a person who is full of hell.

FAITH
Thanks, I think.

MALLORY
I gotta question, though.

FAITH
Not right now, Mal.

MALLORY
C’mon, Faith. Please. You answer this question and I promise I’m done.

FAITH
What Mallory?

MALLORY
Okay, okay. I just wanna know. I have got to know. You ready? Was it good?

FAITH
I’m done with you.
MALLORY
I’m sorry. I couldn’t resist. (To Jessica) Why yo’ jaws so tight over there? Looking like you been sucking on a...nevermind. Too easy.

JESSICA
This isn’t a laughing matter.

KRISTINE (OFF STAGE)
What are talking about Marcus?

MALLORY
Oh Lord.

KRISTINE (OFF STAGE)
I don’t have to lie. I told you it was Faith’s birthday. Brandon is in good hands. I’m about to hang up. I’m not crying, but--

MALLORY
Lemme go and rescue this damsel in distress.

She exits. Jessica sits staring at Faith. There is complete silence. After a moment, Jessica finally speaks.

JESSICA
They think this is a joke.

FAITH
I never said it was.

JESSICA
Girl, you better be glad I was able to get your arraignment when I did. Anyone else would still be waiting.

FAITH
I appreciate that. Sitting in that cell felt like an eternity.

JESSICA
I’m going to be honest with you. This doesn’t look good. I mean, on every conceivable level, morally and ethically it’s bad.

FAITH
You think I don’t know that? I was there, remember?

JESSICA
Calm down.
I am calm. I’m just tired of people acting like I don’t know what I did.

Well, I’m not one of those people. I’m your girl. We go back, right.

Yeah.

And you trust me, right?

Of course.

You need to get an attorney right away. This is going to heat up pretty quickly. Now, I could recommend someone from my firm.

I really don’t know them like that.

They’re more than qualified to represent you. I mean, once this thing blows up--

What? What do you mean blow up?

The police always lets the media know about arrests. And with an incident like this, they’ll eat it up.

Oh God.

That’s why you need to get a lawyer.

Can you do it?
Me?

Yeah. I mean, I know you’ve only been second chair, but I don’t trust anyone else.

I don’t know about that Faith. I’ve never done a case like this before.

I’ve never been in this type of trouble.

That’s why you need someone with more experience.

No one is going to take this as serious as you would.

Yes, they will. Tell you what. Whoever we decide to represent you, I’ll work side by side with them. How’s that sound?

C’mon Jess. Why in the world would someone take this case? I’m a fourth grade teacher. It’s not like I make a lot of money.

We’ll just explain that to them.

What are you afraid of?

I’m not afraid. I just want you to have the best.

That’s why I’m asking you.

But I--

I’ve seen what you’ve done for other lawyers. The amount of work you put in for them to succeed. Isn’t it apart of you that wants that glory for yourself?
JESSICA
I’ll do it.

FAITH
Great. Thanks. How much is this going to cost me?

JESSICA
We’ll work something out.

FAITH
Wow. Thanks.

JESSICA
I need you to do exactly what I say, okay?

FAITH
Definitely.

JESSICA
Are you going to tell them?

FAITH
Think I should?

JESSICA
That’s totally up you.

FAITH
Yeah, I know.

JESSICA
But, they’ll eventually find out. Besides, they would want to hear it from you.

FAITH
I just don’t know how to tell them.

Mallory enters with Kristine.

MALLORY
Tell us what?
FAITH

Nothing.

MALLORY

Don’t give me that. You said you don’t know how to tell them. Us meaning Kris and me. Now, what is it that you don’t wanna tell us?

FAITH

Just don’t worry about it, okay?

MALLORY

Really? It’s like that?

KRISTINE

It’s fine, Mal. She doesn’t have to tell us.

MALLORY

Just by her saying don’t worry lets me know it’s something big. Jess, what’s going on?

JESSICA

As Faith’s attorney, I can’t discuss this matter with you.

MALLORY

Whoa. Whoa. Hold the hell up. Stop the presses. Faith’s attorney? Can’t discuss this matter? When did all this happen?

JESSICA

Just now.

MALLORY

You need an attorney for this? I mean, I thought you just pay a fine and get a slap on the wrist.

FAITH

It’s not that simple.

MALLORY

Well make it simple then.

KRISTINE

Faith, you okay?

Beat.

FAITH

Ummm...I wasn’t completely honest with y’all.
MALLORY
Okay.

FAITH
There’s...There’s more to the story...The guy I was caught having sex with...He...he was seventeen.

MALLORY
Oh God. No Faith. No.

I didn’t know.

Why didn’t you ask?

FAITH
It never came up. I mean, he didn’t talk like he was seventeen. And when I saw his picture, he didn’t look like he was either. What was I suppose to do? It just happen so fast that before I knew it--

JESSICA
Calm down. Calm down. That’s all in the past at this point. We need to get on this right away. Now Faith. I’m legally obligated to keep everything you say between us. That means I can’t discuss your case in front of them. Unless you say it’s okay.

FAITH
It’s fine.

Can someone take me home?

KRISTINE
What? You might as well stay.

I need to be home when Mrs. Davis brings Brandon.

Have her bring him here?

KRISTINE
No, I don’t want inconvenience her. She’s expecting me to be home at ten. I need to be there.
I don’t think it’s--

Look, you all can stay. I’ll call a cab.

Hush chile. You staying and--

I have to go. Period. I’m sorry. I just don’t want to be in the way. Besides, I want to there for Brandon.

I understand. What time are you bringing him by tomorrow?

Um...yeah...I’m not sure.

I can take her home. I’ll check back in with you later, okay?

Okay.

They exit.

You alright, girl?

I don’t know.

You need me to get you anything?

I just need to sit here for awhile.

That’s fine. I don’t mind--
FAITH

MALLORY
Oh. Okay.

Mallory exits. Faith sits alone. After a moment, she picks up her robe. Then her bra and panties. She lies on the couch with the items on her chest.

LIGHTS FADE.
ACT 1 SCENE 6


FAITH
So what happens now?

JESSICA
Well, I’ve put together a few questions I need you to answer. It’ll help me understand the case more and prepare a solid defense.

FAITH
Okay.

JESSICA
We don’t have much time. The pre-trial conference is next Friday.

FAITH
What? That means we only have a week.

JESSICA
That’s why you have to be straight with me. No surprise. Nothing left for assumption. Don’t let me be caught off guard. I don’t wanna look like fool. I’m gonna be pissed if that happens.

FAITH
Why would I do that you?

JESSICA
I’m not saying you would, but I’ve seen it happen before. Attorney thinks he has a case in the bag. Only to look like a complete ass when some information the client leaves out gets revealed.

FAITH
That’s not cool.

JESSICA
You can’t have any slip ups or anything that’ll make me look inexperienced or out of my league, you understand?

FAITH
Yes.

JESSICA
From this point forward, everything you say to me is law. I’ll believe you until you prove me wrong.
Okay.

FAITH

JESSICA

Let’s go back to last night. Whose decision was it to meet at the park?

FAITH

His. He said people almost never come there late at night.

JESSICA

Did you pick him up?

FAITH

No. He said he lived closed by. He was there waiting on me.

JESSICA

How’d you know it was him?

FAITH

He said he’d be sitting on a tree stump, smoking a black and mild, and wearing white hoodie.

JESSICA

Now whose idea was for you to show up with nothing but a coat on?

FAITH

Mine. That was so stupid of me.

JESSICA

In details, what happened once he got into the car?

FAITH

Details? C’mon Jess—

JESSICA

Yes. Details. I need to know what exactly happened. It’s no time to be modest.

FAITH

I know. I just...I just don’t want to go back to that night.

JESSICA

You’re going to have to do it at some point. You might as well get use to talking about it.
FAITH
I know, but--

JESSICA
Hey, I’m not going to let anything happen to you, okay?

FAITH
Okay.

JESSICA
That’s what I’m here for. To protect you. If it helps, close your eyes and just relax. Take your time. And when you’re ready, I’m all ears.

Faith takes deep breaths. She closes her eyes.

FAITH
He stared at me for a few minutes. Kinda embarrassed me a little. Then he started complimenting me.

JESSICA
What’d he say?

