

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

A Postcolonial Anthology
(1977-1987)

MASQUERADERS

by Stafford Ashani

WHIPLASH

by Ginger Knight

FALLEN ANGEL AND THE DEVIL CONCUBINE

by Patricia Cumper, Honor Ford-Smith, Carol Lawes,
Hertencer Lindsay & Eugene Williams

*Edited & introduced by
Honor Ford-Smith*

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for
Stafford Ashani
formerly Stafford Harrison
1953-2009

*Singers and dancers and players of instruments
will be there: all Jah children*

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General Introduction

Mutabaruka, Jamaican poet, recalls how he and Stafford Ashani, whose play *Masqueraders* opens this volume, “used to question everything. All the different belief systems, political systems, even Rastafari...” (Mutabaruka interview, 2009). He might have been talking about these three provocative, compelling and occasionally vulgar and irreverent plays, linked together by their engagement with the many issues of decolonization in all its complexity.

All the plays are haunted by memories of the irrevocable and violent scenarios laid down in the past and are simultaneously marked by what Rex Nettleford called “the reach” or desire for complete emancipation (1995) and social justice. The plays traverse a critical decade in Caribbean society, 1977-1987, and are characterized by a search for new theatrical themes, methods, genres and modes of audience address. Here, the old is partially peeled away; there, it is overlaid with invocations and scenarios of possibility. Here, the new is compromised by a conflicted past that is always pursuing and imperfectly reclaiming a present that is struggling to outmaneuver it and evade its grasp. Memories of colonization linger alongside the urgent challenges and visions of decolonization, the two existing simultaneously, struggling together in complicated and inseparable ways.

The tensions between global and local, interdependency and dependency are evident in how all the plays deal with history and the present; and more subtly, in the ways they take up questions of community and belonging. Each play represents voices, themes and motifs which not only deserve study in the Caribbean but also more broadly in the field of drama and performance as a whole. The fact that they have not been published more than twenty or thirty years since being created and produced speaks to the fact that both critical authorizing practices and the market in cultural production remain largely dominated by European and American work. One of the goals of this collection then is to speak to an audience interested in alternatives to this trajectory, and also to put this work into conversation with other African, African diasporic and postcolonial works from the period and beyond. This general introduction to the collection therefore addresses Caribbean and other diverse audiences. I sketch the historical and cultural contexts that inform the plays, describing some of the key global

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postcolonial and anticolonial impulses that informed the spirit of the time. I demonstrate how global forces intersected with local struggles in different but overlapping ways to shape the work of this generation of writers and performers. Before each play there is a short introduction specific to that script. In these, I attend to the themes and dramatic strategies of each play and discuss how the plays take up questions such as memory, power and authority, violence, nation, community and belonging.

Postcolonial performance and its uses

The term ‘postcolonial’ which informs the context for these plays is used here in at least two somewhat contradictory ways. I use the term fully conscious of its limitations and also of the rolling eyeballs that are often a response to it. First, I use it in a literal and limited sense, because all the plays in this collection were written in the period that began approximately ten years after political independence from Britain. On the one hand, this period was a hopeful time characterized by the development of national narratives of possibility; on the other, it was marked by the awareness that the reorganization and expansion of global capitalism was undermining them. This tension was highly productive and these plays are examples of how that process of contradiction was lived and addressed, how it brought into being new human subjects and how it also resulted in new dramatic strategies. Obviously, the period following independence from Britain did not achieve complete emancipation. Nevertheless it was certainly different from the colonial period that went before. It was also very different from the present global order which scholars have characterized as a new imperial order (Harvey 2003; Hardt and Negri 2000; Razack 2004), one which has the distinction of denying that it is either imperial or hegemonic.

Secondly, and in contradiction to this conventional periodization, I use the term ‘postcolonial’ more broadly to refer to the ongoing and historically conflicted relationship between local cultures and global imperialism, and the struggles within and between them. This encompasses many time periods and affects all aspects of everyday life in the post-conquest Caribbean. This usage of the term ‘postcolonial’ refers to ongoing attempts to dismantle the cultural and political authority of Western imperialism at the level of both theory and practice (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996; Said 1994; Moore-Gilbert 1997) up to and beyond formal independence from the old European colonial powers. It refers to cultural, political, social and economic efforts on the part of anti-colonial activists and scholars to

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question Western imperial ideological reach and historical legacies in an effort to redefine power and possibility beyond its constraints. ‘Postcolonial’ in this usage then refers, not to a moment in time, but to ongoing critical engagement with the assumptions that underwrite the colonial period and importantly, the relationships it created between people. It refers to the legacies of this and to the anticolonial political and cultural struggles which attempt to challenge these. While I am aware that all activities in colonized societies cannot be reduced to their relationships to imperialism, and that we are not living in a moment which can be characterized as a discrete temporal moment AFTER colonialism, I nonetheless recognize that European colonial practices so transformed the globe and complicated all social relationships and discourses that they drew peoples into new relationships with their own as well as their conquerors and overlords in irrevocable ways (Loomba 1998: 9).

These plays perform and transform these relationships and their lingering after-shocks in one setting: that of Jamaica which in 1976 was still a plantation society and a part of the larger African diaspora. All three plays were influenced in direct and indirect ways by the anticolonial movement, arguably the largest, most diffuse and productive global social movement of the 19th and 20th centuries. Through its many manifestations colonized peoples in Asia, Africa, and the Americas attempted to take back the 80 per cent of the globe controlled by Europe and to transform the legacies of white imperial power. Edward Said describes the process as a “fight for recognition” arguing that,

[t]o achieve recognition is to re-chart and then occupy the place in imperial cultural forms reserved for subordination, to occupy itself consciously, fighting for it on the very same territory once ruled by a consciousness that assumed the subordination of a designated inferior Other (Said 1994: 210).

The price of this fight for recognition and engagement with the dominating power, Said concludes, is reinscription. That is, a reiteration and intellectual dependency on the structures of domination. Writing some thirty years after Jamaican independence, Sylvia Wynter (1995), herself a Jamaican playwright and scholar, concurs that postcolonial societies have, in many ways, reiterated the exclusions and violence of the colonial period. They will continue to do this, she argues, unless they can break with knowledge forms that have misrepresented the colonized so as to justify their subordination and exclusion. Simply put, she argues that decolonization entails altering the rules for how we know what we know. These

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rules, she proposes, rely on assumptions that reproduce hierarchies of difference – rich/poor, black/white, male/female, and so on. To start over, to create ways of knowing that destabilize these hierarchical assumptions is an act which requires creating new representations of those most marginalized within old knowledge systems (Wynter 1995).

Wynter doesn't specify the role of performance or drama in this process now or historically, but in a context in which the majority had limited access to print and relied on bodies and voices to communicate and to enact meaning-making practices; theatre and, more broadly, performance became key media for mobilizing the knowledge needed both to govern and to contest these old hierarchies of power. This is one reason why these plays are important. They represent attempts to create forms of knowledge that challenge the old hierarchies of difference. Knowledge here does not just mean objective facts. It means ways of seeing, speaking and moving, desiring, dreaming, and ways we negotiate our relationships with each other across differences of race, gender, age, sexualities and class, and across our social and natural environment.

To be effective power has to be performed in visible and embodied ways and colonial theatre and performances were key sites where this took place. Along with the church, the English language, and the law, colonial theatre was a significant place for spreading public teachings about the colonial order during the period of African slavery and afterward. Jamaica boasted a lively tradition of theatre and performances which included rituals of church and state, balls, feasts, formal entertainment, masquerades, oral narratives and rituals on the plantation and in the spaces outside it. Performance and theatre on both sides of the colonizer/colonized binary produced and circulated beliefs, stories and images about community and identity. Conflicting social groups enacted and undermined the scenarios of power and the spatialized hierarchies of ruling relations in formal and informal performance spaces. Not all of the scenarios were consistently in support of imperial hegemony or consistently subversive of it as is sometimes assumed. They were more complicated than that, often staging contradictions or daring to imagine something better. Errol Hill's (1992) study of the Jamaican theatre demonstrates how rowdy the formal theatre was. The actors and the production were constantly interrupted by audiences who wanted to be seen and heard as much as or more than the play they had come to see. The theatre could also be an important site for cross-racial flirtation and sexualized encounters.

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Elite white performances were places where colonial communities affirmed and reflected on their right to rule and their mission to control and later civilize the Other. Even as they did this they were challenged by Africans who, in narrow and often liminal spaces performed counter narratives and scenarios of memory, belonging and community. Performances, such as plantation masquerades and even balls and dances, were often sites for troubling hierarchy and mocking the knowledge on which the arrangements of the powerful depended. In performances of Christmas masquerades or Jonkonnu, enslaved performers parodied respectability and derided the powerful in ways that were ambiguous, vulgar, embodied and hilarious. Later on, after emancipation, Indians and Chinese indentured arri-vants also performed their own histories and narratives of belonging. For the colonized, these mobilized scenarios and ideas about power and identity while revealing obstacles to possibility. Secular and sacred performances of memories of suppressed histories articulated conflicts in narrow public spaces even as they articulated ways of reconciling these and working through the impasses of power.

By the 20th century, Jamaican performance became a place for interventions around myriad everyday social issues and forums for imagining and critiquing anti-colonial identity and possibility. In effect they performed and enacted what Benedict Anderson (1991) has famously called the “imagined community” of nation, but while Anderson focussed on how print media brought ideas of nation into being, Jamaican performance brought community into being through live embodied aspects of performance while also rendering written scripts. Three examples will suffice though they are not singular examples. The theatre of Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) at Edel-weiss Park in the late 1920s staged narratives of African nationalism and Black history at the same time as it parodied gender and sexual relations in musical and comic forms. Louise Bennett’s performances and monologues within the Little Theatre Movement of the 20th century, and independently in concerts and work-shops around the country, spread ideas of nation as a community rooted in shared language and customs. Over the decades between her first performance in 1938 and her retirement to Canada in the late 1980s, Bennett drew on African diasporic traditions such as call-and-response, mento music and storytelling to fold her audiences into a performance of community that stressed social progress and the public good. She literally performed the nation into being. In her role as mother of nation she journeyed into every nook and cranny of Jamaica, storytelling, playing and singing, invoking ideas of what national community should be. The National

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Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica founded in the 1962 under Rex Nettleford produced an enormous body of choreographed dance drama which presented African diasporic histories, spiritual traditions, scenarios of conflict and celebrations of reconciliation and hope.

In these diverse ways, theatre and performance in the colonial period and after presented and critiqued the social hierarchies that structured the society and acted as places where they could be undermined and replaced. Performance settings were sites of social display and social transgression. Social groups challenged and deferred to the borders of the Other, accepted or rejected the boundaries between performer and spectator, audience and actor. As the work of Garvey, Bennett, Nettleford and others show, in the period of anticolonial activity leading up to independence and after, performance became a critical place for the circulation of stories of citizenship, nation and community. It also offered a key site for learning forms of identification and possibility prior to the globalization of electronic media.

The global 'Third World' movement and local resistance

By the mid 1970s, global anticolonial resistance led to a movement that came to be called the 'Third World'. It brought together peoples from different races, places, organizations and states to dismantle the material and ideological practices that justified European colonial rule. This movement led by people from the colonized world positioned itself as politically central to the transformation of global hierarchies – a situation which is not the case at present. In 1955, leaders of newly independent African and Asian countries met at the Bandung conference to commit themselves to finding an alternative to the dominant Western systems of capitalism and socialism. They wanted to find a political approach that was not compromised by the agendas of the bi-polar world – what they called a 'third path'. They set about building cultural cooperation and opposition to the neo-colonialism of the US, the Soviet Union or any other power. By 1966 when radical activists and writers such as Frantz Fanon, Ho Chi Minh, Jean Paul Sartre and Amilcar Cabral met at the radical Tricontinental conference in Havana, Cuba, many more countries had achieved independence or were engaged in wars of liberation (Young 2003). There had been revolutions in Cuba and Algeria; the war in Vietnam was underway; civil rights, Pan Africanist, Black power, anti-war and first nations organizing had led to alliances between colonized groups within North America and their allies around the world.

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These transnational developments could not have taken place without the myriad local struggles on which they were built. In Jamaica, anticolonial resistance had many manifestations, from early popular African diasporic religious organizations such as those under Sam Sharpe and Alexander Bedward to Marcus Garvey's African Nationalist Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) formed in 1914; to trade union movements of the first part of the century, the formation of nationalist political parties, and Marxist and other socialist groups and political parties. By the 1960s, in Jamaica, Rastafari¹ led the way as a popular oppositional force that critiqued Eurocentrism and white supremacy and stressed African spiritual repatriation and redemption.

During that decade a number of local uprisings addressed growing race and class tensions in the society. In 1960, for example, Reynold Henry led a small armed uprising against the colonial state in Jamaica and the incumbent national government (Meeks 2001). The Coral Gardens uprising followed in 1963. Both were met with harsh resistance. Rastafari was defined by the state as male, subversive and threatening. Members faced extreme social ostracism and violence at the hands of police and soldiers. All this only strengthened the movement, which grew in numbers and included men, women and children (Tafari-Ama 1998).

Chanting oral narratives over *funde*, and repeater drums and carrying the colours of the Ethiopian flag, red, gold and green, Rastafari challenged white cultural hegemony through a repertoire of practices such as language creation, rites such as *nyabinghis*, reasoning, herb smoking, everyday dress, vegetarian and *ital* (natural) habits. By the early 1970s, Rastafari had firmly established a language within popular music, then emerging as a new Jamaican cultural industry. Bob Marley and Peter Tosh are only the best known Rastafari musicians who spread their ideas through the global cultural market place. Many others also taught these

1 The movement drew on earlier forms of Black peasant and working class culture as a starting point for re-imagining social and spiritual possibility. It is named for Ras Tafari, the original title and name of Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, who represents one manifestation of the creator, Jehovah (Jah Rastafari). Becoming visible in Jamaica when Selassie struggled against Italian invaders of Ethiopia, Rastafari developed in the context of a plantation economy dependent on the labour of enslaved Africans. Over the 400 years of colonial rule, a colour coded social pyramid or pigmentocracy developed which regulated opportunities in spite of emancipation in 1834. Rastafari philosophy articulated by rural working class Jamaicans, emerged outside of formal scholarly and religious structures. It drew on the Bible both as the basis for dialogue with Western systems of thought and social structure (Babylon). It interpreted the Bible as a narrative of Black exile, diasporic oppression and liberation through a spiritual and metaphysical return to Zion which is Africa/Ethiopia and a way of life (livity) that reclaims African traditional values and a culture of peace, love, respect for human beings and nature. It emphasizes the divinity within each human – the inner I.

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ideas through music, among them Justin Hines and the Dominoes, Count Ossie and the Mystic Revelations of Rastafari, Ras Michael and The Sons of Negus, Burning Spear, Third World and Inner Circle's Jacob Miller.

By 1967, an informal alliance between some Rastafari and the left frightened the conservative government which took the island into Independence but failed to create an alternative to the existing social structure. The government banned Guyanese historian and activist Walter Rodney² from the island in part because his organizing activities included teaching Rastafari and other working class groups about colonization and African history (West 2008). The violent repression following his banning intensified the criminalization of dissent. The confiscation of passports and more deportations as well as a strike at the local television and radio station over state interference in the media contributed to the government's declining popularity. The challenge to the status quo originally led by the most marginalized found broader support across the country and took aim at formal cultural institutions.

In 1970, students occupied the Creative Arts Centre (now the Phillip Sherlock Centre for the Creative Arts), at the University of the West Indies at Mona, the best equipped arts centre at that time in the Anglophone region. Led by Timothy Calendar, a Black Barbadian artist and Lucille (Icille) Edwards, students protested the centre's Eurocentric programming and demanded more control, a role for popular (non-elite) Caribbean people in the centre and more Afro-centric artistic programming.³ The occupying students included Patrick Lewis, a member of the original cast of the play *Masqueraders*. Though they won some of their demands, the significance of the occupation was that it served notice on formal cultural institutions that change was imminent.

The alliance between the left and Rastafari was based on a shared critique of racism and class privilege. The relationship was uneasy but productive. Unlike socialism, Rastafari of the period rejected the secularism of modernist thought and critiqued the politics of the nation state as amoral *follytricks* and *politricks*. It confounded the binary categories of sacred/secular, nature/culture, savage/civilized, progressive/backward and suggested principles of ecological interdependence and cultural self-sufficiency that were manifest in food culture and dress. For example, Rastafari emphasizes vegetarian and organic food consumption and production,

² For further reading, please see Rodney 1972 and 1973.

³ Mark Figueroa, personal correspondence, March 1, 2009; Dawn Scott, personal correspondence, August 10, 2009.

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and originally stressed a rejection of the commodity fetishism of the consumer world. In these ways the movement challenged both the cultural authority of the status quo and the Eurocentric modernism of the left by undermining the principles of progress, teleology and industrialization that underpinned a rejection of traditional practices often described as “backward”.

This sense of stepping into a moment in which a fixed set of authorized narratives no longer worked was something that characterized life both on and off stage at the time. In 1974, in the middle of the Cold War, Prime Minister Michael Manley, an advocate of the non-aligned movement, took the state to the limit of the inherited form of liberal democracy. Declaring his government committed to democratic socialism, he initiated broad social reforms in Jamaica and allied with the leader of the Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro in support of Angolan independence. Angola had just thrown out its Portuguese colonizers, but was threatened by invaders from the Apartheid regime in South Africa. Cuba sent soldiers to fight them. Arguing that Jamaica was a Black country whose duty was to support anti-apartheid struggles, Manley supported the Cuban position. The alliance ruptured the linguistic and political divide between the Caribbean islands and enraged the USA, at the time immersed in anti-communist struggles against the USSR, Cuba's ally. The US proceeded to aid Manley's opponents in Jamaica and an unofficial civil war began. This is the situation which Ginger Knight's *Whiplash* addresses, while *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine* is set in its aftermath, a period of deep disillusion that marked the onset of neoliberalism in the 1980s.

Within the broad polarizations of the 1970s the women's movement came to voice making a critique of the way in which bourgeois male subjects had dominated national narratives and marginalized women's labour and voice. Groups of women in and across party lines and autonomous organizations like the Sistren Theatre Collective and the Committee of Women for Progress began to demand greater attentiveness to the question of gender relations and women's work. Within the women's movement there were also strong critiques of Western feminism for its bias toward the struggles of bourgeois white women. These organizations were supported by a network of regional educational and activist associations such as the Women and Development Unit of the University of the West Indies and the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action.

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Scenarios of nation and acts of possibility

All the plays in this volume were influenced by the spirit of that time – by Rastafari and by Third World varieties of socialism and feminism – and attempted to find theatrical and dramaturgical structures which were adequate to express these ideas. The social movements provided the intellectual and social space for ideas of a more equitable society to emerge. They also opened a place for encounters across the gaping crevasse of class, colour and culture that still structures Jamaica. These social encounters gave rise to debates about the meaning of power and leadership, belonging, home, African diasporic identity and cross-racial community. These are the themes that shape *Masqueraders*, *Whiplash*, and *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine* even though the plays rarely explicitly reference Rasta, feminism or socialism.

Stafford Ashani's *Masqueraders*, the first play in the collection, is about a troupe of mainly Rastafari players in search of a place to perform their ever-changing story. Stoned in the marketplace and refused access to the colonial theatre, theirs is the story of a troupe that enacts challenges to colonial cultural authority, the politics of spectatorship and inherited Western dramatic genres. Boldly refusing naturalistic illusionism, the play confronts, insults, teases and seduces its audience, stressing the value of improvisation as a tool for cultural and material survival. It addresses issues such as voyeurism and violence inherent in colonial societies as well as the question of written and performed structures of knowledge. Like *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine*, it performs a challenge to the conventional dichotomy between writing and embodied performance which plays out in highly specific ways in the colonial and postcolonial context. In effect, the play and its written script show how each is enmeshed with the other. Refusing an easy romanticism of the colonized and refusing to ascribe pure victimhood to the oppressed, it questions the relationship between power, violence and spectatorship and reaches for a bold and unsettling mode of address that taps into a repertoire of forms and genres from Europe, North America and Africa in diaspora.

Ginger Knight's use of Rastafari language reflects how the movement broadly influenced popular language and identity at the time. The title *Whiplash* looks back to the old conflicts of slavery, though the play is about the fight between pro-capitalist and pro-socialist forces and how this was lived out in one family. It demonstrates how this civil war, never officially declared, accelerated a process of urban political clientelism that built on colonial social hierarchies. Armed supporters of

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the opposition Jamaican Labour Party (JLP) battled the socialist government of the People's National Party (PNP) for control of the country. The fight was most heated in Kingston, where large numbers of people were displaced in the struggle for urban space. The process turned family members against each other and resulted in horrific acts of violence in which people were forcibly removed from their homes so that one or other of the parties could control both urban space and the votes of those occupying it. The conservative JLP, with strong US support, won the election in 1980 but the violence unleashed between communities has never ended, though it is no longer always directly connected to political partisanship. It has multiplied, leaving Jamaica with one of the highest murder rates in the world. Meanwhile, those responsible on both sides of the formal political divide have never been held accountable, sending a clear signal about the relationship between power and justice.

Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine explores the ways in which class, race and gender work together to determine how women of different races live the schisms, the privilege and the pain of the postcolonial condition. It looks critically at how both colonization and nation are gendered by presenting a narrative of the domestic arena, and it narrates community in terms of the cost of domestic exploitation – telling the story of a dispossessed domestic worker and a rebellious impoverished creole who, in rejecting her social class, is disowned by her family. But it doesn't stop there. It enacts revenge fantasies, illusions of grandeur, cross-racial erotic love, envy and jealousy as well as the troubled question of reconciliation. While there are many narratives of the sexual encounters of white men with black women, *Fallen Angel* is one of the few Caribbean narratives to tackle the question of white women's sexual entanglements with Black men and their consequences from the perspective of white and black women themselves.

The plays here therefore represent one particular generation's comments on the ghosts of the past and their contributions to the process of postcolonial cultural intervention. The writers and creators (for not all are playwrights) were all born in the 1950s and were the first generation to come of age in the decade after direct European colonization formally ended. They are of both genders, different classes, colours and shades, and express a variety of political, cultural and theatrical intention. All are Jamaican, though the living reality of diaspora complicates Caribbean citizenships so that they range from African-Caribbean, African/Indian and European mixtures, to various hyphenated states such as Guyanese-Jamaican (Williams), Jamaican-Canadian (myself) and Black British (Lindsay and Cumper).

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Each play is an example of the vigorous variety of Caribbean theatre of the period which encompassed a staggering range of approaches. The collection does not, by any means, include ALL the tendencies in the theatre of the time. For example, it does not include the musicals of annual Jamaican Christmas Pantomimes, the satirical musical revues, popular farces, dub and carnival theatre explorations, agit prop interventions, and the theatre of personal testimony. The plays have been selected because they all tell stories of nation, but they each represent nation quite differently and in ways that echo and depart from previous representations. They offer different perspectives on class and race conflict, gender, political and cultural power and leadership. They are little known outside Jamaica, in part because there are few publications of Caribbean plays but also because the plays were produced for a vibrant local audience.

In a collection of essays on postcolonial theatre, two scholars who base their research on publications available outside the Caribbean wrongly conclude that there has been a failure to develop artistically serious professional theatre in the Anglophone region. They argue that a “despondent sense of West Indian cultural mediocrity, at least as far as serious theatre is concerned, has to be set next to the extraordinary vitality of its popular music, song and dance as well as the vigour of its prose, fiction and poetry” (Crow and Banfield 1996: 19). This collection confidently tells a different story, refuting this inaccurate generalization by presenting work that intervenes in critical social issues and transforms inherited genres and processes of theatrical creation.

All the plays here enact stories of profound postcolonial crises. They unmask the divisions and exploitative practices on which invocations of national unity are based. With varying emphases they explore alternative narratives of belonging, leadership and authority, and address the ways that tradition, sexuality, class, race and colour construct these issues. *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine* and *Whiplash* both address questions of aging and family. *Whiplash* tackles injustice, corrupt political power and the ways that the urban working class exert agency. Knight’s play, like the Reggae music of the time, sets up structures of working class identification which differ from older ones. Most significantly it proposes that the political and social leadership of the time could not speak for the urban working class and neither represented nor acted in their interests. *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine* offers an allegory of nation, power and difference in community. It recuperates the marginalized voices of women to explore a provisional meaning of home.

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Together, the plays cut and mix myriad genres of performance from widely diverse traditions and, like the great African American jazz musicians, they make this polyphonic mixture generative for they create by breaking the rules of existing genres. *Masqueraders* rejects naturalistic conventions and takes an old plantation performance form and reinvents it as a commentary on how tradition can sabotage and transform modernity and refashion cultural power and authority. African diasporic masquerade (Jonkonnu) is mingled with reggae, American musical theatre, burlesque and the theatre of the absurd. *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine* is an allegory of home and relies heavily on the symbolic. Women's domestic orature is placed in dialogue with legal discourse and literature based on letter writing. *Whiplash* reaches for a form of theatre that is both serious and popular. In so doing it weaves together domestic melodrama, oral storytelling, social realism and the morality play. In all the plays, satire and irony are ever present as is the entire spectrum of Jamaican language use.

Conclusion

I began by proposing that in all these plays the old is confronted and partially peeled away. The past is painted over, but it re-emerges imperfectly to mix with and reclaim the present in new ways. Just as popular Jamaican music cuts and mixes old and new in ever expanding repertoires of rhythm and sound, so the plays cut and mix scenarios of action and ways of speaking and being. They engage global and local questions through a wide range of dramaturgical approaches that question inherited social realities and theatrical forms. These plays, in Sylvia Wynter's terms, can be said to recreate what we know (truth) and the cultural structures that determine what we count as knowledge. They are public interventions and discussions about citizenship and power, governance and the rights of citizens, family, home and cultural beliefs. They are themselves pedagogies of nation and community, critiquing and teaching ideas of power, ethics and belonging.

As we were coming to the end of the editorial process, something happened in life that performed this complex mix of past, present and future, and the relationship between the text and life offered in all the plays. This introduction was still unfinished when I boarded the plane for Kingston from Toronto in May 2009 with all nine drafts on my laptop and multiple bulky files of interviews, clippings and thoughts scrawled on scraps of paper in my hand luggage. Early in the morning the day after I arrived home, Paul Issa called and said, "Go and see Stafford. He's in the Hospice in Papine. I don't like how he looks. Go today. Don't wait." I went

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immediately with Carol Lawes. We drove to the hospice at Elletson Flats in my 22 year-old car which like Mad Dog's car in *Masqueraders* was barely working. "I don't want you to go alone," said Carol who had known Stafford since they both attended Drama classes at Excelsior High School.

Ashani's sister Michelle "Shelley Thunder" Dawkins was alone with him. Moments after we were allowed onto the ward Ashani stopped breathing. I went to get the nurse who adjusted his oxygen mask. He started breathing again. "You need to let him know it's all right for him to go," she said matter of factly. We obeyed. We told him he should go in peace, that we would keep his work alive and that it was all right. But with every bone and breath and cell in all our beings we knew that it was not all right.

Stafford Ashani died on May 26, 2009. His funeral was a few days later at the Methodist Church in Harbour View near Kingston Harbour where he had lived. Eugene Williams, Carol Lawes, Patsy Ricketts from the cast of *Masqueraders*, Pablo Hoilett who had directed one production of *Whiplash* and I were among those able to attend the funeral. There was a misprint on the program that told us his name was Stafford Authen Ashani instead of Stafford Arthur Ashani. The minister kept calling him Ashanti instead of Ashani. I left the church and walked out into the yard wondering what he would have felt about having his funeral in a Presbyterian church. How easily, how naturally we had thought things would change and justice would happen. But it hadn't happened. Not the way we had imagined back then when we first met.

In the church someone was playing Bob Marley's *Redemption Song* on the violin:

*Won't you help to sing
These songs of freedom?
That's all I ever have:
Redemption songs
Redemption songs.*

Then Mutabaruka began to speak, "When we jus a sight up Rastafari we used to seat in and reason uppa Mavis Bank. We had dis ritual weh we used to read a chapter of the Bible everyday. Outa dat understanding, we reason and start to shape we philosophy. We used to question everything. All the different belief systems, political beliefs, even Rastafari itself and the different houses in Rastafari itself."

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Muta's words reminded me that in 1974 when I met Stafford, a Rastaman would not have been allowed to give a eulogy in an established Christian church at a funeral, let alone speak about 'sighting up' Rastafari and questioning everything. Rastafari would not have been allowed to teach in a school as Ashani did before he died. *Redemption Song* had not been written yet; and of course neither had these plays. I looked around at the different kinds of people in the church and thought of all the time that had passed between when I first met Ashani and this moment when he was laid out, gaunt and stiff in a box between us. The worlds we dreamed of back then will never be; only moments like this would allow us a sense of what has been gained, what has been lost and what remains the same.

Muta was concluding. He was talking about Ashani's addiction to crack cocaine and saying that he had overcome it. "He had come forward again, but we never got to see the flowers bloom."

Taken together, the plays in this book are imperfect acts of struggle to bring something new into being. Ashani's is the earliest of the three, the most muscular and – perversely – the most hopeful. This collection is therefore dedicated to Stafford Ashani. May the flowers bloom.

A brief note on the language of the plays

Language is always a place where social distinctions are performed and this is patently obvious in postcolonial and African diasporic societies. English first came to the Caribbean with the colonizer, and was imposed on the enslaved African population who, in turn, brought with them the continental languages of Africa and the hybrid languages of the ports that served Atlantic trade in Africans. Helen Gilbert asserts that,

[b]ecause of its colonial legacy and its ongoing role in maintaining neo-colonial hierarchies through foreign education, the English language (or any language for that matter) can never be a neutral medium. However, dramatists such as Wole Soyinka and Derek Walcott maintain that this fact should initiate not a paralysis but a newly invigorated sense of the complexities of the linguistic sites from which postcolonial artists speak. (Gilbert 2001: 4)

This linguistic complexity to which Gilbert refers is dramatized in all three plays where the writers use the full range of the Jamaican language.

Caribbean language use evolved out of three hundred years of violent contact between Imperial England and its colonies and the form that it takes is in itself evidence of that violence and attempts to heal it. Bev Bryan (2004) argues that the languages created resist the homogenizing forces of modernity and perform the social forces in circulation in every shifting and multiple ways. She argues that,

[t]he languages can be seen as metaphors for the Caribbean diaspora: in one sense, sites of struggle for dominance by varying conduits of forces and voices; in another sense, the reflections of our conjoined histories. These possibilities are reflected in the language used in Jamaica from the earliest times, to the language that continues to have resonance for Jamaicans worldwide. It is a phenomenon that is infinitely 'processual' – continually changing as the fissures and pieces connect and re-connect in a continual movement toward 'becoming'. That becoming relates not only to the structure of the language but also to the way its speakers see, use and construct themselves through the vernacular voice. So questions of attitudes and identity are, inevitably, foregrounded as central to this discussion about language. (Bryan 2004: 641)

In the colonial period English language acquisition was seen as a signifier of social status, education, refinement and civilization. For centuries, the language the majority spoke was seen as '*unlanguage*', mangled English or noise, and was called *patois* or broken English. Since the 1950s linguists have challenged this. Early linguistic research characterized Jamaican as running along a continuum

Note on the language

from Standard Jamaican English to something more complex and unique. The notion of a continuum indicated the fluid boundaries between English and Jamaican, but it has since been challenged because it suggests a linear continuity of movement from one finite position to another, when the actual reality is far less predictable.

Mervyn Alleyne's seminal study in 1989 demonstrated that grammar, rhythm and sound of the Jamaican language arise mainly from a combination of West African and English languages. Others such as Cassidy, have shown its reliance on transformed, often archaic English with some contributions from Taino, Spanish, Portuguese, Middle Eastern and Asian languages (such as Hakka and Hindi). Bryan gives a useful summary of the syntactical characteristics of Jamaican Creole which include:

the unmarked verb; absence of subject-verb concord, *Pat sing* ; zero copula, *mi sick* 'I am sick'; serial verbs, *go see, come tell*; and the same form being used for some adjectives and verbs *dem mad mi* 'They made me mad' , *big-op* 'enlarge (lit.) extol/cheer' , *small-op* 'make small (lit.) compress'. Other noteworthy syntactical features are: pluralization using the particle *dem* 'them' as *di man dem* for 'the men'; the conflation of active and passive voice *di fuud sel aaf* 'The food that was being sold is finished'; and front focusing *a taak wi a taak bout Jan* 'It's John we're talking about' 'We are/were talking about John'. Distinctive sounds include the shift from /v/ to /b/ in *beks* 'vex' and *hebi* 'heavy', while in the area of vocabulary, Jamaican Creole uses the English lexicon but often in new ways: *box* 'slap', *favour* 'resemble' , *mancow* 'bull' and *eyewater* 'tears'.
(Bryan 2004: 643)

There continue to be passionate public and scholarly debates about the language. In particular there has been strong support for the idea that Jamaican is a language in its own right which should be officially recognized. Scholars such as Carolyn Cooper and Hubert Devonish have been significant advocates of this. A popular argument is that the distinction between English and Creole reinforces the hierarchical domination of English over a secondary or inferior form which is never named as a language in its own right. Official recognition of Jamaican and its formalization in educational curriculum could redress this and in so doing address the complex relationship between language and subjectivity or identity. It would enable the language to be treated like any other language. At a more practical level the move to recognizing Jamaican as a language would address the needs of children who have little exposure to so called Standard English and who therefore have a difficult time learning the complicated and myriad distinctions

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between everyday language use and English grammar and pronunciation and who are seriously encumbered by learning to read and write in a language which is markedly different from the one which is spoken all around them.

The plays in this collection enact the complexity of the language debate even as they reveal the critical role of theatre and drama in the development of Jamaican language and literature. They demonstrate the ways in which oral and written language interact with each other in highly productive and maverick ways and demonstrate that one reason why the Jamaican language continues to resist the homogenizing tendencies of English is because there is such a dynamic interaction between the oral and the written. In a period (1930–1974) in which literary critics were debating the ability of the Caribbean vernacular to express serious and complex thought, the theatre was getting on with it, doing it and doing it well – a fact which continues to be largely ignored because there is relatively little critical work on Caribbean theatre.

The use of the Jamaican language in drama and theatre brought audiences to a moment of communal self-recognition that underpinned the formation of nation and the negotiation of cultural identity. This contributed to the formation of new subjects negotiating questions of citizenship and nation. This is one factor that accounts for the vibrancy of the Jamaican theatre in the period represented by this collection.

The language of these plays traverses the entire range of Jamaican speech in all its living, shifting intricacy. Here is a nuanced and beautiful Jamaican speech that lives, breathes and changes over time. *Fallen Angel*, for example, combines standard English and Jamaican to play on the linguistic anxieties of both characters and audience in relation to class and colour. Its comedy derives from this. Lettie's malapropisms and Katie's rapid shifts up and down the language spectrum demonstrate how language reproduces and performs social distinctions. *Whiplash* is a rich source of the rhythm and repartee of everyday speech in the 1980s, some of which is no longer in common use. "Rankin", for example, has been replaced by "Don"; just as "Blow-wow!" is rarely used anymore as a mild swear word. *Masqueraders* combines African diasporic oral traditions with inherited colonial High Art forms such as dramatic verse in English. As Day burns the script in *Masqueraders* his speech begins with Shakespearean echoes:

I'll release myself, realize my real intentions.
The script is a player's prison, his cage, his coffin.
Dead words, dead notes on a score.

Note on the language

A sad song of a dead tale. I'll set it afire.
I'll cremate it! I'll not allow it to be buried
In our minds and souls, there to rot
And infect our whole being with its ghastly images.

(Ashani, *Masqueraders*, p. 58)

Gradually a slow nyabinghi rhythm develops, turning the verse into a chant that mixes heightened spoken word with literary forms.

Not surprisingly then, one of the most difficult (and frankly nerve-racking) jobs associated with preparing this manuscript was the question of how to represent the language. It was vividly apparent to me as I worked on this manuscript that making the decisions involved in rendering the language in print always means that something is lost and something gained. The rules for Jamaican orthography are still being negotiated, but even if they were settled, this would not change the fact that the characters move across and around shifting, racialized, social and linguistic positions. This ranges from upper class speech (Heirstone, Mad Dog and Lilly in *Masqueraders*) in the 1970s, through various forms of urban middle class speech (Day and Lilly), through Rastafari speech (Day), through urban working and lower middle class speech from the same period (all the characters in *Whiplash*) to rural speech circa 1930 (Farmer in *Masqueraders*; Lettie in *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine*). To further complicate matters, as was common at the time, all the writers wrote the language down differently, idiosyncratically and often inconsistently. Ashani's text was riddled with apostrophes, which meant that it rendered Jamaican as a visually challenging version of English. *Whiplash* was a working draft for actors with little punctuation. Much of the spelling was English but the spirit and sound was clearly 1970s urban working class Jamaican. In all the plays one word could be spelled differently any number of times depending on who was speaking, in what context and to whom they were speaking.

I began by attempting to systematize the spelling but ran headfirst into the complications of the polyphonic voices of the characters, who represent differing positions on the linguistic spectrum but who switch between the myriad registers and class codes. There followed an agonizing and extremely time consuming process of changing, re-changing and then changing back. I finally compromised and settled on a few general principles. First, given the range of social and racial positions in the scripts, I committed to representing all varieties of spoken Jamaican and decided to worry less about the spelling and focus more on the rhythm and sound of the spoken language. Second, because of this decision I decided to

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accept the inconsistencies and embrace the contraction that came with relying on at least three sometimes conflicting spelling systems – English, the systems used by Cassidy and LePage (1967) and the hybrid traditions which have evolved over the years. Morris' edit of Louise Bennett's verse (Morris in Bennett 1982) represents a middle ground or compromise that reflects what emerged historically through use in relation to the spellings up to the mid-1980s. Cassidy painstakingly and brilliantly created a phonetic system but since most Jamaicans learn to read Jamaican or English by translating things up or down the continuum, it can be difficult for those who have not learned to read it in formal settings.