FAITH
That he liked my hair. How it complimented my skin tone. That my eyes just drew him into me. Saying that he’d give anything just get lost in them. That I smelled so good.

JESSICA
What were you wearing?

FAITH
Eternal

JESSICA
Okay.

FAITH
Then he moved in closer to smell me.

JESSICA
Did he know you were naked under the coat?
FAITH
No. I kept saying how nervous and paranoid I was. He just told me to relax. As he ran his hands up my legs, to my thighs, then in between them, I jumped.

And what did he do?

FAITH
Put his arms around me and whispered I got you. He held me so tight. I hadn’t been held like that since...since...can we stop now?

JESSICA
Why? What’s wrong?

FAITH
I just want to take a break.

JESSICA
I understand, but it’s important that we keep going.

FAITH
I know, but I just need a moment.

JESSICA
Okay. We can do that.

FAITH
Thanks.

Faith gets up and goes to the window. Jessica looks at her notes and begins studying Faith.

Beat.

JESSICA
He made you feel like Derek used to, didn’t he?

FAITH
What? No.

JESSICA
Faith, it’s okay. You can tell me.

FAITH
That wasn’t the case. I’m over Derek.
JESSICA
I have no doubt that you are, but that feeling this guy gave you. What did that do to you?

Beat.

FAITH
You ever felt completed or at least thought you reached some foreign level of completion.

JESSICA
Yeah, I guess.

FAITH
Only to find the thing you thought filled that void was just a mirage. Or, maybe just maybe the void was never filled in the first place. Your subconscious or just the fact you were lonely made you for one brief moment give in to the desires of your heart.

JESSICA
And that’s what you did?

FAITH
That’s what he afforded me the opportunity to do. After that was achieved, I was all his.

When did the police show up?

FAITH
While it was happening?

JESSICA
So, he caught you two actually having sex?

Yes.

FAITH
What did he say?

He knocked on the window. Asked to see our Id’s. After he looked at his, he asked me to step out of the car.

JESSICA
And that’s when he placed you under arrest?
FAITH
Yes. He called in some numbers to his radio, put me in handcuffs, and placed me in the back of his car. A few minutes later another cop showed up and took the guy away.

JESSICA
How long had you known the guy?

FAITH
We’d only been chatting for a little over three weeks.

JESSICA
That’s not very long.

FAITH
I know.

JESSICA
What all do you know about him?

FAITH
Well...we both like the same kind of music. Neo-Soul. He’s into sports. Doesn’t really go out much. We just had nice pleasant conversations.

JESSICA
Anything explicit?

FAITH
Beat.

JESSICA
I don’t think so.

FAITH
Are you sure?

JESSICA
Yeah.

FAITH
Are you sure?

JESSICA
Yeah.
JESSICA
You can’t do that, Faith. If this were an actually trial, you just committed perjury. And
I’d look like a fool. I told you didn’t want to look like a fool.

FAITH
What? What I do?

JESSICA
You’re lying to me, Faith. The night you were arrested. We read your last chat with him.

FAITH
Oh God. You did?

JESSICA
Yes. So, there’s not sense in you trying to hide anything.

FAITH
You read everything?

JESSICA
Everything.

FAITH
That was so stupid of me.

JESSICA
This can’t happen again, okay? If I’m working for you, you can’t work against me.

FAITH
Alright. It won’t happen again.

JESSICA
God girl.

FAITH
I’m sorry, Jess.

JESSICA
Look, I need to get back to the office. Don’t talk to anyone about this case. The Tribune might
call you. Refer all questions to your lawyer.

FAITH
Refer all questions to my lawyer. Got it.
JESSICA
You’re in good hands.

FAITH
Thanks Jess.

Jessica exits.

LIGHTS FADE.
ACT 1 SCENE 7

Later that day. Faith enters with a cup of coffee. She reaches in a drawer and takes out a scrapbook. After a moment, a knock at the door.

KRISTINE
Hey.

FAITH
Hey.

KRISTINE
May I come in?

FAITH
Sure. I was expecting you early this morning.

KRISTINE
Yeah, I know. We were in negotiation with Marcus his lawyer.

FAITH
Why didn’t you just bring Brandon by on your way?

KRISTINE
I was running late and he wasn’t ready.

FAITH
I would’ve came by and picked him up. It wouldn’t have been a problem.

KRISTINE
I thought about that, but he looked so peaceful sleeping. I didn’t want to wake him.

FAITH
Yeah, you’re right.

KRISTINE
My mind was on this divorce. I didn’t know if I was coming or going.

FAITH
Jess had to sprint outta her this morning too. You all are in the home stretch now, right?

KRISTINE
Looks like it.
FAITH
God, I’m so proud of you, Kris.

KRISTINE
Thanks.

FAITH
I can’t wait until it’s settled. We’re all going to Ethel’s and celebrate.

KRISTINE
That sounds nice.

FAITH
You deserve it. I don’t know if I could be this strong for six long months.

KRISTINE
Well, I just think about Brandon. He’s why I keep going.

FAITH
And that’s the best reason.

KRISTINE
Yeah.

Faith takes out more board games.

FAITH
Well, since you all didn’t wanna play these games, I guess Brandon and I can enjoy them.

KRISTINE
I don’t think so.

FAITH
You’re right. He’s fifteen. He’ll probably think it’s kinda childish to that. Besides, it’s Friday. He’ll probably want to be outside.

KRISTINE
It’s not that, Faith.

FAITH
It’s not.

KRISTINE
I don’t know how to say this.
FAITH
Say what?

KRISTINE
I’ve known you ever since I moved to Chicago.

FAITH
Un-huh.

KRISTINE
And from day one you’ve always been a friend to me.

FAITH
Where’s this going?

KRISTINE
I never wanted to lose that.

FAITH
Me neither.

KRISTINE
But sometimes things happen that causes friendships to be put into jeopardy.

FAITH
What kinda of things?

KRISTINE
Things. You know.

FAITH
Like my case?

KRISTINE
Yeah, I mean it’s starting to get really crazy around here. I just think you should be focused on that.

FAITH
I understand that, but Jess and I have everything under control.

KRISTINE
It just...it just makes me feel bad putting my son off on you like this.
FAITH
We’ve been doing our Friday before school starts since he was like four. Why in the world would I break tradition?

KRISTINE
You’ve never been in trouble before.

FAITH
If he came over or not, I’d still be in this situation. So, I don’t see the harm in him coming over.

KRISTINE
I just felt...maybe that you wanted time for yourself.

FAITH
That’s the last thing I want is to be alone. Being alone is what got me in this thing in the first place.

KRISTINE
I understand, but--

FAITH
What’s really the problem?

Beat.

KRISTINE
Well...you know how Marcus can be.

FAITH
Un-huh.

KRISTINE
He’d probable make up something about Brandon being in danger.

FAITH
With me?

KRISTINE
Yeah. Just stupid, I know.

FAITH
That’s low for even him.

KRISTINE
I know. And that lawyer of his would some twist things up in his favor.
I could see that happening.

Yeah. So, it’s kind of best if he doesn’t come over today. But, as soon as this thing is over, he’ll be right back over him.

I do hate to break the tradition.

Yeah, but he’ll understand.

Where’s Brandon anyway?

In the car.

And you got him sitting out here--

I said I’d only be a minute.

Lemme go see my buddy.

As Faith heads towards the door, Kristine stops her.

You can’t.

What? Why not?

Because we’re in a hurry. I don’t want you guys to carry on --like you typically do-- and make us late.

I just wanted to say hi.
KRISTINE
I know. It’s not you that’ll keep the conversation going. You know how Brandon just loves to talk. Just goes on and on.

FAITH
Right.

KRISTINE
Maybe some other time, okay?

FAITH
We’ve talked about this, Kris. You don’t to worry about Marcus finding out.

KRISTINE
I’m not worried about that.

FAITH
Then what?

KRISTINE
Nothing. I gotta be going.

As Kristine turns to leave, Faith grabs her and turns her around.

FAITH
No, you’re going to tell me why you’re worried?

Beat.

KRISTINE
That boy isn’t much older than Brandon.

FAITH
Wait a minute. You think I’d do something to your son?

KRISTINE
I don’t know.

FAITH
Are you serious? How long have you known me?