Third, as much as possible I tried to pay attention to what the writers themselves seemed to want to do. I worked alongside their choices, paying particular attention to the transitions between English and Jamaican, editing so that it “sounded right”. I attempted to render the rhythm and tonal variety of the Jamaican language. For example, in *Masqueraders* I changed

Them no widen nuttin. Them waa blind yuh to reality, then pick yuh pocket
and yuh brains.

to

Dem nuh widen nutten. Dem waan blind yuh to reality, den pick yuh pocket
an yuh brains. (p. 53)

Not perfect, but the English “them” ruined the sound of the language and made the sentence very unclear and “nuttin” was not accurate in terms of sound and confusing if it was supposed to be a translation of English. In *Whiplash* a few syntactical changes were made to keep the characters usage consistent and the spelling was altered to make it more or less consistent with *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine* and to a lesser extent, *Masqueraders*.

This eclectic orthography best represented the shifting location of the characters on the linguistic spectrum and allowed for a variety of readers to interpret the language. Fourth, I included a gloss with definitions to help those struggling with the language spelling and use. This choice seemed to represent the state of the debate in the decade in which the plays were written and produced. In a sense then, the language of the plays themselves represent the complex relations between global and local, and the ways in which the tensions and compromises in this relationship shaped the world of the speaking and writing subject at the time.

Masqueraders

by
Stafford Ashani
(formerly *Stafford Harrison*)



Stafford Ashani (far right) and the cast of *Masqueraders*

PHOTOGRAPHER: Richard Montgomery

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Stafford Arthur Ashani, (formerly Harrison) was born in Jamaica in 1953. He attended Excelsior High School, where he was introduced to theatre, and the Jamaica School of Drama. He later studied film at New York University. His first play, **The Quickie** (dir. Munair Zacca) was produced at the Barn Theatre in Kingston, Jamaica in 1975. **Masqueraders** (dir. Stafford Harrison) opened at the Amphitheatre of the Cultural Training Centre (now the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts) in 1977. Ashani also wrote **Anancy and the Unsung Heroes Outwest** (dir. Trevor Nairne, 1978), **Foreign Mind** (dir. Stafford Ashani, 1990) and **Bar Jonah** (dir. Henk Tjon, 1998) He acted for film, television and the stage; and produced **Reggae Strong**, a television series which was broadcast on television in the US and Jamaica between 1984 and 1994. At the time of his death he was tutor in playwriting at the Jamaica School of Drama at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts. He died in Kingston, Jamaica in 2009. He was 55.

Rasta, Respectability and the Challenge to Colonial Cultural Authority: An introduction to Stafford Ashani's *Masqueraders*

Masqueraders was the first play to be written, directed and produced by a Rastafari playwright in a formal theatre in Jamaica with a cast of mainly dreadlocked actors. It opened in 1977 at the open air amphitheatre of the then new Cultural Training Centre which was built on the grounds of Up Park Camp where the British military had been stationed until 1962. The Centre promised new opportunities for Jamaican performers, visual artists and audiences, and was conceptualized as a unique space which would produce “cultural agents” who would be community-based teacher-artists. Unlike the other two plays in the collection, *Masqueraders* played to small audiences and had a short run in spite of being praised by reviewer Mervyn Morris for its “gusto, decadent intelligence, the impartiality of its witty disrespect.”¹

Ashani was one of a few Black middle-class Rastafari writers at a time when to be dreadlocked in Jamaica was a statement of commitment to Rastafari; it was not “just a hairstyle.” The presence of the mainly dreadlocked cast – made up of Antiguan Dreadlocks Frank I, Jamaican performers Noel Walcott, dancer Patsy Ricketts, Patrick Lewis and African American actress and singer Pam Reid – was itself an embodied act of cultural defiance and a statement of commitment to a search for a Black diasporic aesthetic that was simultaneously Caribbean and postcolonial.

Masqueraders explores the many cultural struggles which underpin the search for new theatrical languages in the context of decolonization. The play is an irreverent and sometimes vulgar meditation on the arts as a form of social intervention and transformation; and on the meaning of being an artist and/or spectator. It challenges established forms of cultural authorization and explores the impulse to power and the sadism inherent in colonial spectatorship. Alternately irreverent, hilarious, surprising and deeply disturbing, the play dramatizes the relationship

1 *The Gleaner*, March 9, 1977: 4.

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between violence, social rupture and transformation. It does so by drawing on plantation masquerade forms, Rastafari and Western theatre. The script is a daring example of the theatre of the 1970s which has never really received the attention it deserves.

Ashani was born in 1953 in Jamaica. He was still a student at Excelsior High School, when he was cast in *A Liberated Woman* written by Barry Reckord and produced by his brother Lloyd. He had to get permission from the school to be in the production because of its sexual content, and after that he continued to work with the Reckord brothers in the productions of the National Theatre Trust, one of many attempts to develop a professional National Theatre in Jamaica. He went on to act in several productions at The Barn theatre including *See Mama* by Eddy Henry and *The Criminals* by Jose Triana. The Barn was a small and highly productive theatre founded by Yvonne Jones Brewster (Artistic Director), Trevor Rhone, Munair Zacca and others. The theatre was a renovated garage at the edge of Yvonne Jones' family home near the centre of Kingston and it quickly became a lively venue for innovative Jamaican theatre. Under the leadership of Jones Brewster and Rhone, it built a committed audience for Jamaican plays, such as Rhone's *Smile Orange*, *Sleeper* and *School's Out* which ran for unprecedented lengths of time.

Ashani produced his first play, *The Quickie* in 1977 at The Barn. Directed by Munair Zacca, it combined a romance with a story about corrupt business practices and was likely based on Ashani's experience of manufacturing and supplying sweeties (candy) to shops in and around Kingston with the help of Zacca and his battered Volkswagen.² Munair and his car are also likely the inspiration for the character and actions of Mad Dog in *Masqueraders*.

In 1975, Ashani was among a small group of performers, directors and actors who began collaborating to produce a theatrical method based mainly on image and actor body. The short-lived workshop was led by director Carroll Dawes, and playwright and director Dennis Scott, and it aimed to explore theatrical languages that drew on Caribbean performance traditions as well as African, Asian and Western experimental traditions of Meyerhold, Brecht, Artaud, Grotowski and Brook, among others. The workshop included performers such as Belinda Barnes Durity, Anna Hearne, Claudia Robinson, Rennie Yearde, Carol Lawes, Munair Zacca, myself and many others. Weekly improvisations, studio exercises and discussions provided space for embodied research into the development of impro-

² Zacca 2009.

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visational techniques and psychophysical exercises based on the identification of Caribbean performance principles. The workshop was linked to the Jamaica School of Drama which, under the leadership of Carroll Dawes, aimed to develop a National Theatre that stressed African diasporic cultural repertoires and was Black in leadership and direction but also culturally diverse. Dawes produced a number of bold productions such as Dennis Scott's *Echo in the Bone*; Soyinka's *Bacchae of Euripides*; *Woyengi* by Obotunde Ijimere; Shakespeare's *MacBeth*; and Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. All of these emphasized a theatre of physicality and relied on drum score, actor body and stark visual image. In the main, through production style and or content, they stressed the connection of Caribbean culture to continental African postcolonial theatre.

Discussion and practice in this and other workshops and a commitment to Rastafari, articulated in long reasonings with Mutabaruka, led Ashani to break with inherited colonial dramatic forms which Muta called "the table and chair theatre" and to move beyond European and American theatricals, folk musicals, and social realism associated with the theatrical landscape of the time. *Masqueraders* is the culmination of this process and is about a group of itinerant dreadlocked players and their search for a place to present their work. When they perform in a market, one of the players, Hawk, steals food from a vendor and the crowd in the market turns against them. Acting out violent homophobic and anti-Rasta prejudices, they catch and brutally beat Hopey, the most gentle and optimistic member of the troupe. As a result the players are forced to seek the apparent safety of the formal theatre to tell their story to a bourgeois audience.

Like Glauber Rocha's aesthetic of hunger in Brazilian cinema where hunger became a metaphor for the search for truth,³ Ashani's work reaches for a theatrical language based on scarcity and the cultural act of making something out of little or nothing. Describing how he came to write the play, he explains:

"We had just done *See Mama*, Eddy Henry's play about a youth who is in rebellion and his mother who is in America and then we did *Summer Dread*, Slade Hopkinson's play which (Dennis) Scott directed. It was about a revolution backed by the Cubans that fails. I wanted to do something that took a totally different look at cultural rebellion. I felt there was the need for a different representation of rebellion. I was sick of most of the theatre I was seeing.... *Masqueraders* was written in rebellion against those plays. It took me two weeks."⁴

3 Xavier 1997.

4 Interview with Ashani, January 2008.

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Ashani's rebellion against realism resulted in a play that combines traditional African diasporic masquerade forms with Western dramatic languages. The piece is characterized by a rejection of illusionism, non-linear treatment of time, parody, carnivalesque improvisation and role switching. *Masqueraders* linked the mode of address of the formal theatre to the contemporary Rastafari popular culture of the 1970s for the first time. It also combined this with an effective translation of Jonkonnu or plantation masquerade to the stage, thus gesturing to both old and new African diasporic performance languages and traditions.

Errol Hill (1992) discusses the precedents for this in his study of Jamaican theatre when he proposes that Jamaican drama relies on both formal Western dramatic traditions and African diasporic rituals and entertainments developed in plantation society. He distinguishes between popular performances and a formal Jamaican theatre, which he proposes came into being when 19th century Jamaican playwrights began to make dramas about Black characters and their local experiences in the language they spoke. Hill uses the term *creole* to refer to the exchanges that take place when there is an encounter between different racial and cultural groups that results in borrowing, appropriation and re-combinations of symbolic languages. He drew on the work of Cuban theorist Fernando Ortiz (1955 and 1995) and the work of poet Kamau Brathwaite (1971) and historian Elsa Goveia (1956) who were among the first to argue that transculturation between European and African culture structured Caribbean society through a process of conflict and accommodation.

Hill does not address the principles of cultural authorization that inhere in colonial artistic institutions, nor the genres that they produce and circulate – though it has been argued by scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu (1993) that genre is linked to power through the productive effects of institutional cultural authority. Exchanges between groups that are differently positioned within social hierarchies are not simply examples of friendly borrowing. Rather they take place through a complicated struggle mediated by unequal power relations that act as filters for the terms and conditions of cultural mixing. These filters are systems of taste and cultural authorization.

Ashani's play boldly asserts that colonial forms of authorization, validation and critical tastes have to be ruptured if forms of cultural identification that break with old social distinctions are to develop in the postcolonial context. The conflict over the play's script demonstrates that merely adding, stirring and mixing local traditions into colonial dramatic frameworks does not fundamentally alter the way the

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colonized are represented, or the symbolic processes that structure their identification. Theatre that incorporates “folk” elements is not necessarily transformative since the staging of “folksiness” can reinforce pejorative images of difference. Staging traditional forms on Western stages may be a start, but the power relations and the assumptions underlying colonial forms have to be disturbed. Just staging difference risks re-producing stereotypes such as that of the legendary “Quashee” figure, a childlike, lazy and potentially violent character, sketched by the British essayist Thomas Carlyle in his famous essay on Jamaica. Carlyle described Quashee as “a pretty kind of man... a handsome glossy thing”,⁵ arguing that this exotic feminized man was also a serious threat to Western civilization if he was not disciplined and controlled.

More than a century of British colonial education had inculcated in the mainly mixed race middle class, the idea that ‘being civilized’ meant appreciating the values represented in Western high art and its institutions. These were the self-aversive subjects Fanon (1967) described in *Black Skin, White Masks*, who internalized the idea that difference was a mark of subordination and who mis-recognized themselves as British. For them, assimilation into the values of British high culture was a sign of civilization. They had been carefully schooled to epitomize the ideas articulated in Macaulay’s 19th century memo on colonial education in India where he articulates the terms of a project aimed at creating Brown Englishmen – subjects who, as he put it, were English in all respects except their race. These were the inheritors of state power at Jamaican Independence in 1962 and they made up the majority of theatrical audiences. As Heirstone points out in this exchange with Hopey, their tastes were conservative:

HOPEY

[W]e’re trying something new. We’re putting on a play without a script.

HEIRSTONE

Columbus! Bravo! That’s about as new as yesterday’s manna! But new or not, it won’t work here. Our audience isn’t ready for that sort of thing. They’re narrow minded and complacent. They want to laugh, poke jokes at the same old cornball falling on the slippery banana peel. They want to burst their sides, not think. They’ve had a hard week at the office and they come to be entertained. (p. 50)

5 Carlyle 1853, cited in Hall 2002: 351.

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Ashani tackles the haze of respectability that surrounded the theatre after Independence. He dramatizes the humiliation of negotiating with the patronizing white/brown creole elite, to beg for access to so-called “civilized” institutions while being deprived of the material means to gain entry to them. He demonstrates the painful compromise and misrepresentation which resulted from trying to satisfy the limited tastes of these audiences. Driven by a desire to be counted among the civilized, characters like Heirstone, the creole or upperclass theatre manager and the light skinned peasant farmer reproduce systemic exclusion. Heirstone gives the theatre to the “band of mascots” partly to prove his cosmopolitan sophistication and partly as a concession to the presence of the white-Jamaican actor, Mad Dog, who he recognizes as coming from a well-to-do family. When the players sing a song of gratitude, Day, the troupe’s captain, erupts with rage, shouting:

The shame! I could peel off my skin. Raped again! Still being raped of our culture. Vultures! This is what you all want? Our flesh? Passions? No more!
Stop the confounded noise! (p. 52)

Heirstone’s ‘gift’ is an act of condescension that underlines the policing of institutional access and entrenches sadistic exploitation. What counts as art in this deeply divided context is art by proclamation. “Di judge call it theatre, so is soh,” the farmer states (p. 65).

The safety the players seek is illusory, for the audience enjoys their pain. Indeed the act of looking at their pain re-inscribes domination and the violence of everyday life. The audience, gains in power from looking at the dramatization of violence which ironically becomes a marker of their civilization. In the opening scene of the play Day disrupts the one-way gaze created by the convention of the fourth wall. After tying up and beating the feminist dancer Lilly, he interrogates the audience about the motives driving spectatorship, saying:

So this is what you wanted? A piece of drama? Or you came because yuh hear some dreads putting on a show and yuh want to see if is really wax wi wax wi hair, ee? Is the pretty building why yuh here? Or to show your fine feathered escort seh yuh cultured? Vultures! Lights! Lights! Mek mi look pon dem face.
(p. 38)

Day turns their gaze back on themselves, and calls attention to the *impulse to power* behind spectatorship. For Ashani as for Fanon, spectatorship in the context of unresolved hierarchies of difference is always hostile and sadistic. In an interview, Ashani described the moment when he became aware of this. He was at a

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Saturday morning concert, part of the working class or downtown performance circuit that existed until the 1970s in Kingston. He witnessed a performance by a popular comic duo in which one of the two, angered by the audience's unresponsiveness, turned his back, dropped his pants and showed his bottom complete with a blinking lightbulb to the audience. The audience went wild with delight. Ashani was disturbed, angry, hurt and astonished. "I swore at that moment I would never let an audience force me to do that to myself."⁶

Power and the desire to dominate are linked because the one-way gaze of the spectator fixes the difference between spectator and actor. The opening scene of *Masqueraders* reveals entertainment as a form of violence that re-iterates the humiliation and objectification of the Other established in the act of colonization. Saidiya Hartman (1997) brilliantly argues that the performances of the enslaved objectify the Other both to spectators and to the object of racial humiliation. *Masqueraders* demonstrates that the theatre, among the oldest of colonial cultural institutions, depends on the sadistic gaze of audiences who enjoy ogling the antics of their supposed inferiors. This play dramatizes the hostile gaze of spectatorship synthesizes impulses of desire and violence and then attempts to reverse it by confronting the audience with their actions while continually disrupting the spectacle.

In *Discourse on Colonialism* Martinican writer/politician Aimé Césaire (1972 [1955]) argued that the violence of modern colonial capitalism performs European savagery and that Europe ruled with amoral violence. He famously proposed that demands for brotherhood and equality associated with the Age of the Enlightenment depended on the violence of colonization. Likewise, some Rastafari attribute colonial violence to an inherently diseased European psyche – a view echoed by Hawk in *Masqueraders*. Like Césaire's essay, *Masqueraders* explodes notions of "progress" and "civilization", demonstrating that the ultimate achievement of colonization occurs when the colonized ingest and enact the ethic of domination.

The predatory nature of power which drives this process is also echoed in Day's patriarchal relationship to the players and in Hawk's amoral presence. Day's authoritarian presence in the troupe is constantly challenged by Lilly, the idealistic, feminist dancer who wants to lead the troupe herself. She despises his authoritarian and homophobic style but can never actually overthrow him. Power is presented as inherently imperfect, violent and repressive, but newness can only come into being through perpetual challenges to repressive authoritarianism

⁶ Interview with Ashani, January 7, 2008.

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which reiterates its hold on the present by determining what elements of memory are selected for replay and by whom.

Ashani's treatment of the white actor Mad Dog (probably inspired by Noel Coward's song "Mad Dogs and Englishmen") suggests that the postcolonial moment offers the opportunity to re-invent white identity. Mad Dog threatens to leave the troupe complaining he is always made to stand in for the evil colonialist, the "white capitalist son of a bitch." Lilly stops him, proposing that performance in the context of black community offers whites like him a chance to do something different, to rewrite what went wrong four hundred years ago. Through performance the colonizer can re-create her/himself "by making the right choices your people were wrong about" (p. 72). At the same time it is an irony of Jamaican racial discourses that this "white" actor is in the terms of colonial racial hierarchies actually a brown man – an Arab who is not white since his name is probably Mahfood. For example, Day says, in response to a question about his name "My food or something like that, his family name" (p. 113) – betraying the precariousness of Jamaican "whiteness" as a stable category and possibly gesturing to Islamic colonization of Africa.

In *Masqueraders*, the emphasis on the sadism inherent in colonial theatrical tradition illustrates the tension between terror and creativity. The play seems to ask: Is creativity fundamentally linked to violence in societies forged through violent domination? This question gives us insight into Ashani's choice of the traditional form of Jonkonnu as a container for the plot; and it is to Jonkonnu that I shall now turn.