KRISTINE
That’s not the point.
FAITH
Since freshman year of college. Freshman year, Kristine. Who came over and helped you get Brandon to stop crying, huh?

KRISTINE
You.

FAITH
You trusted me then. You’ve never known me to do something like this.

KRISTINE
Just because you know someone doesn’t mean you really know them.

I see.

KRISTINE
Look, I’m sorry.

FAITH
Don’t be.

KRISTINE
Think about the position I’m in. What would you do?

FAITH
What I would do really doesn’t matter right now, does it?

KRISTINE
I guess not. Look Faith. I don’t mean to hurt you, but I--

Yeah, I know.

KRISTINE
I’m sorry.

She exits.

FAITH
Me to.
Faith closes the door. She leans against the door and slides all the way down. It’s almost like she’s melting. She places her head between her legs and weeps.

LIGHTS FADE.
END OF ACT 1
ACT 2 SCENE 1

Two days. The room is slightly dim to appear as though the curtains are closed and lights are off. Faith lies on the couch wrapped in a blanket. She has an award across her chest. She stares at the television that’s turned off. After a moment, Mallory enters. She’s dressed slightly more conservative, but still has traits of her old ways.

You okay?

MALLORY

Yep.

FAITH

What are you doing?

MALLORY

Watching TV.

FAITH

But it’s off.

MALLORY

I know.

FAITH

And you still watching it.

MALLORY

Yep.

FAITH

Why?

MALLORY

Because I already know what they’re talking about. I don’t need it to be on.

FAITH

You were on this couch when I left this morning. Don’t you think you ought to get out.

MALLORY

And do what?

FAITH

MALLORY

Hell, I don’t know. Mama used to say sometimes you just need to air ya’ ass out.
FAITH
No, thank you.

MALLORY
Sitting around here won’t make things better.

FAITH
It works for me.

MALLORY
Well, it don’t for me. You got it so dark in here. And the Lord said, let there be light.

She turns on the light.

FAITH
My God, Mal.

MALLORY
It’s after four.

FAITH
So what.

MALLORY
I think you and the couch should see other people.

FAITH
What?

MALLORY
It’s looking about as sad as you are.

FAITH
Whatever.

MALLORY
What you doing with that award?

FAITH
Just sitting back and reminiscing.

MALLORY
Oh.
What are you about to do?

FAITH

MALLORY
Probably change. Go see Curt. You know, it’s his time of the month.

FAITH
What?

MALLORY

FAITH
Oh okay.

MALLORY
Gotta put my best helpless and hopeless face forward.

FAITH
Why do you always be like you?

MALLORY
Cause I ain’t got time to be nobody else.

Beat.

FAITH
How was the first day?

MALLORY
Oh girl. Same oh same oh. You don’t wanna hear about that--

FAITH
No Mal. Tell me.

MALLORY
It was different.

FAITH
Really?

MALLORY
And trust me honey, it was known quite quickly that Ms. Morgan wasn’t in her classroom.
FAITH

How so?

MALLORY

Girl lemme tell ya’. That had to bring in two subs for your class today.

FAITH

Two?

MALLORY

Yes. The first one. Po chile. Had probably was sophomore in college. When I tell you, them kids in your first period ran through him--

FAITH

Oh no.

MALLORY

The got throwing stuff across the room. He got outta there. I betcha he changed his major as soon as he got back to school.

FAITH

What did they do?

MALLORY

Good thing your planning period was next. So they bring in Mrs. Morrison. You remember her, don’t you?

FAITH

Yeah, she taught us English at Simeon.

MALLORY

You know, I couldn’t stand that old hag-

FAITH

Mal.

MALLORY

What? Always on my case. Anyway. Mr. Collier got her to come in during the third period.

FAITH

Oh no. That’s right before lunch.
MALLORY
Baby yeah. And those kids were hungry. They started beating on the desks. Mrs. Morrison got to cussin’. Saying, “you bad ass kids are going straight to hell”.

FAITH
She’s never cursed before.

MALLORY
She did today. Then packed up her stuff, flipped off Mr. Collier, and left.

FAITH
What did Mr. Collier do?

MALLORY
I remind you I knew all this was going to happen. So to prepare for it, I told my students that if they were good, we’d watch a live reality show. Oh, they were excited. And your students did not disappoint.

FAITH
But what did Mr. Collier do?

MALLORY
I’m getting to that. I was talking to my students about my expectations for them--

FAITH
What? You’re actually doing that now.

MALLORY
Shut up. You wanna hear the rest of not?

FAITH
I was just saying.

MALLORY
Anyway. I’m talking to them. Then, I hear this little knock at the door. I look towards the window and all I see is a big black chocolate face asking me to step outside. I step outside. I say, “Man, whatchu want?”. He gon’ say, Ms. Barnet, could ya’ please, please go sit in Ms. Morgan’s class.

FAITH
What?

MALLORY
Girl yes. Just begging.
Mr. Collier was begging?

Begging like Keith Sweat.

What’d you say?

I said, you wouldn’t have this problem hadn’t suspended Ms. Morgan--

Well, you know he had to do what he had to do.

Oh hush. That’s same thing he said. So, I says to him, “I guess I can put an S on my chest and save the day.” Girl, he got to shaking my hand so hard and fast. It was like I had given a lump some of money to his church.

What did they do about your class?

Well the other teacher just rotated during their planning periods.

Oh.

They’ll be fine tomorrow, though.

How so?

Cause I set those little bastards straight. I told ’em, I said, “Looka here. Y’all ain’t about to run over me. I grew up in the Dearborn projects. I’ll get up in ya’ if you go there with me.”

Mal, please tell me you didn’t do that.

And did. You should seen their faces. Then one little boy gon’ say, “You can’t touch us. You a teacher.”
You let that pass, didn’t you?

Like hell I did.

Oh God.

That’s when little Benji walk pass. I guess he was coming to speak to you. I told that little boy, “I might can’t do nothing to you, but Benji here can.” Benji growled and the run got quiet.

Benjamin has a bit of temper.

Good. Cause it worked.

Thanks Mal.

Don’t worry about. You my girl.

Right.

Let me get outta this Clare Huxtable suit.

I don’t Clare wore Stilettoes or showed cleavage.

Don’t hate.

Trust me, I’m not.

Oh, I almost forgot.
Mallory goes into her bag and give Faith a bunch of cards made of construction paper.

MALLORY
These are from your students. They miss ya’.

She exits. Faith sits alone with all the cards. She holds them close to her heart and lies down with them.

LIGHTS FADE.
ACT 2 SCENE 2

The next day. Jessica sits taking notes. Faith enters with coffee.

JESSICA
Let me get this correct. He contacted you through this website.

FAITH
Correct. Basically you click on the person’s screen name in order to enter a private chat with them.

JESSICA
I see. Had anyone else ask you to private chat?

FAITH
Yeah but they were so vulgar. I would never respond. Just when I was about to log out, that’s when Maurice instant messaged me.

JESSICA
Un-huh. I see. I’ve been researching him. There maybe something there after all.

FAITH
On there he called himself Daydreamer.

JESSICA
Un-huh. And from there you started chatting practically everyday.

FAITH
Hours and hours at a time.

JESSICA
Nothing sexual until that night, right?

FAITH
Yeah. Basically.

JESSICA
What do you mean basically?

FAITH
I mean, it wasn’t anything explicit. He’d always compliment me on my looks.

JESSICA
I thought you never seen each other before that night.
FAITH
We hadn’t. I guess he was just trying to flatter me. It was corny but cute too.

JESSICA
Okay. Stop right there. Refrain from using any words like flattery, cute, or nice anything of that nature when talking about him.

FAITH
Why? I mean, that’s what it was at the time.

JESSICA
You know that. And I know that. But, that’s not the way David Barns is going to present it to the jury.

FAITH
That’s the guy from the arraignment, right?

JESSICA
And all the news broadcasts.

FAITH
Oh.

JESSICA
He’s the district attorney. He likes to twist everyone’s words around in his favor. If you can get pass his sexist demeanor, he’s a pretty good trial lawyer. Now, he loves the cameras and is eating this up. In the court of public opinion, he’s going to paint you as the most hideous, vile, terror ever known.

FAITH
Oh God. I think I’m going to be sick.