Jonkonnu, performance and re-traditionalization in *Masqueraders*

Jonkonnu was a plantation performance that cut and mixed Yoruba Egungun masquerade, Yam festivals, and ceremonial rites of passage with parodic borrowings from British popular drama.⁷ Traditionally these carnivalesque performances took place on Boxing Day (December 26th). Groups (bands) of performers and singers (slave and free), accompanied by bamboo fife, drums and other percussive instruments, took over towns and great houses in the holiday celebration. Originally made up of a few masked players, bands later comprised large groups of costumed dancers and singers and finally came to be composed of dancing men cross-dressed as women playing stock characters such as the Queen, Warriors, Pitchy Patchy, Cowhead, Whore Gal and others. The masquerade taught children

7 Drewal 1992; Patterson 1967; Nunley and Bettelheim 1988; Ryman 1984.

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to control their terrors and be strong in the face of fear, in the manner of African rites of passage to adulthood.

The performances also broke down the rigid hierarchies of the estate. During the performance, masked subordinates could invade elite space. They improvised aggressive challenges through sword play and rope tricks to each other and the audience. They performed sexual movements with upper class ladies and gentlemen – transgressing the social grid. They challenged, but always covertly, under the cover of the mask in a manner which absolved them of accountability for their actions.⁸ In so doing they gestured toward the unimaginable, liberating constraints on the imagination and creating a space for rethinking everyday conventions.

Masqueraders refashions Jonkonnu as drama. At the start of Act II, the stock figures are presented. Day is Captain or King of the Band. Fatty is Queen. Lilly is Cowhead, the enduring symbol of African matriarchy; Hopey is Actor Boy and Hawk is the Devil. As in traditional Jonkonnu each scene of the play is structured around combative or agonistic relationships between archetypes as in the mock sword play and stick fights of the warriors. The rope which is the main prop of the play is also an adaptation from Jonkonnu, but it echoes the whip of the plantation and the rope of the circus act. The cast threaten, abuse, beat, and tie up each other in competing bids to control the narrative, continually subverting audience tastes and expectations and fighting over who has the right to speak or act and how.

Victor Turner⁹ argues that ritual performances (such as Jonkonnu) create liminal or threshold states between different social realities and beyond the everyday. There, social conventions can be suspended and sometimes reversed. For postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha (1994), this in-between space at the border of social conventions is a hybrid place which offers the possibility of suspending fixed social relationships and identities. There, difference can be considered and experienced without having to fit into existing hierarchies.

Traditional Jonkonnu exemplified both liminality and hybridity in several ways. It parodied white and near white figures of authority, transgressed fixed races and gender roles and blurred the line between male/female, animal/human and living/dead presences. It expressed the power of subordinates to create unpredictable reversals of power and therefore indicated a possible third space. This suspension of everyday power relations allowed for performances in which mimicry of

8 Scott 1990.

9 Turner 1967, 1969, 1974.

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the upper classes became the weapon of menace that Bhabha contends it is and that Ashani in 1976, prior to Bhabha's naming, presents in the play.

Through its adaptation of the traditional form, *Masqueraders* dramatizes a cultural struggle between written and oral/embodied knowledge production, and between respectability and vulgarity. It also offers a meditation on improvisation as a survival strategy. In Act One, Heirstone demands a script from the players to assess their fitness to perform in his theatre. The players write the script but then realize that the written text provides the gatekeepers of cultural legitimacy with the evidence to contain, censor and possibly refuse them entry to the theatre. Day then burns the script and calls on the players to improvise their ideas, chanting:

The script is a player's prison, his cage, his coffin.
Dead words, dead notes on a score.
A sad song of a dead tale. I'll set it afire.
I'll cremate it! I'll not allow it to be buried in our minds and souls,
there to rot and infect our whole being with its ghastly images. (p. 58)

Diana Taylor (2003) reminds us that colonized peoples, who are usually positioned as objects of knowledge in the historical archives of the colonized, take up performance as a means of knowledge production. The subordinate bring alternative histories to life by creating multiple and proliferating versions of cultural memory and action in living repertoires that can be circulated through the body in performance. While official practices obviously have embodied characteristics, Taylor's concept of the repertoire allows for a theory of performance as knowledge creation; one that takes account of how the suppressed memories and desires of the dominated can be simultaneously transmitted and transformed in plural ways through body and voice in action. This idea of the reproduction of suppressed memory as a performed practice offers a role for the actor as a producer of knowledge and a force for the resolution of difficult histories. As Hopey says:

[W]e performers... masquerade objects in society's box of divination.
Feathered messengers between heaven and earth... we shake up society and
read its bones. Our ancestors masqueraded in Africa. Then Jonkonnu paraded
Jamaica and all over the New World in masks, with song and dance. Under
many masks we show society's problems, and possessed by ancient gods, we
show the way back home. (p. 87)

Performers in Ashani's play teach, challenge and improvise conflicts and alternative scenarios. Provocateurs of possibility, they incite, invoke, heal and project past and future actions. Lilly envisions perfecting her transcendent dance in a

Masqueraders

world free from patriarchal authority. Day refuses to be a “commercial-minded whore” in the vulgar marketplace and reaches for a world in which his imagination is liberated from the scripts of colonial authority. Hopey claims, “[S]ociety needs us. To communicate feelings and ideas. To teach, help widen the scope of our nation’s insights.” (p. 53)

In *Masqueraders*, performance becomes a site of memory and revision that eludes the market-place, whether that market-place is the literal place where food is sold or the global free market. Memory is performed but it resists commodification. It is structured within old forms and repeated but always with unpredictable difference. American musical theatre, modern dance, can-can, reggae and neo-African masquerades exist alongside a world of unreliable motor cars, Mao Zedong’s radicalism and the burning of draft cards. The shifts in time and place suggest multiple and colliding temporalities. Ashani’s use of traditional play does not advocate the fixed preservation of cultural retentions from an idealized African past. Rather, it demonstrates that the assumptions underlying both tradition *and* modernity can be transformed when they are enacted simultaneously. Just as Rastafari musicians use the most advanced technology to communicate in the recording studio, so *Masqueraders* performs what Loren Kruger calls a process of *re-traditionalization*,¹⁰ that is, it translates the traditional into the context of the present while transforming modernity itself. The bricolage of symbols and narratives offers a provisional and uneasy balance of the forces of power and resistance, past and present, human and nature, self and other. The contradiction is itself generative.

These and all the other elements discussed make *Masqueraders* a powerful and brilliantly original example of the theatre of the time. In its vulgarity, humour, and philosophical explorations of art and power, the play makes a compelling intervention. It is a vigorous performance of challenges to existing forms of cultural authorization and artistic identity, and a strong statement about the potential newness of combining a range of performance conventions within an African diasporic cultural structure.

10 Kruger 1999.

MASQUERADERS

by *Stafford Ashani*

PRODUCTION HISTORY

This play opened on March 4, 1977 in the Amphitheatre of the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts (formerly the Cultural Training Centre). The original cast was as follows:

Cast

<i>Day</i>	Frank-I Francis
<i>Hawk</i>	Patrick Lewis
<i>Hopey</i>	Noel Walcott
<i>Pitchy Patchy/Clown</i>	Calvin McDonald
<i>Mad Dog</i>	Andrew Garbutt
<i>Lilly</i>	Patsy Ricketts
<i>Fattie</i>	Pamela Reid

Costume Design	Richard Montgomery
Director	Stafford Ashani (formerly Stafford Harrison)

Composer	Marjorie Whyllie
Lyrics	Stafford Ashani

Masqueraders

CHARACTERS

DAY A dreadlocks; group leader and singer
HAWK Group drummer
HOPEY A dreadlocks; a lame performer
(actor, singer, dancer)
PITCHY PATCHY Clown; dancer and mime
MAD DOG A white actor
LILLY Group dancer; a virgin
FATTY Group singer; Day's woman

SETTING

Bare stage

ACT I

Sound of drum and fife (Jonkonnu music) offstage. A SPOTLIGHT spot comes up on a bare stage as PITCHY PATCHY enters: moving with a staccato rhythm, like a wound-up mechanical toy. He is wearing a "professor's cap" and has a cane in his hand. He dances the figure eight while miming teaching a lesson. He grinds slowly to a halt as the music slows and fades to silence. He freezes.

A few beats later, five ACTORS enter with instruments and crocus (burlap) bags with props: DAY, the group's leader; FATTY, his woman and the group's singer – she carries a baby in its cradle; HAWK, the group's drummer with his drums; HOPEY, the lame performer hopping on his cane; and LILLY, the group's dancer. They put down their instruments in a semicircle, chorus fashion, and solemnly walk downstage towards the AUDIENCE. They break into applause as the LIGHTS go down on them and simultaneously come up on the AUDIENCE. They cease applauding and stare at the AUDIENCE. Pause. As DAY begins speaking, LIGHTS come up onstage and go down on the AUDIENCE.

DAY

(Addressing the AUDIENCE with a cynical smile.)

Wah yuh really come yah fah? Why this play – ee? Why should I be talking

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to you now? Ever ask yourself why these minutes? They always seem to have happened before. Why this moment?

(He turns to the other ACTORS onstage.)

See... it's done!

(He slaps a high-five with HAWK.)

Just like that.

(Snaps his fingers.)

The beginning pass! We did it!

(Turns to the AUDIENCE.)

And yuh don't even know why yuh here!

HAWK

Or don't have the courage to admit ... not even to themselves.

DAY

In the quiet of their minds, souls yearn to be turned on. They are hoping to see some flesh, maybe. Blood! Two thousand years ago, it was blood they wanted in their arenas. They turned lions against lions.

(The ACTORS mime lions.)

To smell some blood. Dirty little savages! They'll settle for a little rump these days though. Tits and thighs!

HAWK

Maybe tonight they'll participate. Yes! As our brothers did back home in Africa before the great separation. But this audience would rape you, Day, if they had the courage.

LILLY

(In disgust.)

Or the stomach.

DAY

Yes! Stomach and necks! Toes! Calves! Smooth curves! Anything to relieve the boredom.

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HAWK

That's why they came. It's the boredom!

HOPEY

No. Not all of them.

DAY

You mean maybe they were hoping to learn something? THEM? Ignorant apes! They came to be ENTERTAINED. Hear some music. See some flesh bleed.

HAWK

Maybe ah should drop mi pants and beat mi meat for dem!

(He starts pulling down his trousers.)

LILLY

(Stopping him.)

You ooze corruption. You sick, warty little sore! I don't know bout the rest of you, but I'm leaving!

DAY

You're not getting out of here. Once you're born here, there's no escape until you die.

LILLY

(Starting to leave.)

I gone!

HAWK

Him wi kill yuh!

(He grabs a rope and threatens her with it.)

LILLY

I'll die young and be a knockout!

(Points to Fatty.)

Look at him dead corpse of a wife who slavishly stays.

(Referring to FATTY.)

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Is she any example of the virtues of living? Breast flat like patty-bag, hang down touching her navel. Wid him big stick bending her back. Kill mi! Rip out mi heart if yuh want. Shoot mi in di head. Yuh still cyaan keep mi here wid you two sick, slack sinners!

(She turns to leave.)

DAY

Tie her up!

(HAWK grabs her and ties her up with the rope: She struggles and screams.)

Gag her!

(HAWK gags her with his scarf. Pause.)

So this is what you wanted? A piece of drama?

(The ACTORS laugh.)

Or yuh came because yuh hear some dreads putting on a show and yuh want to see if is really wax wi wax wi hair, ee? Is di pretty building why yuh here? Or to show your fine-feathered escort seh yuh cultured? Vultures! Lights! Lights! Mek mi look pon dem face.

(LIGHTS come up on the AUDIENCE.)

But watch dem nuh! Sniff, sniff. Smell dem! Woolworth's on sale! Vanity! Cheap trinkets! Darkness! Darkness! Turn off di lights before I puke!

(All the LIGHTS fade down to blackness.)

Oh, like a breath of fresh air. Oh darkness, my old friend, come soothe these wounds of unpleasantness, cover our ugliness. Make us one with the eternal AUM.

HAWK

Yes! In the darkness, can't tell the smell of one stinking armpit from the next.

(He laughs hysterically.)

DAY

Make us anonymous. Unanimous is the vote for anonymity! That's why the world is void of strong characters and great individuals! Except Christ! He is always with us.

(He bursts out laughing as the LIGHTS come up onstage again.)

Masqueraders

HOPEY

(Advancing on DAY.)

Can we start?

HAWK

We have already. I'm sure ten minutes pass by this.

HOPEY

The show! Not this shit! What is this, anyway?! Yuh advertise wi having a show and when wi show up yuh abuse the audience? Yuh abuse Lilly? You're full a shit!

HAWK

Don't cry, baby. Don't cry, my little darling. Should I stroke your bat-bat for you?

HOPEY

(Threatening with his stick.)

I'll kill you, yuh know. Just so and I'll kill yuh. Yuh don't know me. I'm going to loose Lilly. I'm not playing anymore.

(PITCHY PATCHY throws a machete at HOPEY's feet. Pause.)

HAWK goes over to LILLY, lies on her, hugging and rubbing on her with his body.)

DAY

Yes! Kill him! Tek up the machete and chop him in him rass back!

HAWK

Oh, baby! Hopey, di gal yah fleshy, man. Meaty and juicy like mango!

HOPEY

Get off! Tek yuh crab-louse self off mi girl!

HAWK

Big joke! Ha! I going show yuh what I do her las night! Oh, dis body, dis virgin territory! Oh!

HOPEY

Liar! Damn liar!

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DAY

Watch di coward, nuh? Tink a man could try that wid Fatty an I stand back and watch? An I have a weapon? Mince meat fi patty! Me an di cutlass inna him back!

(He picks up the machete and hands it to HOPEY.)

See yah. Kill di bwoy!

(HOPEY takes the machete and slaps HAWK across the face with it. HAWK doubles over in pain, then gets up with murder in his eyes.)

HAWK

I was hoping one day you'd make that mistake. Where is mine? Clown!? Jonkonnu!? Where is my sword? You know how long I've been waiting? Lame or not, you going to pay! Clown! Mascot! My machete in two seconds or I may chop you up too!

FATTY

Please, please stop now. It don't look good an it not right. We shouldn't fight mongst we self, especially in front of strangers. Dem brave di criminal dem... di police dem to come out. They could stay home, watch TV, listen radio, or go stadium, go see sports. But dem come here... to see a show, not a brawl! Please? We cyaan afford fi dem fi leave and tell people not to come. We need di money... di supportance. If not fi yuhself, tink bout mi baby maintenance.

HOPEY

(He unties LILLY.)

Come, Lilly. Let's get in place for the act.

(He tries to take LILLY's hand: She pulls away angrily.)

LILLY

Keep yuh hans to yuhself!

HOPEY

Don't say that. Please, love, you sound so bitter.

LILLY

Don't call me that!

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HOPEY

We're friends. I love you.

(He holds LILLY.)

LILLY

Love who? Love who? Let go! You only want to use me. Lemme go!

HOPEY

Hey, love, remember me? Your old friend, Hopey?

LILLY

Let me go! Let me go and don't call me yuh friend.

HOPEY

As usual, is me, di old doormat, di whipping stick. As usual, is me yuh treating like dat. I limbo over backwards in love for you and di only time we touch is when yuh angry at di world. You always tear into me like dis. Always! Yuh so unfair. Don't be unkind, Lilly.

HAWK

Give a little, Lilly. Lill of the lilly punny!

HOPEY

Cut out the irreverence.

LILLY

You're all the same. Out for what you can get.

HOPEY

You know I really care about you. Why you always treat me like this?

LILLY

It's all yuh deserve. Yuh so... so... lame! Yuh never fight when Day and Hawk bully us.

HOPEY

What can I do?

LILLY

Show them you're a man too!

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HOPEY

I thought you liked me despite my being a man. Every time I act like one with you, yuh get vex or turn off completely.

LILLY

My art comes first. You know that. I want to be really great at something. As good or better than any man ever was. And I'm going to do it! You all won't stop me!

HOPEY

You need to understand your body some more. All its capabilities.

LILLY

He told me it would be like this. That you would try anything to get at me, even act like you're on my side. Mister D was right! All you men just want our bodies.

HOPEY

What dat batty-bwoy know?

LILLY

Don't call him that! He is the best dance teacher in the whole world!

HAWK

This Mister D in her mind! How come him so great and we never hear nutten bout him? She talk as if she was with him yesterday, and yet, from the time she with this group, no one has seen her precious "Mister D".

LILLY

He exist! He exist! He taught me modern dance, and promised that he'd be always with me in spirit. And when I'm good enough, he'll come to one of our performances and take me away to dance with his touring troupe. I believe him and every time I'm up here, I dance for him and him alone! He says if I obey him, one day I'll be great! Better than he was when he was young. He could be here tonight.

(She addresses the AUDIENCE.)

Oh, Mister D, if you're out there—

Masqueraders

HOPEY

Would you leave me, Lilly? Jus like that?

LILLY

I love you, Hohey. Really I do. But I love to dance more! I live to dance!

HOPEY

Live for me then.

LILLY

Mister D warned me of that too. That's why I never let you get too close to me. I would lose my centre, and it would be all over. You would strain my muscles. I would get pregnant and end up like Fatty. That's why he told me to join this group. So I would see Fatty everyday and remember his warnings about men.

HAWK

Di man is a batty-bwoy! Di theatre full a dem! Him only tell you so because him see how you beautiful an him wah keep all di men to himself.

FATTY

Dem nuh interested in wi personal life. Come wi gi dem a nice show.

(She crosses and takes up a position as if to begin singing.)

DAY

AFTER we meditate on the importance of this particular one, now, in this galaxy, in these skins. Here and not somewhere else.... Is there a somewhere else when you're not there? Where is here? Shake off tired conventions and expectations of the work-a-day world. Arouse and alert the senses for manifestations of new but ancient gods.

(He addresses the AUDIENCE.)

I know you want me to entertain you. But why? Is it just because we invited you?

(MUSIC CUE: A Can-Can beat. DAY sings.)

I KNOW YOU WANT ME TO ENTERTAIN YOU
I CAN

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CHORUS of ACTORS

CA-CA-CA-CAN CAN

DAY

DO

CHORUS

DO-DO-DO-DOO DOO DOO

DAY

FOR YOU

CHORUS

AS YOU

DAY

WISH ME TO... BUT I WON'T

CHORUS

NOT EXACTLY

DAY

I'LL PLAY MELODIES ON THE DRUM
RHYTHMS ON THE FIFE
I'LL PUT REGGAE IN DEH

CHORUS

IN A DEH
IN A DEH

DAY

CAUSE I'M NOT YOUR CHUM
AND THIS SWEET LIFE
AIN'T NO CABARET
YOU PAY YOUR MONEY

CHORUS

MONEY MONEY
DONEY DONEY

Masqueraders

DAY

HOPE TO GET A LAUGH
THIS SHOW MAY JUST GIVE YOU THE COUGHS
THE THEATRE BUG MAY INFECT YOU, HONEY

CHORUS

HONEY HONEY
HONEY HONEY

DAY

YOU'LL LEAVE SCHOOL
JOB, FORMER VOCATIONS LIKE FOOLS
STEP UP HERE AND ACT REAL FUNNY

CHORUS

FUNNY FUNNY
FUNNY FUNNY

DAY

THAT'S WHEN IT STUNG YOU

CHORUS

THE ENTERTAINMENT BUG

DAY

AND YOU'LL WANT TO DANCE WITH ME

CHORUS

COME ON AND PARTY PARTY PARTY

(The song builds to a wild 'ska' dance.)