JESSICA
That’s where I come in. You just gotta be ready. Do you have nice dress?

FAITH
Yeah. Why?

JESSICA
We have to make a public appearance.

FAITH
What? No.
JESSICA
Yes. You can’t stay inside. The more you hide the worse it’s going to get. It’s Tuesday already and you haven’t been seen.

FAITH
What’s going to happen?

JESSICA
I’ve arranged a small press conference. We have to get a statement out there. If we don’t, Barns and the media will construct one of their own.

FAITH
Okay. What do I say?

JESSICA
No ma’am. You don’t say anything. I’ll do all the talking. You just do as I tell you.

FAITH
Why can’t I talk? I mean, I don’t stand up there like some statue.

JESSICA
You’ll talk. Just not at this first one.

FAITH
The next one?

JESSICA
Maybe. Do know that I’ll be right next to you. Governing all questions. Anything I don’t feel you should answer, I’ll smile and say, “next question”.

Jessica gives Faith some papers from her briefcase.

JESSICA
Take this. Read over it. Do as it says.

FAITH
What’s this?

JESSICA
I put together a color perception document for you.

FAITH
Huh?
JESSICA
Just trust me. What you wear can directly affect how people feel or think about you. I’ve taken the liberty to highlight some things for you. I place numbers next to each one. That’s what you’ll wear whenever we go out.

FAITH
We?

JESSICA
Yes. You can never been seen without me by your side.

FAITH
(Reads) Appear trustworthy. Wear clear earthy colors combined with navy or medium blue. What in the world?

JESSICA
These colors make you appear warm, open, and down-to-earth giving the impression of dependability and credibility. Being dressed that way, you have to be that way, right?

FAITH
I guess.

JESSICA
I’m going to be doing some radio interviews later.

FAITH
What? Why?

JESSICA
Well, I gotta prep everyone for the press conference. This exposure will be good for you. It’s time we hit Barnes where it hurts. The media.

FAITH
If you say so.

JESSICA
I do. Everyone is backing us on this Faith. My firm told me do what I have to do. And for my best friend, I don’t see any other alternative.

FAITH
Okay. I’m down.

Beat.
You trust me, don’t you?

Yeah.

I met with the Barns.

And?

Before I tell you this, remember it’s just an offer.

Okay.

We could always hold for something better. Usually the first offer is never what you want to take.

What did he offer?

Since you have no priors--

Which is a good thing, right?

Of course. He’s willing to drop jail time.

That’s great. Right?

You’d have to register as a sex offender and be on probation for five years.

Wait a minute. That doesn’t sound like a good deal.
LIKE I SAID, IT’S A FIRST OFFER. NOT A TOTALLY BAD ONE BUT AN OFFER NONETHELESS.

How can I get a job as a sex offender? No school district is going to hire me with that over my head.

There are other jobs.

I only want to teach.

I know. It’s just an offer.

What would you do?

That’s not my call.

If you were me, what would you do?

Honestly?

Yeah.

I’d let me handle this.

What if I lose?

Barns would go for the maximum.

Which is?
JESSICA
If he goes hard like he typically does, you’re looking at felon and according to Illinois law; you’d do three to five years.

FAITH
Oh my God.

JESSICA
There’s more.

FAITH
What else?

JESSICA
You’d still have to register as a sex offender. Most likely for the next ten years. And as a registered sex offender, you can’t work or live with five hundred yards of any children.

FAITH
Oh God.

JESSICA
You’re in good hands. Just do like I asked you. I gotta be going.

She exits.

LIGHTS FADE.
ACT 2 SCENE 3

The next day. Faith enters wearing a pastel colored business suit. Maybe lavender. She kicks off her heels and collapses face into the couch. After a moment, Mallory enters from the bedroom.

MALLORY

You alright?

FAITH

I’m hurting in places I never knew you could hurt.

She turns over.

MALLORY

Where did you get that suit?

FAITH

It’s part of my defense. It’ll play a huge part at my pre-trial conference Friday. You see, pastel colors are unassuming, quiet and diplomatic, calmly deflecting criticism.

Beat.

MALLORY

What?

Faith hands her a piece of paper from her purse.

FAITH

It’s all on here.

MALLORY

(Reads) Ten ways to influence with color Psychology.

FAITH

Jess said these colors have been proven to influence a person’s perception.

MALLORY

Un-huh. It’s damn sho’ influencing me.

FAITH

It will help confirm what I’ve been saying all along.

MALLORY

And what you wear will do all that?
She puts the paper in her purse.

FAITH

Yes, ma’am.

MALLORY

Un-huh. I see.

FAITH

Did you see today’s press conference?

MALLORY

Yep. And the one yesterday, too. What’s your point?

FAITH

I’m starting to feel better about things.

MALLORY

Sure, you are.

FAITH

What’s that suppose mean?

MALLORY

Nothing.

FAITH

Jess has me so confident in things working out now.

MALLORY

Oh really.

FAITH

Yep, it’s time I start planning for my return to the classroom.

She exits.

MALLORY

What are you doing?

FAITH (OFF STAGE)

Just a minute.
MALLORY

We need to talk, Faith?

FAITH (OFF STAGE)

Hold on a second.

Faith enters with a basket full of clothes.

MALLORY

What are you doing with that?

FAITH

If I’m going to be going back to school, I need to have my costume ready.

MALLORY

Don’t you think you’re getting ahead of yourself?

FAITH

You know I do this every school year.

MALLORY

I know, but--

FAITH

Then let me do it.

MALLORY

Fine.

Faith takes out a picture of SpongeBob Square Pants. Using the picture as a guide, she looks through the clothes to match the picture.

FAITH

The new kids are going to love this.

MALLORY

I guess.

FAITH

Jess was simple amazing today.

MALLORY

I bet she was.
FAITH
She’s coming over later to unveil some master plan. She seemed pretty confident in it over the phone.

MALLORY
Master plan?

FAITH
She wouldn’t go into details but said it’s going to sway the public considerably.

MALLORY
Interesting. Very interesting.

Faith matches an outfit. It doesn’t look much like SpongeBob.

FAITH
Does this look like the picture?

MALLORY
I guess.

FAITH
Maybe if I add my own touch to it. I was thinking today. There is no question Jessica and I can’t answer.

Beat.

MALLORY
You and Jessica?

FAITH
Yeah.

MALLORY
And you’re cool with all this, right?

FAITH
Yeah. Why?

MALLORY
Nothing.
FAITH

What?

MALLORY

It’s just that...all this stuff...I mean, all this stuff y’all doing. Forget it. I don’t what I’m talking about.

FAITH

Jess sets it up and I follow through.

MALLORY

You mean you follow her?

FAITH

What?

MALLORY

You said you follow through. To me, it looks like you’re following her.

FAITH

I don’t understand.

Nevermind.

FAITH

Jess said it’ll all make sense in the end. At these negotiations tomorrow, we put our stamp on this case. And when we prevail, this will all be worth it.

MALLORY

Well, there you go.

FAITH

What’s that suppose to me?

Nothing.

FAITH

To me, it seems like you’re having your doubts.

MALLORY

I never said that.
FAITH
You don’t have to.

MALLORY
I feel like Jess has lost sight of what’s important.

What?

MALLORY
I mean, she just seems to be enjoying this a little too much. To me it’s like she’s having her own moment in the sun.

FAITH
I can’t believe you said that.

MALLORY
You don’t think that?

FAITH
Not for a second. And for you to think that--

MALLORY
Well, I do. And even you should at least do that.

I don’t have time for this.

MALLORY
What are you afraid of? Is it so strange for her to want to do this so bad that she forgets that it’s your life that’s on the line.

FAITH
We’re talking about our friend here.

MALLORY
That we’ve know all our lives. Which means you should know how bad she wants this. And the reason you don’t know is because you choose not to.

Beat.

FAITH
I belong in a classroom not some damn courtroom.
MALLORY
I never should’ve said anything. You know what, just forget everything I said. I was out of line and--

FAITH
That’s how you felt. And like always, you say exactly how you feel.

MALLORY
No, but this time I should’ve kept it to myself.

FAITH
But that’s not your style.

MALLORY
You know, there’s nothing wrong with changing.

Beat.

FAITH
First Kristine. Now you.