PARTY PARTY PARTY PARTY PARTY
PARTY PARTY PARTY PARTY PARTY!!!

MAD DOG

(Shouting from the AUDIENCE.)

I'll party! I'll take part!

(The SPOTLIGHT picks him up, coming through the AUDIENCE as the other LIGHTS go down.)

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I'll participate. So why go on without me?

HOPEY

Look yah! The Ace of Diamonds, just strolling in!

(MAD DOG steps onstage.)

DAY

GET OFF THE STAGE!

(DAY screams at him.)

O! F! F! OUT! You can't come waltzing on stage as you like. We want audience participation, yes, but only when it's asked for. Get off the stage!

MAD DOG

Hey! What is this?

DAY

Telling you may incriminate all of us. Now get off the stage before ah throw a tantrum like all great artists are expected to every once in a while.

(He screams.)

GET OUT, GET OUT, GET OUT! GET OUT!!!

MAD DOG

No! This is my idea. All of ours. That's why we're here. And I'm not leaving unless I get my money back!

HOPEY

You couldn't possibly be one of us. The show started years ago, and look when you come creeping in? No, man. You must be part of a different show! Come off di stage, ugly bwoy! Tek yuh clumsy self off di stage!

(HOPEY hooks MAD DOG round the neck with his cane and drags him toward the AUDIENCE.)

MAD DOG

I want my money back! Gimme back mi money, or I'll mash up the place! No show, no dough!

(The ACTORS beat MAD DOG back into the AUDIENCE.)

I can't spend my money to help you and you abuse me.

Masqueraders

DAY

Yuh deserve fi wi box yuh, spit pon yuh, chop yuh inna likkle pieces and throw yuh in di garbage pan! Indisciplined filth! Think money can buy inner beauty?

WORK! DISCIPLINED WORK! PUNCTUALITY! Respect for the show! Suppose we had sat around waiting for you? The audience nuh leave by this? I can't work with immature, unprofessional little boys! Who allowed this frowsy tail mad dog into the group? No one did... You hung round like some mangy bitch! An outcast we feel sorry for. So out of pity, we include you in our cast. And look at the gratitude! A public embarrassment! How are we going to build a country – no, a world! – of any worth, if indisciplined apes keep coming late? What's your excuse? Tell us! That will be a laugh. We're here for entertainment. Tell us. Did you think of an excuse while coming here or you need more time to rehearse?

MAD DOG

I had a flat tire.

HOPEY

(Kissing his teeth.)

Yuh original nuh rass.

(The stage LIGHTS come up as the ACTORS go back onstage.)

MAD DOG

I'm really sorry, man. Believe me, I didn't plan it.

DAY

Sorry? Sorry! Does that change anything? Make me or the audience whole? Heal the wounds your selfishness has opened up? I shit on sorrow! I don't need it. Keep yuh sweet sad sorrow.

MAD DOG

(Going onstage.)

Shit on you! Is my fault this country makes rotten tires? Is my fault the roads are bad? That I'm the only one in the group with a transport? So you all run it into the ground? Is my fault you're all poor and don't have shit? That

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nothing functions? Am I God that I should be flawless? Shit, man, I'm sorry I'm late!

DAY

Remember when we got the theatre? The conditions?

MAD DOG

Am I stupid? Do I look like a fool?

(He says this meaningfully; as if they all understand. He makes a circle around the stage, fixes his clothes, strikes a pose and becomes the theatre owner, HEIRSTONE.)

HEIRSTONE

You want my theatre. You don't know how long you want it for... or what you're showing. You have no money – no name! Yet you want me to give you my theatre. Out of faith? Love? Hope and charity? Do I look guilt-ridden? Under an attack of conscience? No! A billion times, no! With no apology!

HOPEY

(Breaking flashback.)

That's not the time we got the theatre. That's the time it was refused.

LILLY

(Dancing around.)

The other time when it went so well..., so beautifully. When I danced for Heirstone..., he loved it! He really did. I saw it in his face, his eyes!

HAWK

Look! She getting orgasm!

MAD DOG

Who say virgins can't get orgasms?

DAY

Not that time, either. When things looked shaky. When the answer was maybe. That's when I get butterflies in my stomach and I don't know where I am. A yes? Yes! I'll even take a definite no. But a maybe makes me nervous. That time when he warned us....

Masqueraders

(The ACTORS rush for their bags, then freeze with them in their hands. MAD DOG assumes his airs again, becoming HEIRSTONE.)

HEIRSTONE

You're here today to bother me again? Why me? There are millions of other theatres in the world! Why this theatre? Ee? Listen....

(The ACTORS break their freeze.)

I have a friend with a place. Better still, I have an enemy! With a lovely theatre down the road. My main competition. I'll write a recommendation for you to him.

HOPEY

It has to be this place, Mr. Heirstone.

HEIRSTONE

Why?

HOPEY

It's what we've dreamt of! Perfect location. The rates are reasonable.

HEIRSTONE

The theatre rental may be reasonable, but after you get through paying for rehearsal fees, electricity, paying my ground staff, advertising space on my billboard ... and the press! And if you get the theatre you have to pay my front of house people. If any of you do front of house, the audience won't even come into the parking lot. My people are expensive. Not me, just my facilities.

HOPEY

We have worked out a show this time.

HEIRSTONE

You are a show! Just looking at the lot of you is entertainment enough!
A band of mascots!

(He starts walking away.)

HOPEY

We're good players. Hard working, with a professional attitude. We make good music. We have an accomplished singer, and a great dancer. Our lives

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have countless stories to tell. All we need is a chance.

FATTY

You should give us this opportunity to prove ourselves.

HEIRSTONE

With what? Strut your stuff. Do your thing. Turn me on, then!

(He sits in the AUDIENCE.)

So far, all I see before me is a bunch of mad people. I don't need that in my theatre. There are many of you walking the streets! Where is the script? Let me see a script, and I'll consider it.

DAY

There is none.

HEIRSTONE

(Getting up to go.)

You're wasting my time.

HOPEY

What he means is... we're trying something new. We're putting on a play without a script.

HEIRSTONE

Columbus! Bravo! That's about as new as yesterday's manna! But new or not, it won't work here. Our audience isn't ready for that sort of thing. They're narrow minded and complacent. They want to laugh, poke jokes at the same old cornball falling on the slippery banana peel. They want to burst their sides, not think. They've had a hard week at the office and they come to be entertained.

FATTY

We sing and dance. We mime. We discover our traditional roots. They are part of our act.

HEIRSTONE

If that was all, great! But you intend to speak! Spout your mad philosophies! Abuse our sensibilities with your assertions. For improvisations to work, you

Masqueraders

need bright people – genius – if they're going to work well. You're all pretty ordinary, in fact, less than so. If you're all so talented, you wouldn't need to come begging for the theatre. Theatres would be begging for you.

FATTY

There is nothing more ordinary than poor people. That's who we are. All except one, and he is always so late that he misses everything. If you are poor, your talents take longer to come to the fore. But struggle tempers talent and endurance turns talent to skill. There is nothing more ordinary than our suffering. Nothing more ordinary than life, but that's what makes drama. Nothing wrong with being ordinary. All great artists are ordinary human beings who started just like us until they got a break.

LILLY

Please?

HAWK

You won't regret it.

HOPEY

And we wouldn't improvise everything. Not the songs! Not all the action.

HEIRSTONE

One condition. Show me a script. Improvise the script if you have to, but show me one. Typed out and bound. Then I'll give you a definite answer. But let me warn you. If I give you this space, and you carry on any illegal actions, like ganja smoking or hiding stolen goods... OUT! Out on yuh rass, yuh hear? I know all you entertainers. No self control. Sex and drugs, that's all. I won't stand for it! And should you ever get the theatre and don't start yuh show on time... Out! Out on yuh rass! I have the reputation of my establishment to protect. Smoke your ganja and get yuhself crazy somewhere else. Improvise your script somewhere else. But bring it to me, typewritten and bound, by the latest next week, Monday, seven-thirty sharp! Half a second later, no deal!

FATTY

(Clapping hands and singing; the other ACTORS join in the song with dancing.)

YOU WON'T BE SORRY

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YOU GAVE US THE CHANCE
OUR BIG BREAK
THANKS TO YOU
WE MAY BE THE RAKE OF THE TOWN
IT'S TRUE THERE IS NO HEART AROUND
FILLED WITH MORE GRATITUDE
THAN MINE IS FILLED WITH THANKS TO YOU....

ALL

YOU WON'T BE SORRY
YOU GAVE US THE CHANCE
OF A LIFETIME
THANKS TO YOU
WITH OUR DANCE, SONG AND OUR MIME
SO FEW CHANCE TO BRAVE THIS CLIMB
AND JOIN THE MERRY MASQUERADE
IN CELEBRATING SWEET LIFE TRUE....

(DAY interrupts the song.)

DAY

Stop it, stop it! The humiliation! The shame! I could peel off my skin. Raped again! Still being raped of our culture. Vultures! This is what you all want? Our flesh? Passions? No more! Stop the confounded noise!

(He boxes the instruments out of the PLAYERS' hands. They run, scared)

Hawk?! How yuh stand it? Prostrating yuhself in front of dat reactionary white capitalist son of a faggot, ee? Hopey, you stood there while your girl gave herself to Heirstone in a song, and you even joined in! We all joined in... for money! Blood money! Burn it! You should have stopped me, Fatty. And you—

(Turning on PITCHY PATCHY.)

—oh, you would do anything, in a mad search for ritual. Crazy! Dumb an crazy! I could kill myself. Blow up the theatre with all a we for making it happen.

(Turns to AUDIENCE and shouts at them.)

Vultures!

Masqueraders

(Referring to the ACTORS about the AUDIENCE.)

You know what they deserve? Just what they're getting. An anti-play of fears. Is he god? Why should he control our lives?

LILLY

We need the theatre.

DAY

Fuck the theatre!

HOPEY

Remember the result when we tried doing without one? You wouldn't remember. You didn't feel any pain. My back still hurts.

DAY

We have one now and it pains me. The humiliation!

FATTY

It's your pride, Day. Just pride and anger.

DAY

Don't I have anything to be proud of?

(He takes a seat and talks to a Member of the AUDIENCE.)

Isn't a wife and child all a man hopes for? Haven't I achieved great skill in my art? I should be proud! Why should my family beg because they—

(Referring to the rest of the AUDIENCE.)

—want shit?! Heirstone is right. Yes, because I refuse to make a commercial-minded whore of myself, I can't eat.

(He remains seated, dejected.)

MAD DOG

You chose to be an entertainer.

HOPEY

Because society needs us. To communicate feelings and ideas. To teach, help widen the scope of our nation's insights.

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MAD DOG

Then you should be a hypnotist, a priest or a teacher.

HAWK

Dem nuh widen nutten. Dem waan blind yuh to reality, den pick yuh pocket an yuh brains.

LILLY

I'm not humiliated, Day. I enjoy dancing and singing for Heirstone, for the audience. That's why I'm here. I love what I'm doing. Dancing, singing... playing turns me on. All I need in life is to play. Day, you should find something you really enjoy. You play, but not for pleasure. It's more an ego trip with you. That's why you're like that. On a sad ego trip. The audience isn't stupid. They'll sense it and tell their friends not to come. I danced for him because I was glad he gave us the chance to prove ourselves, to show our stuff!

FATTY

Make the best use of this opportunity, Day. Less than a half pound of milk powder leave to feed di baby. Ah don't eat a meal in so long, mi breast dry as mi mouth. Please, Day! Or I may not be able to sing anymore. Just have patience. People will change, the society will get more open minded.

DAY

(Getting up.)

Nonsense!

(He goes and takes up his bag and starts out of the theatre.)

FATTY

Have patience, Day.

DAY

Patience? What am I? Ee? What am I? What am I? What am I?

(As he keeps repeating "What am I", the other ACTORS pick up the phrase and go for their bags and freeze.)

What am I? A pregnant hospital, that I should have patients?

(The ACTORS break the freeze, going into a flashback.)

Masqueraders

Where's Heirstone? I have skill and talent. I don't need patience. He calls us here, under threat of time, to show our script. His precious words on paper...

(He takes the script out of his bag.)

Sleepless nights to get this together in a week. Then he doesn't show up? I'm leaving. I'm not waiting around any longer, I tell you!

HOPEY

He said to be here seven-thirty. He's just five minutes late.

DAY

Yuh lie!

LILLY

True! We came early, very early.

DAY

What time is it?

HAWK

Time we mek some money. Den one of us could afford a watch.

DAY

How you know is five minutes, anyway?

HOPEY

We just got here.

DAY

He's in love, you know. Only for lovers time stands still as it does for you. The play has been going on for almost half an hour and he says we just got here.

(He addresses the AUDIENCE.)

Anybody got the time?

FATTY

(Breaking flashback.)

I'm confused.

(The LIGHTS change.)

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What scene we doing now?

HOPEY

The day we got the yes, I think.

HAWK

Don't.

HOPEY

What?

HAWK

Think. Don't tax your little brain too much. Just go with the flow of the show. It will solve itself. Remember what the king of kings said? "Life is like the theatre, one shouldn't try to understand it all at once." Relax your brain and let your senses teach you. It's the best way to over-stand absurdity. We want them here. Yet we abuse them. They hate abuse. Yet they can't leave. If they leave, it's even more absurd to think they can escape mediocrity and folly. Life is absurd. We are afraid of dying, though it's the one thing we are sure of. Absurd! Look at it. They paid to come here. Can't escape highway robbery either!

(He laughs.)

DAY

(Getting an idea.)

That's exactly what we do. Jibe them. Pull a hoax. I give him a script... Straight commercial crap, light and jovial, yet full of suspense and some interesting twists. And when we get the place, get up here and blast them!

FATTY

What about the other nights? The show needs a long run for us to make a living.

HAWK

If we blast them good, they'll come again. The script may be mediocre, but the acting must be good, the singing and dancing, too. If they see outward accomplishment, they'll neglect the inner void.

Masqueraders

LILLY

You're in a bad state then, Hawk. You haven't soared to any heights. Your feathers are weather beaten. You lack even the substance to contain the vacuum, so just shut up and let's continue!

(LIGHTS change, returning to flashback in HEIRSTONE's theatre.)

FATTY

Yuh sure it was dis Monday he said?

HOPEY

He said in a week's time.

FATTY

From when?

DAY

Last week.

HAWK

Actually... it's first week. That week came before this. This is last week.

FATTY

But this is the first of all our other weeks.

LILLY

Maybe he won't come.... And it's our fault. I'm so confused. He said within a week, but he didn't make any appointment to see us a week from then.

DAY

I remember...

(He mimics HEIRSTONE.)

"Monday night, seven thirty..." We give him the script. He gives us his final word.

MAD DOG

You have it all wrong. He would get the script, read it, and then find out from his associates if he could let us have the place.

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HAWK

What those money-guineagogs know about art?

MAD DOG

Enough to make a bag of money out of it. And they have more sense than to make a set of natty head degenerates overrun their theatre.

DAY

Who yuh a deal wid? I art a respectable I-thiopian. Who yuh a call degenerate? Mek we kick di bwoy face. Mek him know him place.

HAWK

What yuh really mean by dat?

(HAWK lassoes MAD DOG and starts to strangle him with the rope.)

Waan we lynch yuh, bwoy?

MAD DOG

Hey! Cool it! All I meant was... that's how they look at us.

(HAWK slackens on the rope.)

We aren't exactly the cream of the entertainment world, you know.

HAWK

Day, wi really wasting wi time! Dem people no care bout wi. Mek wi leave.

LILLY

We don't take part in their society. Why should they care about us?

DAY

They need us and they don't even know it! Look what wi come to. He thinks I'm one of his boys at his beck and call? Bout im waan script! I should tek this—

(He holds up the script.)

—wipe my arse, then start a fire with it to burn down this precious theatre!

(PITCHY PATCHY produces a match. Lights it and takes the centre stage. As the theatre LIGHTS dim to blackness, HOPEY's voice is heard.)

Masqueraders

HOPEY

He is daring us again, Day. He is daring us to play out our deep desires.

DAY

So he can know our weaknesses. Ritual hungry primate! I hate him! Why won't he speak? Turn on the lights, quick! No – wait. Maybe he has a point.

(He goes and holds the script to the flames.)

I'll release myself, realize my real intentions.
The script is a player's prison, his cage, his coffin.
Dead words, dead notes on a score.
A sad song of a dead tale. I'll set it afire.
I'll cremate it! I'll not allow it to be buried
in our minds and souls, there to rot
and infect our whole being with its ghastly images.

(A low, lazy Nyabinghi beat starts up from among the ACTORS as DAY speaks in rhythm above their sounds.)

Coffins to burn anyone?
Prisons to purge with fire?
Any books to burn? Bibles?
Bank books? Insurance certificates?
Any draft cards to burn?
Bras and combs to burn?
Drivers' licenses? Birth certificates?

(The music stops abruptly.)

FATTY

Then they wouldn't know if we were born. They would be bound to ask us, and we wouldn't be able to tell them if we were alive or not.

HAWK

Any images to burn?

(The music starts up again.)

Symbols? Idols?
Any mythologies to burn,
to burn, to burn, to burn?

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Any clothes to burn?
Any critics to burn?
Any effigies?
Any people to burn?

(The fire burns out.)

To burn.... To burn....

HOPEY

Soon there will be no fires left to burn.

(He is looking sadly at the burnt script, as LIGHTS come up onstage.)

All fuel will be spent with time,
chasing shadows from shadow's fires.
We could have done well.
It could have been beautiful,
this garden of endless beauties.
This stage of infinite possibilities.

(He turns away.)

Oh, rass! Rass! I don't even feel it anymore. It could have been, but it's not. We fuck it up again! Endless possibilities! Look at all the scenes we could have improvised, yet we choose these ugly ones. Yuh burn di script! What we going to show di man? Is my life yuh joking wid! Endless possibilities. We choose to be rebels.

HAWK

We just are, that's all.

HOPEY

Endless possibilities. And here comes Heirstone!

(MAD DOG assumes the air of HEIRSTONE.)

Improvise yourself out of this one, Day. Improvise your way out of this prison of our minds!

HEIRSTONE

Ah, gentlemen!

Masqueraders

HAWK

(Stalling.)

Man and woman, sir.

HEIRSTONE

So you have brought the script?

HOPEY

Not quite.

HEIRSTONE

So you have given up the idea of having a show, then?

DAY

Just your word we waiting on.