MALLORY
What’s that suppose to mean?

FAITH
Don’t worry about it. I guess this whole thing is having its effect on everyone.

MALLORY
Whatchu trying to say?

FAITH
I ain’t trying say nothing. I think I am.

MALLORY
What do you want from me, huh?

FAITH
If you have to ask, then it’s no point in me wanting anything.

MALLORY
You know what; I don’t have time for this. This has gone farther than either one of us would’ve like.
I guess.

MALLORY

I’m outta here.

FAITH

Just like Kristine.

MALLORY

Whatever.

FAITH

I expected more from you, Mal.

MALLORY

Likewise.

MALLORY

Mallory exits. Faith sits alone.

LIGHTS FADE
ACT 2 SCENE 4

Later that same day. Jessica stand as though she’s giving a college lecture to an auditorium of people. Papers and folders are scattered on the table. Faith sits somewhat listening and looking through a folder.

JESSICA
The prosecutions will have those statements as well.

Faith closes the folder.

FAITH
Un-huh.

JESSICA
Keep in mind this is just a pre-trial conference. The next two days of preparation is key. We don’t want to show all our cards, okay?

FAITH
Un-huh.

JESSICA
I like to call it an old fashion pissing contest. See who’s aim is further and more accurate.

FAITH
Un-huh.

JESSICA
It’s going to be pretty standard, run of the mill, and quite boring stuff.

FAITH
Un-huh.

JESSICA
We’ll discuss plea negotiations. Identify the issues to be tried and witnesses who will testify.

FAITH
Un-huh.

JESSICA
What’s wrong, Faith?

FAITH
Huh? Oh. Nothing.
JESSICA
Any less enthusiasm and it’ll feel like I’m up here giving a eulogy.

FAITH
Oh. Sorry.

JESSICA
Don’t worry about it. Just focus, okay?

FAITH
Alright.

JESSICA
The last thing we want to do lose is our focus.

She stoops down to Faith.

JESSICA
You and me. We have to be on the same page. Got it?

FAITH
Gotchu.

JESSICA
Now. If I know Barns, his main two witnesses will be the Maurice and Melissa Fishers. They’ll be prepped pretty well.

FAITH
Will he ask them to lie?

JESSICA
Lying is frowned upon in this field. The stretching or more convincing layout of the truth is what I see it as.

FAITH
Sounds like a lie to me.

JESSICA
Just know. The lady you’ve seen on the news won’t be the one in court.

FAITH
I see.
JESSICA
The last thing you wanna do is appear as though it bothers you. I’m getting ahead of myself, but the jury pays attention to body language. I’m not saying look like a lifeless statue. But just relax.

FAITH
Hopefully, everyone will see them stretching the layout of the truth or whatever you said.

JESSICA
All is fair in proving guilt and innocence.

FAITH
There’s always a right and wrong way of doing things.

JESSICA
Look, we’ll let the other side do what they’re going to do. It’s my job to be prepared for it.

FAITH
Sounds good.

JESSICA
Now, can we get back to the task at hand?

FAITH
I’m all ears.

JESSICA
Okay. Where was I? Oh. Look at folder C while I discuss its contents.

Faith opens Folder C.

FAITH
Alright. Folder C. Got it.

JESSICA
You see, Mr. Fisher isn’t as squeaky clean as the local media would like us to believe. As you can see he’s had quite a few instances of deception.

FAITH
These are only disciplinary statements by his teachers.

JESSICA
At face value, yes.
FAITH
I don’t understand.

JESSICA
It’ll all make sense, trust me. The teachers would serve as potential character witnesses. What he was like as a student. How interacted with faculty and staff. Judging from there statements. It won’t be too much of stretch for them to expound on their answers.

FAITH
What does any of this have do with the case?

JESSICA
It supports our claim that you couldn’t have possibly known he was underage. An with his many instances of deception, it’s quite easy to understand why he failed to tell you and why you couldn’t imagine yourself asking.

FAITH
Oh. Okay.

JESSICA
He’s been suspend for theft, harassment, giving false information. All this goes back to my original premise. Moving right along. Take a look at folder D.

Faith opens folder D.

FAITH
This looks like his mom.

JESSICA
It is. Mug shots never make good pictures.

FAITH
She was a lot meaner on TV.

JESSICA
Melissa is the picture of criminal perfection.

FAITH

JESSICA
Ooooweee. Just music to my ears.
FAITH
So she has a checkered past.

JESSICA
Did I mention she’s unbelievably in debt? Isn’t working. Living off of state funds.

FAITH
Whoa. Wait a minute. I guess, I get how Maurice’s past effects the case, what does his mother’s past have to do with it?

JESSICA
Without getting into a bunch of legal mumbo jumbo, it speaks to legitimacy of her testimony.

FAITH
I’m still not following.

JESSICA
Okay. Let me try to break it down more for you. She can only speak about what she knows. Not what she assumes happened. Because she wasn’t there.

FAITH
But Maurice was. She could base her answers around that. I’m not trying to discredit you or nothing like that, but--

JESSICA
Oh, no, no, I don’t mind you asking questions. That’s good. I welcome that. It shows that you’re paying attention to details. It would be in Melissa’s best interest to say what she knows to avoid committing perjury.

FAITH
You think she’d do that?

JESSICA
You never know. Here’s what you have to realize Faith. Some of these people get on these stands and say the most outlandish things. They’d make you think they were there when in actuality they weren’t. I like to know about crucial witnesses. She’s the mother of the alleged victim. There’s a strong possibility that there will be parents on the jury. Now, I’ll try to strike as many single mothers as I can, but I only get ten. Look, lets just focus on this pre-trial conference, okay?

FAITH
Okay. Sorry.
JESSICA
No, it’s fine. We are getting head of ourselves.

FAITH
One last thing, Jess.

JESSICA
Yeah.

FAITH
I appreciate everything you’ve done and are doing for me.

JESSICA
You don’t have to thank me.

FAITH
I don’t want you to using their personal issues for the case.

JESSICA
Come again.

FAITH
I’m not gonna fake like I know what all this means because I don’t.

JESSICA
Un-huh.

FAITH
But what I do know...or at least think I know is that I don’t want the extra to be used.

JESSICA
What extra stuff?

FAITH
You know. This stuff in the folders. I mean, is all this really necessary?

JESSICA
It’s true.

FAITH
That maybe the case--
JESSICA
No maybe. It is true. All of it. I plan on taking this information convincing the jury that this is just one big hoax.

FAITH
Hoax?

JESSICA
Yes, that Maurice, at age seventeen, couldn’t have possible worked alone. That he couldn’t have said those things they way he said. He had and accomplice. His mother.

But why would they do that?

JESSICA
Thinking they’d get some publicity. Have you found guilty. Follow that up with a civil suit and try to sue you.

But, I don’t have any money.

JESSICA
They’ll find some lawyer who’ll try to hold the school district liable because you’re their employee. That’s why we need to jump on it this way.

I just don’t feel right doing this.

JESSICA
And why not?

FAITH
Because none of that stuff has anything to do with my case. Your job is to--

JESSICA
Get you off. By any way I see fit.

FAITH
Not like this, though. It’s not right. Maurice having trouble in school didn’t entice me talk with him online. Melissa being in debt didn’t make me have sex with him.

JESSICA
I see.

FAITH
We gotta do it the right way.
And what way is that, Faith?

I don’t know. I just know it’s not like this.

Let me get this straight. You want me to help you beat this, but not in the way, I’m proposing doing it?

See, you’re getting upset.

Oh, I’m well passed that. I’m pissed off.

Why?

Because too much work has been put into this case for you to suddenly develop a moral conscience.

I just don’t feel right doing this. It would seem like I did nothing wrong.

If that’s the way a jury sees it, I’ve done my job.

I can’t go on knowing that.

Do you care about your life, Faith? Your freedom?

Yes. Of course. Why would you ask that?

Because all that’s gone if you’re found guilty.

I understand that.
JESSICA
No, you don’t. You will go to prison. You hear me? To prison. For a very long time.

FAITH
But Jess--

JESSICA
I don’t want to hear it. Barns isn’t going to give a damn about your moral conscience. To him, it’s just another check in the win column.

FAITH
Why are you making it seem like there’s something wrong with it? I’m not telling you how to do your job—

JESSICA
Yes, the hell you are. That’s exactly what you’re doing. I want you to listen to this and listen good. You have three people. Three people. All saying the same thing. A single mother who’ll probably cry on the stand about how you took advantage of her only child. A seventeen year old boy who’ll say he was just excited to be talking to an other woman. And a well decorated office, who’ll testify, under oath, that he witness you have sex with the boy. He won’t say he believed you were having sex. He’ll say he saw it. Which is totally different. And all you can say is I didn’t know and I made a mistake.

FAITH
That’s the truth.

JESSICA
Damn the truth. Contrary to popular belief the truth won’t set you free.

FAITH
I just deserve some blame.

JESSICA
Why do you keep saying this?

FAITH
Because I do.

JESSICA
My God. I’ve never seen a client continuously profess their guilt. I’ve known people who were guilty as sin. But come hell or high water they weren’t going to admit it. Please tell me why you insist on doing it.
Because it’s the truth.

If you say truth one more time--

I thought this was about me.

It was...I mean it is. I was just hoping...never mind.

What do you want from me?

I want you to stop making this harder on me. Do like I say and--

I can't.

Why the hell not?

Beat.

Because…because I'm not sure I thought he was older.

Come again.

Something inside of me questioned his age.

All this time you knew?

No, no, no, I didn't know.

Oh my God. This can't be happening to me. Not now.
FAITH
I didn't know for sure. I guess I had an intuition. My heart wouldn't listen to my mind. He was what I needed when I needed it.

JESSICA
Whoa. Whoa. Stop talking like that. He's a seventeen year old boy for Christ sake.

FAITH
That's how I felt at the time.

JESSICA
Unbelievable. Un-fuckin'-believable. Are kidding you me right now?

FAITH
I wouldn't have done this had I known he was underage. You gotta believe me, Jess.

JESSICA
When it rains it pours.

FAITH
When Derek left me at that alter, it felt like my heart had been sucked into a black hole. It was Maurice who pulled it out. I guess, I didn't want to do anything to lose that with him.

JESSICA
We're screwed. That's it. We're screwed.

Jessica begins to exit.

FAITH
We done?

JESSICA
You have no idea.

FAITH
Where are you going?

JESSICA
Hell, I don't know. Maybe if I beg Barns for a plea deal, he'll have a heart and agree to one. Look, I gotta go.
You want me to check in with you later?

I'll call you

Jessica exits.

LIGHTS FADE.
ACT 2 SCENE 5

The next morning. Mallory is getting ready for work. Her appearance is the most conservative it’s been. Faith enters. They stare at each other.

Beat.

FAITH

Morning.

MALLORY

Morning.

FAITH

You’re leaving early?

MALLORY

Yep. Thought, I’d try that for a change.

FAITH

And the clothes?

MALLORY

You like?

FAITH

Yeah, shockingly, I do.

MALLORY

Makes you feel different about me, doesn’t it?

FAITH

Yeah, I guess so.

MALLORY

Wow. It actually worked.

FAITH

What?

Mallory goes into her purse and give Faith her paper back.

MALLORY

I had my doubts, but damnit this color Psychology stuff works.
MALLORY
Yeah...it’s still a working progress. And look. No split.

FAITH
Very nun like.

MALLORY
That was kinda my thought process.

FAITH
It looks nice.

MALLORY
Not too dull?

FAITH
For you? Definitely not. It’s a nice look.

MALLORY
Yeah. I think so too. Don’t get use to it, though.

FAITH
I don’t plan on it.

MALLORY
But, hey. You never know, right?

FAITH
Nope. You never know.

MALLORY
Everyone’s going to think I’m a new teacher.

FAITH
Is that such a bad thing?

MALLORY
Not really.

FAITH
It might be the beginning of new opportunities.

MALLORY
Yeah, maybe I can get some mothers to show up for parent teacher conferences for a change.
That just might happen with your new look.

And if I play my cards right, think I could sway some votes for teacher of the year?

Maybe. Who knows.

No need to get ahead of myself, right?

It could happen.

Yeah, it could.

But look. I don’t wanna keep you here.

Yeah. It’ll probably defeat the purpose of my self makeover.

Yeah.

Beat.

I went down to Garfield yesterday.

Oh.

Yeah. I saw a couple of the kids from the school.

Did you speak?

Shockingly, I did. I broke up a fight.
FAITH
Oh no.

MALLORY
It was between little Benji and some sixth grader.

FAITH
Was he hurt?

MALLORY
A few scrapes and bruises.

FAITH
Thank God, he’s alright.

MALLORY
Of course, you know I gave him the spill, “What would Ms. Morgan think of you fighting.”

Really?

MALLORY
Yeah. Even threw in a finger wag here and there.

FAITH
He knows I don’t like fighting.

MALLORY
That’s what he said. So, I asked him why he was fighting. And you know what he said?

What?

MALLORY
Because the guy was talking bad about Ms. Morgan. Calling you names. Said you were going to jail forever.

Oh God.

MALLORY
He said he told the guy over and over to take it back. But, he didn’t. And in his little squeaky voice he said, “Ms, Bor-Net--I don’t know why he can’t say Burnet--, I tol ‘em to take it back and when he didn’t I socked him.”
FAITH
I gotta have a talk with him. I thought we got rid his temper last year.

MALLORY
They should’ve been fighting.

FAITH
That the truth.

MALLORY
But I’m glad he was fighting for who he believed in.

Beat.

MALLORY
Now, it’s my turn.

LIGHTS FADE
ACT 2 SCENE 6

Later that day. Knock at door. Faith enters and open it. Kristin stands.

Beat.

Can I come in?

Sure.

How you been?

Better. And you?

Great.

That’s good.

Beat.

We reached a settlement in my divorce.

Great.

Brandon and I went out to eat.

Oh.

I have no earthly idea what he was talking about.

You weren’t listening?
KRISTINE
I tried too, but I couldn’t.

FAITH
You just went through a divorce. It was probably just shock.

KRISTINE
Yeah, I guess.

FAITH
You should be happy.

KRISTINE
I know I should, but I’m not.

FAITH
Oh.

KRISTINE
Don’t get me wrong. I’m grateful because I get to keep my son.

FAITH
It’ll take time. I mean, you’re starting over. That’s going to be hard, I guess.

KRISTINE
Standing up there with Jess and Mal. It just didn’t feel right. While they were given each other high fives, I just sat there. I’d waited for that moment for six months and didn’t enjoy it.

Why not?

KRISTINE
It just wasn’t right. The whole thing.

FAITH
I don’t understand.

KRISTINE
I started this journey with three people. I celebrated with two.

FAITH
Things happen, Kristine. I mean, that’s just the way it is.
KRISTINE
It shouldn’t be.

FAITH
But, that’s the way it is.

KRISTINE
I know.

FAITH
You just have to accept it. Everything has its season. And that’s over it’s time you move on, I guess.

KRISTINE
Do you have too?

FAITH
In almost all cases, you do.

KRISTINE
But for those few, you can still make thing right or at least try to.

FAITH
I guess, but you know in your heart of hearts when it’s time to let go.

Beat.

KRISTINE
Can we go back to the way things were?

FAITH
I don’t think so.

KRISTINE
You don’t?

FAITH
I can’t. Not after what has happened.

KRISTINE
But think of years we had.

FAITH
I know. And that’s what makes the decision so hard. I was at my lowest, Kris--
KRISTINE
I know. I know.

FAITH
No, you don’t. It’s one thing to be down. It’s another thing to be kicked while you’re there. But, you know what’s worse than that?

KRISTINE
What?

FAITH
Having your best friend be the one doing the kicking.

KRISTINE
You’re right. Who could go back to being friends after that?

FAITH
You understand, don’t you?

KRISTINE
Yeah. I mean, I can’t blame you.

FAITH
It’s just too soon, you know? Those deep cuts haven’t quite healed just yet. Hope you understand.

KRISTINE
Right.

FAITH
Yeah.

KRISTINE
I lied to my son.

FAITH
When he gets older, he’ll understand why you did what you had to do.

KRISTINE
Hopefully by then, I’ll understand.
FAITH
Listen--

KRISTINE
No, you listen. I was wrong, Faith. You’d never touch my son.