HEIRSTONE

I have two jumpy security guards around here. Anyting dem see shabby in di shadows outside... Pow! Pow! Pow! I talk to dem, but dem jumpy. So if yuh not leaving right away, I suggest you hand mi your fares for tonight's show. The cashier hasn't arrived yet, but you can sit off to the side until the show starts.

HOPEY

It wasn't to see your show why we came. We're here to finalize the theatre rental.

HEIRSTONE

Come into some money? Have you? Have you convinced someone to manage your group? Oh well, since is you, all considered I'll say you can have it for a million dollars a night!

ALL

How much?!!

HEIRSTONE

(Hamming.)

A million dollars a night! That's what any figure I state will seem to you. Wake up, likkle dunce bwoy! Look at your slate. Your presence alone

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doesn't fill the earth with joy. Where is the script? The one I asked of you?
Do you have any money, if that deal falls through? Just what is your name?
The name of this group? I don't deal in backyard theatre. This is not a
chicken coop!

DAY

I, the rooster! You, the chicken hawk!

HAWK

Nay, the farmer!

ALL

Ah! The farmer is he!

FATTY

HEY OH THE CHERRY OH, THE FARMER TAKES A WIFE....

*(To the tune of "Farmer in the Dell", FATTY starts an improv
which PITCHY PATCHY takes up by leading her to HEIRSTONE's side.)*

ALL

AND THEY ALL GROW SOME CHICKS...

(They sing and dance in a circle around HEIRSTONE and FATTY.)

THEY ALL GROW SOME CHICKS
HEY OH THE CHERRY OH, THEY ALL GROW SOME CHICKS

HAWK

AND WHAT SEXY BROADS WERE THEY
WHAT SEXY BROADS WERE THEY
HEY OH THE CHERRY OH, WHAT SEXY BROADS WERE THEY

DAY

OUR SHOW IS SO READY, WE DON'T NEED A SCRIPT
WE'LL OPEN OUR FEATHERS LIKE PEACOCKS IN SPRING
VULTURES, OH VULTURES, LOOK BUT DON'T TOUCH
DON'T MOLEST MUCH, LEAVE US TO SING

ALL

WE FIGHT HARD FOR SURVIVAL, THE ODDS ARE SO HIGH

Masqueraders

LIKE LEERING VULTURES THEY CIRCLE THE SKY
OH, GOD ETERNAL FARMER, LET US STAY ON THE ROOST
EASE OFF THE NOOSE, LET'S LIVE TO SEE WHY
OUR WAY IS PURE FOLLY, OUR WAY A BIG—

HEIRSTONE

(Breaking the song.)

Wait! Stop! Stop this madness!

HOPEY

It's logical.

HAWK

Factual.

HEIRSTONE

A song is not a show. Where is the script?!

HOPEY

(Under his breath, to DAY.)

What we do now?

DAY

(To HOPEY.)

Shut up! I'm glad we burnt it! The script was shit, anyway!

(He addresses HEIRSTONE.)

There are many scripts. The Bible. The Koran. What's-his-name's red book. My little black book. But we've read them all. Done them all before. Mankind knows it. He wrote it! Forget the scripts, let's do! Leave weak, puny fellows to document! Action speaks louder than words. Our silent, yet loud intent is what's important. You wouldn't have really gotten it if you read the script.

HOPEY

Without a director. A good director could translate it.

HAWK

How you know? They add their noisy, self-conscious minds to it and it's the same old humdrum, TV show.

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DAY

(Resuming the song.)

WE'LL SHOW YOU OUR INTENT
IF YOU'LL JUST TAKE PART
LOWER YOUR DEFENSES
AND RECEIVE OUR ART

HAWK

RELEASE YOUR INHIBITIONS
WHEN THE SHOW STARTS

FATTY

CAUSE WE HAVE A SHOW
THAT'S SURE TO DELIGHT
THE TOPICS ARE RELEVANT
THE TIMING IS RIGHT

DAY

WE, THE CHICKENS,
YOU, THE CHICKEN HAWK

HOPEY

(Breaking the song.)

Nay, the farmer!

DAY

The vulture!

(He indicates the AUDIENCE.)

Vultures are they all!

*(LIGHTS out. Sounds of chickens on a farm,
as spot comes up on PITCHY PATCHY, miming a chicken.)*

(LIGHTS up as the ACTORS become chickens on a farm. MAD DOG becomes the FARMER and goes to sit in an imaginary chair, with an imaginary gun (HOPEY's cane). DAY becomes the ROOSTER and struts around. He tries to couple with LILLY but she pecks him and runs him away. PITCHY PATCHY and HOPEY are young ROOSTERS circling LILLY. DAY bullies them and goes after LILLY again. She pecks him and he leaves her and goes after FATTY. He couples with FATTY. FATTY lays

Masqueraders

an egg. HAWK becomes a CHICKEN-HAWK and prowls around. The CHICKENS sense him and are scared. The CHICKENS are in an uproar. HAWK heads for the egg. DAY tries to stop him. There is a struggle. The uproar wakes the FARMER, who, on seeing HAWK, comes out shooting. The HAWK flies away with the egg and PITCHY PATCHY is accidentally shot: He dies. FATTY goes mad at the scene because she has lost her egg. The CHICKENS are running around the stage in a frenzy.)

FARMER

Myrtle? Myrtle?! No bodder get het up over dinner. Dat confounded hawk solve di problem.

(Referring to the dead CHICKEN.)

(FATTY becomes MYRTLE.)

MYRTLE

So yuh finally ketch dat fowl tief? Good! I gwine enjoy hawk stew tonight. Suck all di fowl him tief out of im marrow.

FARMER

We'll eat in time for di theatre tonight.

MYRTLE

Some mad masquerade a market, an yuh a pop style bout theatre.

FARMER

Di judge call it theatre, so is soh!

MYRTLE

Where is dinner?

FARMER

(Pointing to the dead CHICKEN.)

Here.... Mi sorry. Di hawk get weh again, wid another chicken too.

MYRTLE

What? Mi prize sensei rooster?! Yuh shoot him? Yuh out here all day. Week in, week out... lay waiting di hawk, like yuh nuh have farm to run, an him always get weh. Ah tell yuh, yuh wasting yuh time. An di hot sun out here wasting yuh mind!

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FARMER

Is not wasted. I got us dinner. And I'll get di hawk one day.

MYRTLE

(Looking over the dead CHICKEN.)

Well, I guess we could roast him, stuff him wid potatoes and have him for dinner. I'll invite di neighbours and we'll have a feast before we go to di masquerade tonight.

(She starts taking off PITCHY PATCHY's costume while she speaks.)

Bwoy, I sure hope dem jokify. Pressure so hard wid dis drought, I waan laugh till I pop up!

(She props up PITCHY PATCHY like a roast chicken on a platter; then exits with his costume. The CHICKENS mill around PITCHY PATCHY's body. They throw flowers on him, anoint him with oil and prepare him for burial but in effect, dressing him for MYRTLE's table. They light two candles and step back, mourning.)

FARMER

(Off.)

Mmmmmmm! Myrtle mi love! Honey, dat smells scrumptious!

MYRTLE

(Entering.)

Come an get it, dinner served!

FARMER

(Entering.)

Where are di neighbours? Our guests?

MYRTLE

(Pointing to the AUDIENCE.)

Here. They took their seats long ago. Hurry, it will look bad if wi late.

(They sit around the dead CHICKEN.)

Di judge will be down di market by dis....

(The farmer starts to eat.)

Masqueraders

No, no, no. Ben, yuh know yuh should give thanks.

FARMER

We have to consecrate the dead.

MYRTLE

Well, do it and stop wolfing the food.

FARMER

For what we are about to receive... ask pardon!

(All the chickens start to weep, in the background: They hum a hymn as HAWK becomes a preacher.)

PREACHER

Receive the soul of our dear, departed loved one, oh eternal rooster, as this earth now swallows his body. And before it can rot and turn to loam, help to deliver us from this, our plight. Help us to break the backs of the various vultures who plague our existence.

FARMER

(Diving into the food.)

I want the legs.

MYRTLE

I, the breasts.

FARMER

Him nuh ha no titty!

MYRTLE

Gimme di rump, di wings an di neck.

FARMER

(While eating.)

Ah hear di performers is a set a natty-head man call demselves Spades. But di judge seh him hear seh dem good, and only an uncultured man wouldn't appreciate dem art. Pass di salt an pepper... Mek ah dust dis fellow here.

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PREACHER

Dust to dust.

FARMER

But Myrtle, yuh almost reduce di leg to ashes!

PREACHER

Ashes to ashes!

MYRTLE

Just dat part get ketch. Sorry.

FARMER

Is still delicious.

PREACHER

Vultures! Carnivorous animals! Leeches! Ticks! Give us the strength and blessings to multiply enough to overthrow our enemies! Oh, eternal cock, we outnumber them already, but still we are eaten daily, in salads, casseroles, in sandwiches and soups. We are grown by the thousands in coops, farms, hoarded in various concentration camps until the day of the machete or the axe. Then we are picked by these vultures, seasoned and eaten as if we were corn, coconuts or worms. Oh ever loving cock, give us the strength to kill all our predators. Hawks and human beings!

FARMER

Ah, dis is heavenly. Thank God we able to eat so good.

MYRTLE

Hurry up! Mek we go a market go rub shoulder and eat up culture wid di judge.

PREACHER

Make us rot in their stomachs! Infect the ones of us who must die with indestructible worms who will eat away at them the way they eat away at us. Help us, Lord. Save us, Lord. Save us!

FARMER

(Holding up the wishbone.)

Masqueraders

Yuh have a wish?

(Myrtle takes hold of one side of the wishbone.)

HAWK

I wish all who eat us, short life and permanent indigestion!

FARMER

(Breaking the bone.)

Aah, I lose, yuh get yuh wish.

MYRTLE

Want some more? The heart or the gizzard?

FARMER

Yuh didn't clean dem out? Yuh know I hate dem. Di entrails always make me sick, upset mi! Yuh cook wid dem?

MYRTLE

Only fah di stuffing.

FARMER

And I had so much? Ah feel sick.

(He starts heaving.)

MYRTLE

Ben? Ben? Hold it! Yuh okay?

(He is puking.)

(MAD DOG runs upstage, and with his back to the AUDIENCE is vomiting like crazy.)

Dis look serious.

(FATTY breaks the flashback.)

FATTY

Hey, Mad Dog, you okay?

(She follows him upstage.)

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Hey, fellows, this looks serious.

LILLY

Slap his back and bend him over.

HAWK

Him acting or what?

DAY

I don't know.

HOPEY

Hey, Mad Dog, di act over. Stop now, yuh getting us worried.

DAY

Him not acting. Him really sick!

HAWK

The act must be really get to him.

LILLY

Bring him over here. Lie him out.

MAD DOG

(Recovering.)

I'm okay.

FATTY

Sure?

MAD DOG

Fine. Just give me some air. Just exhausted. Sick and tired of these roles.

(He starts to leave.)

I'm getting out and breathing some fresh air.

DAY

Yuh not leaving here. You haven't given your word as yet. We mus reach di end.

Masqueraders

MAD DOG

I'm tired.

DAY

We haven't finished. These culture vultures must know how we got the theatre.

MAD DOG

Why? We're here, aren't we? Isn't our presence enough? Why do people need to know the reason why?

LILLY

They have a mind.

MAD DOG

I'm sick and tired of all our minds. The roles we imprison ourselves in. Why is it that I always have to be the bad guy?

HAWK

It's in your blood.

DAY

In your makeup. Your family history.

MAD DOG

I'm getting out! The only time I ever get a half decent character to play, the part is poorly written or badly conceived.

HOPEY

If we had a director, that wouldn't happen. He would be more objective.

DAY

Rubbish! This is a whole lot a rubbish. You get the part you're best suited for.

MAD DOG

A white capitalist son of a bitch? I'm more than that! I'm a man. Not a symbol!

HAWK

Can't separate the symbol from the man.... The king from his country. We are what our images are symbolic of. Come, it's important you go on.

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MAD DOG

There's nothing in it for me. I only get the rotten parts to do. Make me sick.

FATTY

You must play your part. Do your share. We all agreed, remember?

HAWK

Everything will be alright. Just trust us.

MAD DOG

You? Trust you?! I wouldn't trust you with your own life, much less mine! You're trying to paint me black all the time. Since I'm white, you must paint me black. I'm the heartless, evil colonialist every time. In every act or improvisation. I never get a decent role to play. My family is right, I'm just being used here.

LILLY

Mad Dog, pull yourself together. That is not true.

MAD DOG

It is, Lilly. I'm leaving.

DAY

(Stepping in MAD DOG's way.)

Over my dead body!

HAWK

We made a deal. Remember?

MAD DOG

I didn't know this was what you meant.

FATTY

Time is running out. Let's finish the act.

LILLY

Remember how happy we were when we agreed we would show the world? Remember how great we felt? We would redeem our own by getting back the self respect in our art we lost for four hundred years, and you, by making the right choices your people were wrong about.

Masqueraders

HAWK

You would give us back our zebras, our lions and tigers. Our jewels and all our natural resources which you stole from our mother over these hundred years.

DAY

By joining our group, you would give us the chance to get back our culture, to re-enact scenes from our experience. To show the world the way we saw salvation. We would all profit.

FATTY

Remember your promise?

MAD DOG

That was then. I see clearer now. No gods! No covenants! No vows!
No more!

HAWK

Africa our mother,
Oh tropic sun our father, who never wanes
Beam your light across the seas
And make your exiled suns on this chain of islands
Shine with light
We call from the heavens
And vow to uphold a new Africa
We, the new jewels to light mankind's existence
New Ashantis, new Timbuktus... Axum!
Ethiopia, united with her sons again
Singers and dancers and players of instruments
Will be there....

(The others agree.)

Us, all who made it happen!

You, too, if you help us. The Antilles will shine, beaming with culture. Art, music, dance will strive. Our little island, Jamaica, will achieve it, and shine like a beacon of arts in the Caribbean. Help us to achieve this, to unite us and mother Africa. You have to, you will! It says so in the Bible!

(He laughs.)

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MAD DOG

I don't give a—

FATTY

Don't you care about us? About Africa?

MAD DOG

What did Africa ever do for us? They helped sell their own people!

LILLY

What about here? Jamaica? Don't you care about Jamaica?

MAD DOG

Jamaica?
Jamaica?!
Jamaica bloodclaat!
Africa pussyclaat!!
Earth?
Earth rass!!!
Moon can swoon and kiss di sun's ass
What was Jamaica before Africa got her name?
Fuck patriotism!
Fuck groupism!
Tek di Bible mek fuel
An di flag mek tablecloth
At the feast of anarchism
Isms schisms chasms orgasms...
Yes! Orgasms!
National orgasm is the order of the day!
A law should be passed to forbid the passing of laws!
Disarm the armed, man the women!
Live, love, eat, sleep, hate, sleep, crap, sleep...
Sleep....

(He has become delirious and falls to the ground.)

ALL

(Other ACTORS singing.)

Masqueraders

Sleep...

Sleep...

Sleep...

Sleep....

(All ACTORS surround MAD DOG; hushing him to sleep.)

MAD DOG

(Slowly awakening and singing a jazz/rock song.)

TO WAKE FROM THIS NIGHTMARE
IS MY INTENT
TO LIVE, LEARN AND SHARE THIS LIFE
THAT'S TO THIS CONSCIOUSNESS LENT
TO THESE HANDS, EYES, EARS
AND THIS HEART THAT'S BENT
ON FINDING THE PURPOSE
OF ALL THESE TIMES SPENT
HATING AND LOVING
TAKING AND GIVING
BUT NOT ACCEPTING
WE DON'T REGRET OUR FAILINGS
IMAGINE, IMAGINE...
IMAGINING...
NO NOS... NO NO-NOS
NOSE, EYES, MOUTH...
IMAGINE NO COUNTRY, BELIEFS
REASONS TO HATE AND LOVE
NO HEAVEN OR NOSE
TO SMELL THE RAT
THAT IS NO MORE A RAT
THAN YOUUUUU....

(All ACTORS applaud.)

DAY

(Hamming it up as if he is at a cocktail party.)

If your mother could see you now! Bravo! Brilliant! You remind me of what's-

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

his-face at the what's-that-place? In the west end of London. Or was it Broadway? In that really great year for the theatre – the arts, in fact! The critics really loved him. We love you, too. You can't let us down! Your parents love you. You want to amount to something, don't you? You've left home but still you want to prove that you're not worthless. I know. It's the same with us and Africa. But don't overreact. Be able to slip in and out of the roles. Know them but not be them. And you do know them. That's why you do your parts so well.

MAD DOG

I'll not be typecast.

(All ACTORS play guests at a cocktail party.)

LILLY

But you're really good.

HAWK

Don't you want to really shine?

DAY

Do what you're good at? Make life proud of you? Be special? That's why you're here. In this group of people. There is not another person exactly like you. You're the only one here who can live the parts we assign you, as well as you do.

MAD DOG

But you always assign them! Why can't I assign some roles to myself?

LILLY

That would be self indulgent. Art shouldn't be self indulgent.

HAWK

Who taught you that?

LILLY

My teacher! My dance teacher.

HAWK

(Breaking cocktail party sequence.)

Masqueraders

Dat batty-bwoy!? What him know? Come indulge your true self! Play the part history has given your breed and realize your true worth! How else can we find out if we, the spades, are right about you or not? If your fears are founded or not? Afraid to find out you're a typical white man?

MAD DOG

Alright! I'll go on, okay? But I'm exhausted. Like a vacuum cleaner sucking on mi brains. I promise, I'll continue after the intermission, okay?

(He starts to leave.)

FATTY

But they must know about the theatre.

MAD DOG

After the intermission!

(He exits through the AUDIENCE.)

HOPEY

(Sitting down and relaxing.)

Shit, that was close.

LILLY

Got real nervous in parts.

HOPEY

Still, is a good thing we didn't have to show anymore. Couldn't keep up that standard of work without rehearsing. I'm tired.

FATTY

We were lucky.

LILLY

Very!

HAWK

Especially having the blessing of Ace, Mad Dog's presence. It made a difference. He knows it. Dat's why him waan come and go as him please.

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DAY

That was hard work. Not luck! This is a result of hard work.

FATTY

Yuh think dis making sense? If any of dis is being understood?

LILLY

Yuh mean if di audience getting di point so far?

HAWK

Some of them. The ones who think, but not too much. And have an imagination.

LILLY

(Dancing around onstage.)

Is dem I love to perform for.

DAY

Maybe they don't know what the fuck is happening, or why they here. Yet they come and applaud, because it's the done thing.

HAWK

But they recognize something. They know themselves so well.

HOPEY

Only from the outside. That's why they're embarrassed by what they see. If they knew their inner selves, there wouldn't be so much nervous laughter.

(He addresses the AUDIENCE)

Come with us, do your art and discover your inner heavens.

(The ACTORS start picking up their instruments to leave.)

FATTY

Is it time for the intermission? The interval? Why we leaving? What we doing now?