FAITH
You’re right. And for you to think that I would, it makes me wonder. Did you ever take our friendship serious? Or did you have doubts about it too.

KRISTINE
No, I never did that.

FAITH
But you allowed something like this to cloud your mind.

KRISTINE
I know. Listen Faith. There’s something I have to say.

FAITH
You don’t have to.

KRISTINE
No, I do.

FAITH
I was mad at first, but I understand you had to do what was best for your child.

KRISTINE
I didn’t do what was best for him. I did him way more harm than good. I took him from his favorite aunt. My best friend.

FAITH
You are a mother first.

KRISTINE
I was dead wrong for what I did.

FAITH
What do you want me to say?
KRISTINE
Nothing. Just know that, I’m sorry. I don’t expect you to act like nothing has happened. In fact, I
don’t want you too. I just want the chance to make things right. I gotta be going.

FAITH
Okay.

LIGHTS FADE.
ACT 2 SCENE 7

The next morning. Faith is dressing in front of the mirror. She takes moments and just stares at herself. Touches her face. Runs her fingers through her hair. After a moment, Mallory enters and watches.

Beat.

MALLORY

Looking good.

FAITH

You think so.

MALLORY

Definitely.

FAITH

I guess.

MALLORY

You guess?

FAITH

Yeah.

Mallory joins Faith at the mirror. She stands behind her.

MALLORY

Look at yourself.

FAITH

That’s what I’ve been doing the past thirty-five minutes.

MALLORY

No I want you to really take a look at yourself.

FAITH

I did. Happy?

Mallory takes Faith and turns her towards the mirror.

MALLORY

You aren’t what they say you are.
FAITH
I know, but--

MALLORY
No buts. You not and that’s the way it is. It’s time you start acting like it.

FAITH
I don’t know anymore.

MALLORY
Well, I know and it’s about time you get on board with that notion.

FAITH
I suppose.

MALLORY
This is a big day for you, Faith.

FAITH
I know.

MALLORY
I mean, I’m confident that things will turn around.

FAITH
At least one of us is.

MALLORY
Why aren’t you?

FAITH
A number of things. One, I haven’t heard from Jessica since she left here. She’s not answering my phone calls.

MALLORY
She’s probably working. You how she gets when she’s in work mode.

FAITH
I know, but she could at least answer a text message. Two, I have no idea what I’m suppose to do at this pre-trial conference.

MALLORY
Just do like me.
FAITH
And what’s that?

MALLORY
Look sexy and sophisticated. *(Pulls out glasses from purse)* And with these, let the sophistication begins.

FAITH
Oh God.

MALLORY
Better get with the program.

FAITH
I just don’t know.

Knock at door.

MALLORY
It’s open.

Kristine enters.

KRISTINE
Hey.

FAITH
Kristine? What are you doing here?

MALLORY
I told her to home.

FAITH
You did?

MALLORY
Yeah.

KRISTINE
If it’s a problem--

FAITH
No, it’s not. I just would’ve wanted to know.
MALLORY
Look. I didn’t invite her over for y’all to kiss and make up.

FAITH
That’s not what I’m implying.

MALLORY
The girl has no friends other than us. What else was she going to do? Besides, we need to four deep going into battle today.

FAITH
What?

MALLORY
We do this thing as whole. Not in parts.

FAITH
I’m fine with that.

MALLORY
Y’all can make up on your own time. Today ain’t the day for us to be separated.

FAITH
I agree.

MALLORY
Good.

KRISTINE
Thanks, Mal.

MALLORY
I didn’t do this for you. Only for the group.

KRISTINE
I understand. Are you ready for today, Faith?

MALLORY
She’s ready.

FAITH
I can answer for myself.

MALLORY
Go ahead.
I do have some concerns.

Like what?

Well...I don’t know...it’s just that--

You have no concerns. Leave it at that.

Jessica enters. She looks as though she’s been work literally all night long. Though she’s dressed professional, her hair is possible in a ponytail.

Hey y’all.

Looks like someone has been burning both ends of the scented candle.

You don’t know the half of it.

You okay?

Yeah, I’m fine.

Did you get the plea?

He wouldn’t even answer my call.

What now?

I deal with the consequences.

Consequences? Oh no. Jess, you gotta do something. You can’t let her go to jail.
I never said that was going to happen.

Then what are you saying?

If you allow me to finish, I will explain what we're going to do.

Be my guest.

Thank you. Here's what I came up with. We'll argue what is called the good faith belief.

What's that?

It's a defense that says, through all apparent beliefs, you had no idea that he was of underage.

But, I kinda did.

You can't prove kinda in a court of law. On the basis of his appearance -which even I thought he was older-his speech and level of intelligence, you had the belief he was of age.

Will that work?

Honestly, I don't know. It could. It'll take more than that to make Barns think twice.

This Barns guy is working my last nerve. I don't even know him and already don't like him.

Call down.

The fact that I even had the thought--
Matters, but it doesn't make you guilty.

FAITH

It doesn't?

JESSICA

Not at all.

FAITH

What does it make me?

JESSICA

Human. Sometimes we allow our hearts to make decisions that should be left up to our minds. Because of that, it doesn't mean you should go to prison. In fact, I might have something unfolding that could keep that from happening.

FAITH

What?

JESSICA

It took some serious researching. There are many crimes where state doesn’t win. Then I found it. Garrison versus the state of California.

FAITH

What’s that?

JESSICA

A case in which the defendant, Devon Garrison was facing statutory rape chargers. The defense was able to prove that Garrison didn’t knowing commit the act.

FAITH

How?

JESSICA

To be on those sites you have to be eighteen, right?

FAITH

Yeah.

JESSICA

By Maurice being seventeen, he had to have gained access to the site under false pretense.
FAITH
Yeah, I guess.

JESSICA
That is what I believe happened.

FAITH
How would you prove it?

JESSICA
I've issued a subpoena to the website for his account information.

FAITH
That should do it, right?

JESSICA
Barns would look like a complete idiot if he doesn't drop the charges. Like I told you, if you can get past his sexist demeanor, he's a pretty good lawyer. And he didn't get that by being stupid. He won't waste tax payer's money on a case he knows he can't win.

MALLORY
Hot damnit, Jess. You did it.

JESSICA
Calm down. We still have to follow through with it.

FAITH
What happens now?

JESSICA
We go to the court house for the pre-trial conference. I'll present what I have in details to the judge and Barns. Hopefully, they'll drop the charges.

FAITH
Okay. Let's do it.

JESSICA
I told you to trust me, didn't I?

FAITH
You did. Thanks Jess.

Faith, Jessica, and Mallory begin to leave. Kristine lags behind.
JESSICA

Alright ladies. Let's go.

KRISTINE

Together right?

Silence. They all look at each other. Faith approaches Kristine.

FAITH

Yes. Together.

MALLORY

Faith, next time you wanna be bold, take baby steps first. Go to a strip club or something. The Pink Monkey is a preference of mine.

FAITH

What?

MALLORY

I'll be your personal guide.

FAITH

Don't ever stop being you.

MALLORY

Trust me, I won't. Like I always say--

FAITH, JESSICA, MALLORY, KRISTINE

I ain't got time to be nobody else.

They exit.

BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY
Poster Design by Michael J. Riha.
University Theatre Presents

Caught in the Net
By Prince Duren

June 19 & 20, 2013
Nadine Baum Studios

Directed by Kate Frank
Scenic Design by Michael J. Riha    Lighting Design by Justin R. Spaethe
Costume Design by Cayla Greer    Stage Management by Krys Garrett

Cast for this Production

Faith Morgan.................................................................Samille Palm*
Mallory Barnet..............................................................Kelsey Newman
Kristine Payne..............................................................Kanesha Day
Jessica Armstrong...........................................................Meghan Lewis

*George Washington Carver Intern

There will be one 10-minute intermission during the performance
and a short talkback immediately following the show.