DAY

We go backstage an rest. An dey go front of house to have refreshments for ten to fifteen minutes. They come back in and watch the rest of the show.

Masqueraders

FATTY

Will they?

HOPEY

If they want to get more into their heavens.

(He slaps his palms with HAWK's and breaks into song.)

CLAP HANDS AND REJOICE
IN HEAVEN, IN ZION, IN PARADISE
SINGERS AND DANCERS
AND PLAYERS OF INSTRUMENTS WILL BE THERE
THAT'S THE WAY I HEARD IT
FROM THE DEAR PSALMIST'S SONG....

(All other ACTORS join in.)

ALL

CYMBALS AND TRUMPETS
BANJOS AND FLUTES
THE TAMBOURINE, GUITAR AND DRUM
THE HARP AND THE LUTE
WALTZ AND THE SKA
CALYPSO AND FUNKY
THE TWIST, TANGO AND LIMBO
THE JITTERBUG AND REGGAE....

(They exit while singing.)

YEAH! CLAP HANDS AND REJOICE
IN HEAVEN, IN ZION, IN PARADISE
SINGERS AND DANCERS
AND PLAYERS OF INSTRUMENTS WILL BE THERE
THAT'S THE WAY I HEARD IT
FROM THE DEAR PSALMIST'S SONG....

(LIGHTS out.)

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

ACT II

After the AUDIENCE is seated: CIRCUS MUSIC; Reggae, carousel type. The ACTORS enter from different directions, dressed in Jonkonnu costumes; singing and dancing.

ALL

LIONS AND TIGERS
BEARS AND ELEPHANTS
PLUMED HORSES WITH RIDERS
WE SHOULD SOMERSAULT
DANCE THE TRAMPOLINE, WALK THE TIGHTROPE
HANG BY OUR TEETH, AND BALANCE ON POLES
THIS SHOULD BE A CIRCUS
YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN US
BEFORE OUR CAPTORS CAME AND MADE A FUSS
WE'LL NOT CRY OVER SPILT MILK
WE WILL NOT FUSS
WE'LL REMEMBER OUR ART
AND BE HOME AT LAST
BEFORE THESE ISLANDS SINK
AUDIENCE LINED IN LONG ROWS
MAGIC ACTS AND FREAKY SIDESHOWS
ATTRACTIONS OUTSIDE
THE FERRIS WHEEL, THE MERRY-GO-ROUND
TASTY APPLE CANDIES AND THE FEE-FEE SOUND
THIS SHOULD BE A CIRCUS
YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN US
BEFORE OUR CAPTORS CAME AND MADE A FUSS
WE WON'T CRY OVER SPILT MILK
WE WILL NOT CUSS
WE'LL DO OUR CRAFT
AND BE HOME REAL FAST
BEFORE THE ANTILLES SINK
RECEIVE OUR SONG AND OUR DANCE
ALL WE GIVE IN OUR ACT

Masqueraders

AND COME TAKE PART IN OUR PERFORMANCE
THE STORIES OF OUR LIVES TO TELL
WHAT IS SHAMEFUL, WHAT IS SAD
WHAT INSPIRED HOPE AND MADE US GLAD

(LILLY leads the circus dance for the chorus and next verse.)

OUR LIFE IS A CIRCUS
YOU CAN ALL SEE US
FIGHTING OURSELVES, MAKING A FUSS
NO TIME TO CRY OVER SPILT MILK
NO TIME TO CUSS-CUSS
LET'S JOIN HANDS TOGETHER
FORGET THE BAD WEATHER
AS WE SAIL HOME AND STRENGTHEN OLD LINKS....

DAY

Step right up, ladies and gentlemen! Step right up to the big top! Total theatre, that's your treat this evening. Step right up onstage and be part of the act. We need lions and tigers, zebras and elephants. We need acrobats and clowns. Step right up, ladies and gentlemen.

(He is speaking through a cone; using the rope like a whip, as if he is the circus ringmaster.)

LILLY

(Interrupting.)

Give me back my lines! Give back my lines! There you go ego-tripping again. There are others here besides you. We have our thoughts, too.

DAY

(Cracking whip at LILLY.)

Shut up! Shut up and get back in your cage!

(He treats LILLY like a wild animal that is being trained.)

Back! Back!

LILLY

You're cheating. Those are my lines. We agreed during the intermission.

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MAD DOG

You see? He always wants the best parts.

HOPEY

Not today. I'm on Lilly's side.

DAY

Back! Back! All of you, back in your cages! Back in your roles!

(The other ACTORS react like wild animals; stalking DAY.)

LILLY

That's unfair. It's my turn to be the ringmaster.

FATTY

It's true. We'd be the first show with a female ringmaster. You agreed to try something new.

DAY

There is nothing new under the sun. Back, back I say. Damn your disobedience.

LILLY

Ah not giving in dis time, even if yuh beat me to death.

FATTY

He'll do it, too, I know. Don't force his hand, Lilly. Do as he says.

LILLY

(Running up to confront DAY.)

Beat me to death, rip out my heart! I won't give in to you. Everything must go as you see. In your eyes, the world spins only for you. If I don't get back my rightful role, I'm not acting any more.

DAY

(Cracking the whip: backing LILLY away.)

This is my camp, my safari, my circus! This is my show! You are all mine! I claim you and you will do as I say!

Masqueraders

LILLY

Why you always have to get your way?

DAY

What would I do with yours? I'd get lost following your tracks.

LILLY

And we've followed yours for too long. We need to find our own way to our own salvation! I'm not acting anymore unless you give me back my role. Why should I worship you?

FATTY

(Kneeling meaningfully.)

Because he is king! Royalty! One of the earth's first performers!

HAWK

(Joining game.)

Aye, the King of Spades!

FATTY

The God of Spades made manifest among men. He teaches us the right ways. It was his idea to form this group. We were all starving until he came along. Don't be ungrateful. We owe him so much.

HAWK

All bow to the King of Spades!

(He walks around; pushing everyone onstage to the floor)

The King lives and all is well!

(PITCHY PATCHY bows low: DAY sits on his shoulders and PITCHY PATCHY stands up with DAY on his shoulders.)

FATTY

Oh my King man, King of Spades,
My head and my glory!
Deliverer and mouthpiece of the underdog,
We pay tribute to your greatness!!

(She falls with her face to the ground, in his worship.)

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LILLY

Boo! Boo! Come off the stage, you damn fool, you fraud!
Boo! Boo! Fraud! Boo! Boo!

DAY

Silence that mouth! Pitch that noise into the dungeon!

(HAWK grabs LILLY and carries her offstage, screaming.)

LILLY

Let me go! Let me go!! I'll leave when I like!

DAY

My robes! My royal garments!

(He descends from PITCHY PATCHY's shoulders.)

HAWK

Dress him, dress the King of Spades.

(MUSIC: The other ACTORS crown DAY king: with the Jonkonnu Houseboat on his head and dressing him in a purple robe, beads and knitted belts. Afterwards, the other ACTORS put on their own Jonkonnu masks.)

DAY

(Showing off their Jonkonnu costumes as they dress.)

Handiwork from the Kingdom of Spades. Handmade by our artisans. Our merchandise is the best in the world... made from genuine materials to last a lifetime, on sale in the foyer! Welcome to Court!

(Introducing HAWK.)

This devil is my Chief Advisor.

(HAWK, dressed as the DEVIL, dances forward and bows. As each person is introduced, they do the same.)

(To FATTY.)

My baby-mother, naturally, is the Queen.

(FATTY is dressed as the Jonkonnu BELLYWOMAN Queen.)

Our key card—

Masqueraders

(To MAD DOG.)

—the Ace of Diamonds, our trump for the King of Babylon.

(MAD DOG is dressed as the ACE OF DIAMONDS in a Jonkonnu mask.)

Heirstone knows his power, and yields to him.

(To HOPEY.)

Our Jack of all trades the young and highly talented, professionally-minded, spirit of our group, Actor Boy! A hard worker!

(HOPEY is dressed as the Jonkonnu ACTOR-BOY.)

(LILLY re-enters, straightening her clothes.)

And meet the love of his life, the Earth Priestess, Cowhead.

(LILLY is dressed as the Jonkonnu COWHEAD.)

Last and consequently least—

(To PITCHY PATCHY.)

—is the Joker, the Clown, Pitchy Patchy. He tries to entertain us in times of utter boredom. He never talks. He is our slapstick comedian. I'm told he has a function, I guess he does....

(PITCHY PATCHY slips while dancing: falls on his ass, and they all laugh.)

The gallery loves him!

HAWK

Not many know our purpose. Maybe they think we're not real. Tell them! Advertise the kingdom!

DAY

We are those who keep your shiny world clean. The poor, the artisans....

(The ACTORS mime each artisan as DAY names them.)

Garbage collectors, those who work in tar to build roads for your shiny transports, who walk for miles to sell brooms, push hand-carts, and fix cesspools. We are the spent black oil which lubricates your systems. Tattered cards dealt by unscrupulous men. The third part of society, hidden—

(ACTORS freeze and turn their backs.)

—away from its benefits. We have no houses, no land, no carriages, no real

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

rights. We have only life, our art, and the tools of some of our trades.

FATTY

(Turning to the AUDIENCE.)

And we have a King! A jealous, a hard, but loving King!

HAWK

(Turning to the AUDIENCE.)

The manifestation of our dreams, the one who presents our case in the Heavens. Who battled the King of Babylon on a cloud for forty days and nights. And rebuked him. Sent him back to the cold and frozen North.

FATTY

Tell us, gracious King, what did you say to the King of Babylon in the clouds before he fled?

HAWK

Tell us! Tell us!

ALL

Let us hear! Hear, hear!

FATTY

What did you say to his evil feast?

LILLY

(Trying to break up the game.)

No no no no no no NO NO NO! No more! Not all of us want to hear. It's boring!

(To the AUDIENCE.)

Can you stand anymore of this?

DAY

It's that noise... the rabble again. Guards!

(Other ACTORS converge on LILLY threateningly.)

Masqueraders

LILLY

He is the one to be arrested. He promised something new! “New African Theatre combined with the old, to cleanse us of cheap entertainment.” And he is cheating us! Like *mbari* houses, which mirrored the life of our ancestors in Africa at times of crisis.

FATTY

Or the Indo-Jamaicans’ *tazia* at the time of Hoosay...

LILLY

Or our Jonkonnu houseboat, which he wears.... Our play would show, like their fine sculptures in soft woods and tinsel, scenes from everyday life. And after the celebration of their existence, these effigies were left to rot. To decay... like old fears making way for new hopes. You promised this play would work the same way!

DAY

That’s why we have no set script, so when society changes... we can change too. Like images in mirrors do.

LILLY

So you steal the little lines I have?

DAY

I am the true reflection of society,
The artist Earth is held together by authority.

That’s what I reflect.

This Court is the seed of society.

The storehouse of their energies.

I am real.

The King is real.

See the confusion if I am defeated.

The King is alive and all is well.

LILLY

When your position as head rooster is threatened, you sabotage the play with these corpses you improvise.

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DAY

You are not ready to be ringmaster yet, I can't let you shame us in front the audience.

LILLY

Native spades are never ready for independence... always the oppressor's excuse! You would have a crown of gold, old King, but we agreed on one of feathers, to rot away with old things.

HOPEY

Yes, we read in the Book and we remember in our souls, that we performers... masquerade objects in society's box of divination. Feathered messengers between heaven and earth... we shake up society and read its bones. Our ancestors masqueraded in Africa. Then Jonkonnu paraded Jamaica and all over the New World in masks, with song and dance. Under many masks we show society's problems, and possessed by ancient gods, we show the way back home.

DAY

Show who what? They don't care, they only want to laugh and jeer. It's their main weapon. I am not interested in art any longer. I am just making a living. Do as I say. If we take ourselves too seriously they will be able to kill us off... just like they did the old Jonkonnu.

LILLY

What you doing, killing us, too? Imposing their old order in the group?

DAY

Someone must lead.

LILLY

Not you anymore. Like true mirrors
we must invert the order of things,
the object's right reflecting the image's left.
The first in life, the last in jest.
So I, or Pitchy Patchy should be King sometimes.
Yes, Pitchy Patchy, he is the only one
close to where we have to go
and he doesn't talk about it like you deedless,

Masqueraders

line-thieving preachers.

DAY

Who save us from dispersing, after we nearly get killed at Solace Market?
After you all too afraid to perform again? Who had the courage to go on?

LILLY

I and Hopey did all the begging for the theatre.

DAY

But my courage got us so far and it will save us. Can this dumb clown save
the play?

LILLY

Egotistic DA-DA Dread de la dread,
so-called I-thiopian! You not as valid
as this silent Jamaican clown.
His art, ancient as Africa itself,
lives and dances to the true rhythm of life...
so you treat him like dirt.
And all you do is talk.
Well, dance Africa for us now.
No more words. Show us our roots
so we know our shoots. Show us images
of past greatness. Dance Africa, old King.
We have no literature to show us our history
so dance it for us.
Show the meaning of scenes
we act out everyday of our lives.
Dance our hopes and fears!

ALL

Yeah, dance. Dance!

DAY

(Walking over to FATTY; taking her hand.)

Shall we dance, my Queen? But to well-regulated melodies. Not to the
rhythm of the irrational crowd.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

FATTY

How dare they try to tell us what to do? We should have them all beheaded.

DAY

(Starting to waltz.)

Let's dance, love. And think of pleasant things.

LILLY

You're cheating again. We should now dance the dance of Africa. Here is where you prove you're real royalty.

DAY

Musicians! A waltz, sweet and stirring. Let the Court be jubilant and drown out noises of the rabble.

(A waltz starts playing.)

HAWK

(To PITCHY PATCHY.)

As Grand Advisor, I must do the wishes of the King. Come on, let's dance. And remember, to a gentle melody. If you step on my toes, I'll kill you.

MAD DOG

(To HOPEY.)

Dahling, shall we dance?

(The ACTORS begin dancing the waltz.)

LILLY

What are you all doing?

HOPEY

Trust us.

LILLY

You are helping him to bury us.

HOPEY

Have more faith in us.

Masqueraders

LILLY

(Getting an idea.)

Okay. If you must do a Court dance, I insist on a little rhythm. Drummers! More rhythm. We live in a Creole society, the union of Europe and Africa. We must have more rhythm. A Quadrille. I can compromise if we start with the quadrille. At least for now....

(HAWK goes to the drum and introduces the rhythm while the couples start the Quadrille. LILLY looks on, still disgusted, but with a smirk on her face. As the formal quadrille progresses, PITCHY PATCHY, then HOPEY, start doing dips and belly rolls; much to LILLY's delight.)

More rhythm. Get those pelvic girdles grinding. More whyne! More hips! More rhythm, dancers! More!

(The DRUM begins playing a stronger rhythm and the dance speeds up to a Mento beat, with LILLY cheering on. PITCHY PATCHY, then HOPEY and the rest, get looser in their middle, and the Mento moves to a 'Bruckins' dance.)

That's it! Get that back in there. Still more rhythm! Let us hear rhythm in the fife and the flute. Get more soul in there.

(The music and dance move on to a fast Jonkonnu rhythm. DAY can barely keep up the pace. All ACTORS, except DAY and PITCHY PATCHY, drop out of the dance and take up percussion (rhythm) instruments and speed up the tempo of the dance. PITCHY PATCHY gets stronger and better at the dance, as DAY grows fainter and fainter.)

HAWK

Him letting down di side.

(He picks up the rope and using it like a whip, cracks it around DAY's feet.)

Dance! Dance, old King! Dance Africa for us! Show them we have a right to rule!

(He hits DAY occasionally, and the whole scene gets more frenzied.)

Dance! Dance! Dance, ole bwoy! Dance you old fool. Dance!

(DAY passes out. There's great jubilation. Nevertheless, FATTY goes over to DAY in concern. The rest of the ACTORS dance: LILLY and PITCHY PATCHY leading them in an African fertility dance which climaxes in a rhythmic orgasm.)

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

HAWK

More! More! We want more.

(To PITCHY PATCHY.)

Earn your keep as our new King. Dance, you clown, dance! Dance the rhythms of life. Dance!

(The exhausted PITCHY PATCHY attempts a slow dance.)

MAD DOG

Dat pace salt, man. Faster, faster. Musicians, faster still!

LILLY

(Encouraging a faster beat of the drum.)

Vinegar, vinegar, vinegar, vinegar...

ALL

(Building up tempo.)

Salt, vinegar, mustard, pepper! Pepper pepper pepper pepper pepper.

(PITCHY PATCHY dances faster and faster to the PLAYER's rhythm; until he dances himself into the ground.)

LILLY

(Pauses.)

Him faint?

MAD DOG

Him pass out to rass.

HAWK

Ah tell yuh him have no use. Wi should kick him out di group.

HOPEY

We need him. We should be a circus, but instead we're a masquerade court of dirty spades. He's helping to redeem us. He is the only true source of our African tradition. He teaches me to dance, does a lot of knitting, and he baby-sits for Fatty.

Masqueraders

HAWK

Help spoil her! She should tek care of her pickney herself!

LILLY

Then what would become of her singing?

HAWK

Women shouldn't take part in the arts. They should stay home and mind house.

LILLY

So you can dress up as a woman and kiss a brother! Poor thing! Not satisfied with the leading role, some men want the supporting role as well.

HOPEY

(To PITCHY PATCHY.)

Come, get up! Stand up, man. We can start all over again.

MAD DOG

He's cold. Feel him.

LILLY

Like ice.

MAD DOG

Is he...? Will he be okay?

HOPEY

Don't know. Get the smelling salts.

FATTY

The smelling salts... yes.

(She leaves DAY and goes looking for salts in her bag.)

LILLY

As cold as ice....

FATTY

Can't find it. Oh God, we lost it. It was here in the bag beside the milk powder. But that gone, too. No, here is the salts. The milk, where is that?

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HOPEY

The salts. Pass the salts.

FATTY

(Running over to DAY.)

Day! Day, get up! Di milk gone! What we going feed di baby wid? Wi have no money. No friend wid any. What is happening, Day? Do something! Di baby feeding gone!

HOPEY

(To PITCHY PATCHY.)

Hey, Pitchy Patchy, wake up!

(He slaps him.)

DAY

(Awakening.)

Ee!? What? Where? Again? That's the second time this week!

(Grabbing up cutlass.)

Who took it? I know you all, and I must find out. Who hide di milk? Who drink it? Own up now, before I get mad. Hawk, I know you! Weh di baby milk powder?

HAWK

Move yuh blood-seed. I put down anyting fi yuh? Wah yuh a ask mi seh?

DAY

Lilly...?

(She kisses her teeth.)

Alright, Hopey. Own up!

HOPEY

(Still trying to revive PITCHY PATCHY.)

This looks serious. Wake up!

HAWK

(Pointing to PITCHY PATCHY and walking over to him.)

Masqueraders

It's him. He did it. Him just faking, acting ill so he won't have to answer to charges. Him should be President of the United Spades of Americas. Damn tief.