Special Thanks
JP Green, Cherly Collins, Walton Arts Center, Theatre Squared,
University of Arkansas Pine Bluff, B Unlimited, hip hop group Authentic,
and The George Washington Carver Research Program

Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices while in the theatre.
As a courtesy to others, please do not TEXT during the performance.
Production Staff for Caught in the Net
Associate Scenic Designer.................................................Madeline Brown
Sound Engineer.................................................................Michael J. Riha
Properties Coordinator......................................................Madeline Brown
Wardrobe Crew................................................................Erin Alaniz
Sound Operator.................................................................Kenny Fitch
Technical Director..............................................................Patrick Stone
Assistant Technical Director..............................................Justin Ashley
Master Electrician...............................................................Justin R. Spaethe
Scenery/Lighting Crew Stephanie Bignault, Melissa Haar, Maegan Hickerson, Curtis
Longfellow, Nathan Stahlke
Front of House.................................................................Ashley Cohea, Brittany Taylor, Rachel Washington

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Flamingo and Decatur.........................................................June 22 & 23
By Todd Taylor.................................................................7:30pm

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For tickets, please visit www.waltonartscenter.org or call (479) 443-5600.
For more information on these shows, visit theatre.uark.edu and theatre2.org.

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The Clean House By Sarah Ruhl Oct. 4-13
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Spring Awakening By Steven Sater Music By Ducan Sheik Feb. 21-March 2
As You Like It By William Shakespeare April 18-27

For more information, or to purchase season tickets, Please call (479) 575-3645 or visit theatre.uark.edu
Act One Scene Two—Mallory gets ready for a night out with the girls. Mallory played by Kelsey Newman. Photo by Prince Duren.

Act One Scene Three—Faith chats with DayDreamer. Faith played by Samille Palm. Photo by Prince Duren.

Act One Scene Five—Faith listens to the seriousness of her crime. From Left to Right. Faith played by Samille Palm. Jessica played by Meghan Lewis. Photo by Prince Duren.
Act One Scene Five—Faith realizes the amount of trouble she is in. Faith played by Samille Palm. Photo by Prince Duren.

Rehearsal—From Left to Right. Director Kate Frank gives blocking instructions to Kelsey Newman. Photo by Prince Duren.

Opening Night—Stage Manager Krys Garrett gets ready to call the actresses to their places. Photo by Prince Duren.
House View Of The Set—From Left to Right. Lighting Designer Justin R. Spaethe and Director Kate Frank checks the lighting. Photo by Prince Duren.

Rehearsal—Director Kate Frank demonstrates a stretching exercise. Photo by Prince Duren.
View Of Finished Set—Photo by Prince Duren.
COMPLETED WORKS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

Drinks on Me (2010): After a tough day on the job, most people like to have a drink help unwind and relax. Out to have a cocktail or two, a lonely office worker enters a strange bar. By the time he leaves, his life has been forever changed.

Take Me As I am (2010): Finding someone capable makes having a good relationship hard to achieve. Some people choose to change who they are in order to meet the needs of a potential mate. Three college age women battle the trials and tribulation of dating.

A Journey for Refuge (2010): In this one man show, a man struggles with his identity. He searches for answers to where he comes from. This causes him relive some dark moments in past.

The Verdict (2010): The result of the infamous Rodney King trial has a dramatic affect on a LA family. Because of the verdict, I troubled teen seeks justice. He must decide whether to apart of the problem or the solution.

Keeping My Brother (2011): Myles, a former drug dealer gets released from prison after serving three years. He attempts to get his life on track. In trying to reconcile with his younger brother, he finds himself pulled back into life he is trying to leave behind.

Rules of Engagement (2012): Most men have a great deal of anxiety when it comes to marriage. The first step is actually getting the nerves to propose. A young man encounters this decision and creates a set of rules to follow.

Delta Secret (2012): Set in the 1920’s in the Mississippi Delta. A family man’s world is turned upside down when finds out his family is not what it appears to be. With this new revelation, he must what course of action to take.

Caught in the Net (2013): A fourth grade teacher enters into a relationship with person online. When she becomes intimate with him, she finds out he is not who she thought he was. Her life is drastically affected as a result.

Afro Angel (2013) A drug dealer on the Southside of Chicago meets a young woman from the suburban area. He must decide which is more important. The life he leads or the one he could start with her.

Dances with Football (2013): One of the most important nights for primetime television happens on Monday. Networks bring forth they best programming to compete with viewers. Two of the top television shows on this night are Monday Night Football and Dances with the Stars. A war over a new flat screen television ensues between a couple vying to watch their favorite shows.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Director</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He Said/She Said</td>
<td>Production</td>
<td>University of Arkansas (UA)</td>
<td>August 2010</td>
<td>Roger Gross</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keeping My Brother</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>UA Graduate Playwriting Class</td>
<td>January-May 2011</td>
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<td>Stage Reading</td>
<td>The Boar's Head Players Summer Showcase</td>
<td>June 2011</td>
<td>Robert Ford</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delta Secret</td>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>UA Graduate Playwriting Class</td>
<td>August-December 2012</td>
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<td>Production</td>
<td>UA Studio 404</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
<td>Kristopher Stoker</td>
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<td>Stage Reading</td>
<td>UA Summer New Works Festival</td>
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<td>Robert Ford</td>
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<td>Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival</td>
<td>March 2013</td>
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<td>Dances with Football</td>
<td>Stage Reading</td>
<td>KCACTF Region 6</td>
<td>May 2013</td>
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<td>Caught in the Net</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
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<td>Production</td>
<td>UA Summer New Works Festival</td>
<td>June 2013</td>
<td>Kate Frank</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Prince Duren

EDUCATION
Jackson State University (Jackson, MS)
Enrolled: August, 2005 – December, 2009 Received Bachelor of Science Degree in Mass Communications
Major Advisor: Dr. Andrea Dilworth (601) 979-2151

ACADEMIC/TEACHING EXPERIENCE
The University of Arkansas (Fayetteville, AR)
August, 2011 – May 2013
Instructor: Introduction of Theatre and Playwriting

Jackson State University [Project S.T.A.R.S] (Jackson, MS)
Summers of 2011, 2012
Drama Instructor

South Assembly of God [Salvation Station] (Jackson, MS)
Summer of 2009
Drama Instructor

Woodville Heights Elementary School [Special Project] (Jackson, MS)
Fall 2009
Drama Instructor

HIGHLIGHTS OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
Co-Creator of Camp S.T.A.R.S. Summer Camp, Jackson State University, Jackson, MS
- Developed program layout
- Implemented strategic plan to insure profit

Assistant Dramaturge for Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Montgomery, AL
- Assisted in the development The Hemmings Diary by Lucile Lichtblau
- Provided feedback to resident playwrights

Artist-In-Residence, The Black Academy of Arts & Letters, Dallas, TX
- Instructed inner city youth in the area of Performing Arts
- Conducted comprehensive workshops geared towards effective public speaking

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATION
- National Association of Dramatic and Speech Arts, Inc
- Dramatists Guild
AWARDS & HONORS
2013    Summer Resident at the O’Neill Playwrights’ Conference
2013    Boston College Arts Festival Participant
2013    KCACTF National Lorraine Hansberry Award for Playwriting (Delta Secret)
2013    KCACTF Regional 6 Finalist for Playwriting (Dances with Football)
2012    Mississippi Theatre Association Award for Playwriting (The Verdict)
2012    Guest Dramaturgy for Alabama Shakespeare Festival
2011    KCACTF Regional 6 Honorable Mention for Playwriting (The Verdict)
2011    Featured Work in Stage Black Play Festival (Drinks on Me)
2010    Carrie Hamilton Memorial Scholarship in Playwriting
2009    S. Randolph Edmonds Award in Original Playwriting Competition at 73rd National Association of Dramatic & Speech Arts

THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS
Play Productions:

A Family Affair    The Clarence Muse Theatre, March 2008, dir Mark Henderson
                  Rose Emily McCoy Auditorium, March 2009, dir Mark Henderson

Keeping My Brother    Nadine Baum Studios, June 2011, dir Robert Ford

Delta Secret    Studio 404, April 2012, dir Kristopher Stoker

Drinks on Me    The Clarence Muse Theatre, July 2011, dir Jiles King

Take Me As I am    The Jones Center, November 2010, dir Clinessha Sibley

The Verdict    Kimpel Hall Studio 402, December 2010, dir Justin Cunningham

Caught in the Net    Nadine Baum Studios, June 2013, dir Kate Frank