(Kicking PITCHY PATCHY.)

Get up, you!

LILLY

Leave him alone. Poor thing.

HAWK

See? He's just acting to get sympathy. He is no good. Up to something. Anybody who is this silent must have something to hide. He may be a silent spy, sent here by the King of Babylon theatre to get out the competition. He may kill us when we are all asleep, drunk from the drugged wine of his mirth. He will come creeping around each of us and stab us in our hearts. Get up, Pitchy Patchy! Answer to your charges!

(He moves to kick PITCHY PATCHY again, but others restrain him.)

FATTY

You know he's dumb.

HAWK

And deaf, too, I bet. Get up! Get up before I kick in your ribs.

(Going at PITCHY PATCHY again.)

MAD DOG

Enough! Stop!

(He lifts PITCHY PATCHY.)

HAWK

The good Samaritan.

MAD DOG

Leave him alone. He isn't feeling well.

(They pick up PITCHY PATCHY and carry him upstage.)

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DAY

A who poop, ee?!

(To a member of the AUDIENCE.)

Yuh poop?

(He looks around, sniffs and then screams.)

Who in my Court farted?!

HAWK

Farted...?

DAY

Yes, farted! Poop! Poop, fart! Fart, poop! Farted!!

HAWK

Is mus you. My mumma say, "Who smell it first, is dem!"

HOPEY

(To HAWK.)

Gweh! Is you! Either dat or yuh breath worse dan I tink! When yuh pass mi likkle while, ah smell it!

HAWK

(Lifting a hand, threateningly.)

Ah wi box yuh, bwoy! Seh yuh sorry!

DAY

Lord, God! A hydrogen bomb couldn't mash me up so. I smell another one. Is you! Is you! Yes, is you, Hawk! I smell yuh again.

MAD DOG

Lord! Remind mi of when we used to get milk powder and cheese at boarding school. Renk! Same way we used to fart and smell!

DAY

Milk powder belly! So is you! Yuh rotten, yuh know, Hawk. Yuh is a real stinker!

Masqueraders

MAD DOG

An kick up mi friend fi it.

HOPEY

Damn tief!

FATTY

But yuh wicked, ee? Accusing di dumb. Well, God talked on his behalf.

DAY

Him batty find him out. If yuh never smell so stink, I would come over dere and box yuh wid dis cutlass.

FATTY

You are a disgrace. Kick up di only one who help me and di baby after is you steal we food. Yuh nuh do nutten all day except smoke ganja and mek noise on dat drum so di baby cyaan sleep. Pitchy Patchy work hard. All day him help wi, and all him ask is likkle love, food, shelter and company. I love him, and I hate yuh for hurting him... and telling lie pon him because him cyaan defend himself.

MAD DOG

People like you should be lined up and shot.

DAY

(Throwing rope over HAWK.)

Damn swine. Ah sorry fi yuh. Now is my turn.

(He starts beating up HAWK. HOPEY gets in a kick, too.)

LILLY

You don't have to kill him. Is only food.

DAY

The staff of life. He stole from my child.

LILLY

And give yuh excuse to bully and beat a defenseless body. Yuh no better than him.

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DAY

I can't allow these things to go unpunished, have to discipline him.

FATTY

Yuh could employ a little more understanding.

DAY

Shut up, woman, and don't talk crap! I understand him out to box di bread out of our mouths. Lucky I never kill him!

(He hits HAWK again.)

FATTY

Yuh too harsh.

DAY

Be quiet! I don't like yuh back-chatting me, butting in my conversations.

LILLY

Bully!

DAY

Shut up, all of you! No more sass. No back talk! No snide remarks! If you don't like how I run things, leave.

LILLY

You couldn't have a single show without us or Fatty.

DAY

She? I'm managing in spite of her.... Her love cramps my style.

FATTY

It's a new tune these days.

(Takes up her baby.)

LILLY

(Going over to FATTY.)

Men! I don't want one, not a single, solitary crumb of one. Dem so heartless. How yuh do it, Fatty? Live wid a man for so many years? Dem so different from us. So coarse and crabbit. We don't have much in common with dem.

Masqueraders

How yuh do it?

FATTY

(She and LILLY sit on the edge of the stage.)

I try hard, very hard. I repress and try to forget. It gets harder each time, though. Cyaan forget di time he dressed all my odder children one night... I was gone out... and march dem home to dem granny. Seh dem wasn't his and him nuh see why he should mind dem. Couldn't argue with him. I cried for weeks. I still don't get to see dem yet. Is over a year now. Him nuh mek mi go nowhere. He goes out regularly to his women, though, I know it. He picks an argument wid me, and then leaves.

LILLY

He always comes back, though.

FATTY

To change his briefs, bully us some more, and when he can't take himself anymore, he leaves and gets lost in his passions.

DAY

(Talking to MAD DOG at other end of stage.)

She doesn't understand me at all, at all. I feel caged up with her and the damn pickney. If I didn't have this release in my art, I would blow up. She holds that baby over my head. As if it's my fault she got pregnant! Is my fault she feeling bad, is my fault she can't sing as good as before I met her. She was a marvel before she met me, she says, a great goddess! But I got her pregnant when she wasn't looking, and stole her sceptre.

FATTY

(Continuing to LILLY.)

He never believe mi when I said he was di baby faada. Asked mi how I was so sure.

DAY

(To MAD DOG.)

She have baby wid two odder men before. And she wouldn't stop deal wid dem even after we togedda. Den expect me fi mind dem pickney, too. I just

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

sen dem to dem faada's yard. An she vex too because I never waan mind odder man pickney.

FATTY

(Shouting across at DAY.)

Dat's a damn lie, Day! I was supporting my children before you came along. Me one! How yuh cyan chat bout me like dat behind mi back?

(She puts the baby back in the cradle.)

DAY

You started it.

FATTY

I was just using that as the transition into our next improvisation. But you had to use it as an excuse to hang out our private lives, to put all the blame on me. I don't like how you go on sometimes. One day, yuh gwine wake up, and ah not going to be here.

DAY

Shut up, woman!

FATTY

Don't tell me what to do anymore! You're not absolute King any longer.

DAY

So you dare bark in my face because that clown out-danced me? Wah dat prove? Weakness in my character? That I am a contradiction? That the King is no nobler than his subjects? So what? The eternal role of King is still mine. I am born to wear this mask. This is no act which just anyone can do. In too many kingdoms the silly rabble take over. They subvert their own revolution and make things worse. It's an embarrassing masquerade... like actors who play great characters, alien to their puny selves. It's a mockery whose end is tragic. I have the spirit to put life in the mask of leadership. My word is your light, so be quiet and hear me.

FATTY

Don't assign any more roles. Is my mouth. Nag nag nag nag nag nag nag nag.

Masqueraders

DAY

Shut it, or I'll tie it shut!

FATTY

Nag nag nag nag nag nag nag nag.

DAY

You asked for it.

(He gags FATTY with his purple robe.)

This will teach you to go against me in public.

LILLY

Bully! Bully!! You big brute. Leave her alone! If I were her, one night when yuh sleeping, ah woulda pour acid down yuh ears.

(LILLY starts untying FATTY.)

HOPEY

Then you would be charged with murder.

LILLY

Shoot me in the head! I won't make you all destroy me! If I were a man—

(To DAY.)

—I would kick you in the teeth.

(She unties FATTY.)

She loves you, and look how you treat her, how you treat us all. And you—

(Addressing the AUDIENCE as well.)

—just look on and make it happen. No backbone!

Spineless worms, wriggle out of every challenge.

MAD DOG

Not my business, I'm not getting involved.

FATTY

(Recovering herself.)

He always resorts to violence when his reasoning can't convince us. The rope and the gag cyaan pen up my spirits, though. It only gets madder and

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resolves to be more free. Don't know if I'll be back tomorrow. I never believe you would do dis to me. Not in public. You don't love me, Day, I realize that now.

(MUSIC CUE: While LILLY leads the group in an Afro-American type, soul-jazz dance. FATTY sings.)

FATTY

FORGIVE ME IF MY EYES SEEM DULL
IF MY HEART SEEMS FULL OF BITTERNESS
IGNORE MY UNHAPPY AND NAGGING TONE
THIS GENERAL MELANCHOLINESS
IT'S JUST THE PRIDE RISING IN ME
AS YOUR PAINS PASS THROUGH
CAN'T YOU SEE I'M BETRAYED, BETRAYED, BETRAYED
STABBED IN THE BACK BY MY LOVER
BETRAYED, BETRAYED, BETRAYED
AND I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL BE BACK TOMORROW

(LILLY dances with PITCHY PATCHY.)

REMEMBER THE DAYS WHEN WE SPARKLED TOGETHER
THE JOY IN OUR HEARTS MADE OTHERS GLAD
AND WE JOINED OUR THOUGHTS AND OUR BODIES
NOT KNOWING THAT IT COULD TURN SAD
IT'S JUST THE PRIDE RISING IN ME
AS YOUR PAINS PASS THROUGH
CAN'T YOU SEE I'M BETRAYED, BETRAYED, BETRAYED
STABBED IN THE BACK BY MY LOVER
BETRAYED, BETRAYED, BETRAYED
AND I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL BE BACK TOMORROW
MAYBE ONE DAY I'LL SMILE AGAIN
AND OPEN AN EMBRACE TO THE WORLD
AND MAYBE WHEN I AM LOVED AGAIN
MY SOUL WILL FEEL LESS SOLD
IT'S JUST THE PRIDE RISING IN ME
AS YOUR PAINS PASS THROUGH
CAN'T YOU SEE I'M BETRAYED, BETRAYED, BETRAYED

Masqueraders

STABBED IN THE BACK BY MY LOVER
BETRAYED, BETRAYED, BETRAYED
AND I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL BE BACK TOMORROW

DAY

You can say anything you feel like. I have work to do. Get up, Hawk.

(HAWK gets up, and the other ACTORS start taking off their Jonkonnu costumes in preparation for the next scene.)

MAD DOG

(Walking centre-stage; miming drinking a cocktail.)

“Degenerate. Decadent and demented set of slack, sick sinners, those entertainers. Anything for kicks. To try something new, on a vain chase to immortalize their egos. They want to be the first to live forever without realizing God. I'll tell them, cold Oscars don't breathe. A mus grave for Jamaica's medal worshippers. They shouldn't be allowed to associate with decent people.”

DAY

Even though you're always late, you're here everyday. Why yuh love cuss yuhself soh?

MAD DOG

That wasn't me. That was my father. He is convinced we pimp off Fatty and Lilly when we need money. If he only knew our suffering. He has never seen one of our shows.

HOPEY

He never comes to the holes we perform in.

MAD DOG

He only sees theatre if a foreign group is in town. “Our own people don't know our greatness, don't know their own potential. They're looking beyond themselves, to other shores, for salvation.” He said that to me about you dreads yearning for Africa. And look how he lives...?

DAY

Like the King of Diamonds.

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LILLY

Our situation is improving. Society becoming more aware of our functions.

MAD DOG

Ah glad yuh so sure. I'll never forget when we first started. Remember the first show we did at Linstead market?

HOPEY

I'll never forget the last one. Never!

MAD DOG

Negative energies started building up way before that. Don't you remember our first show in Linstead? How the audience reacted? Remember that bleak evening at Linstead market?

(LILLY and FATTY become vendors and HOPEY moves back, going upstage.)

FATTY

Flowers! Flowers!

LILLY

Fruits! Fruits!

(PITCHY PATCHY dances downstage-centre while MAD DOG, DAY and HAWK become part of a CROWD: staring past him into the AUDIENCE.)

1ST CROWD MEMBER (MAD DOG)

A some mad people.

2ND CROWD MEMBER (HAWK)

A some political jinal.

3RD CROWD MEMBER (MAD DOG)

Is what dem doing?

2ND CROWD MEMBER (HAWK)

Dem a try obeah wi. Is some obeah people. Is duppy dem talking to in di air.

1ST CROWD MEMBER (MAD DOG)

(Going for missiles to throw at the AUDIENCE.)

Yuh waan wi stone dem?

Masqueraders

2ND CROWD MEMBER (HAWK)

(Picking up stones.)

Is what dem deserve. But wait... Come wi watch dem some more. Devils incarnate, iniquity workers, conjuring up spirits for amusement. Dem nuh know what dem doing. Wi tek dem tings serious! An dem gwine find out. Mek dem do anything immoral and see what happen.

(The CROWD MEMBERS freeze.)

LILLY

(Breaking flashback.)

Dat attitude changing.

DAY

It had to..., thanks to us.

(Six ACTORS sit at the edge of the stage and stare at the AUDIENCE as in the opening of ACT I.)

HOPEY

(Coming downstage centre.)

I can't forget the pain of that last show at Solace Market, which forced us here.

DAY

I can't forget the humiliation of the first one at Linstead. You all made me beg. When I look back on myself that day in Linstead, I was so ashamed, I swore never to beg again. I hated you dogs. Remember after that show at Linstead, you dogs?

HOPEY

(Throwing away his cane, dancing and spinning wildly.)

See me... see me! I can dance, I can dance!

(HOPEY is back in Linstead, immediately after the first show.)

I don't have to stay here and be insulted by you.

(He stops dancing and goes for his bags.)

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DAY

Go on then, leave! I don't need you and your bastard half-Euro, half-Afro movements! I'll discover something new for my children.

HOPEY

The energy of the show was good. The pieces you chose to present to these people for our first act was rubbish! We could have shown any one of the many acts we know, but you had to ask them why them come. That's why the show flopped, and we couldn't make no more money. People not interested in your ego trips. That's why they booed and left, and you didn't feel any pain. It was me di overripe tomato ketch!

(Wiping his face.)

DAY

Because you wouldn't stay in your role as you were told, but kept on dancing up front like a hen, like a real likkle batty-man—

HOPEY

I'm going! Lilly, if you want to make anything out of your life, and make Mister D proud of you, come with me and get as far from this man as possible....

Our first show, and what a disaster! Let me tell you, man, the show was a flop because you are a bad organizer, an unprofessional ego-maniac! Yuh cyaan lead mi and yuh cyaan feed mi either, so ah don't see why I should stay. Yuh cyaan even feed your own family yet yuh waan to lord it over us. Dis group mus mash up. No one will put up wid your bullying and bad organizing.

MAD DOG

(Picking up his things to leave.)

Such a waste of time.

HAWK

I tink dis man did serious! I would be better off working in commercial Babylonian theatre.

(HAWK also starts to pick up his things to go.)

Masqueraders

MAD DOG

Is a joke move dis.... Ah tell yuh it wouldn't work!
People not ready for traveling masquerade players like us.
Yuh lucky dem never shoot us! How yuh manage get me fi tek part?

DAY

Nuh bodder pop no style! What else yuh cyan do? Your family don't waan yuh. Society don't waan yuh! Yuh cyaan do nutten! So yuh hang around us, hoping a likkle class will rub off on yuh.

MAD DOG

(To LILLY, HOPEY and HAWK.)

Yuh ready? If any of yuh want, I'll give you a lift.

HAWK

(Picking up his sacks.)

Wait for me.

DAY

You too, Hawk?

HAWK

This is foolishness, man. It was a mistake.

(All ACTORS start to go offstage.)

I sorry, but I don't like to suffer.

(PITCHY PATCHY tries to block their path.)

DAY

Leave them, they'll come back. There's no place to go.

HAWK

(Pointing to MAD DOG.)

Him cyan go back to him faada yard.

HOPEY

I and Lilly are bound to find work. We're young and beautiful.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

DAY

You don't live nowhere. What you goin do till you find work? And you, Hawk?

HAWK

Go back to my former profession.

DAY

And end up in jail again?

LILLY

What about you, Day? What will happen to you if this group mash up?

DAY

Nothing. I'll start another. There are countless offers I could take up.

FATTY

We would starve, das what. Di three dollars fifty wi collect in di tam after di show little while ago is di first money wi earn doing our art for a long time. We been eating for weeks from odd jobs and di likkle craft work we sell, and dem don't pay much. We usually have to work all day to earn what we make in an hour. We don't have nowhere to go if Mad Dog leaves wid di van.

MAD DOG

Unu not convincing me to stay in dis crazy group. Yuh could cry di living eye-water, Fatty, I'm leaving.

(They start leaving; except for FATTY, DAY and PITCHY PATCHY.)

DAY

(Going after them.)

But people coming tomorrow! Just one more show, please! Don't let me down. We is brethren. We have a reputation to uphold. It's important to other spades that we succeed.

HAWK

Why? Why should we care about them?

DAY

We have a reputation of laziness. Please help me prove we have some good.

Masqueraders

Don't walk out now when we finally have something together. All we need to do is stick together, things will improve, I promise you. Very soon, we will make a breakthrough, and be performing at one of them big theatres in Kingston, then Broadway, the movies! The sky's no limit to where we can reach. International recognition for all spades if each one, in his own way, decides to excel.

HAWK

You really are full of shit. Let me show you what all spades should do.

(He goes to centre stage, and drops his crocus bag at DAY's feet.)

There! That's how we should work. Take back what is ours.

DAY

What's in there?

HAWK

Energy! The energy we wasted performing before swine. Look!

(He opens the bag.)

Oranges, sand berries, bananas, apples, pears, all fruits that were here. We'll have a feast tonight!

(A large assortment of fruits is thrown from the bag.)

LILLY

(Diving for fruits.)

Food.... Precious food!

HOPEY

(To HAWK.)

May I?

HAWK

Eat! Eat and be merry! Get back your wasted energy.

(All ACTORS eat hungrily.)

FATTY

Where did you get all these lovely goodies?

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

HAWK

While you were all acting out your lives, I collected a little payment from the higglers who thought they were seeing free show.

FATTY

Yuh tief it?!

HOPEY

I knew it!

(He angrily throws away what he is eating.)

Once a tief, always a fucking crook! This little fart will get us arrested one day, will get us in real trouble. I know it!

FATTY

(Referring to the AUDIENCE.)

Suppose dem find out. See dem looking over here? Maybe dem know wi picking dem.

HOPEY

Give it back. Wi don't need it!

(Hitting food from LILLY and MAD DOG's hands.)

LILLY

I hungry!

HOPEY

(Starting to put fruits back into bag.)

We don't need his stolen goods.

MAD DOG

The apple nice.

(MAD DOG picks up another apple and continues eating.)

HAWK

We earned it. They watched, they enjoyed, but didn't want to pay.

Masqueraders

DAY

They don't know how to pay yet. We have to teach them how to appreciate us.

HAWK

You do the theory, I'll teach the practical lessons. You recite the poems about why they should feed us, while I tek di food!

FATTY

That is stealing.

HAWK

(Sarcastically.)

No shit!

FATTY

It's wrong to steal.

HOPEY

Suppose dem find out?

HAWK

(Angrily.)

Only because yuh raising dis big uproar why anybody may ask where dis come from. Keep down yuh voice. Di market full wid food. Nobody nah miss dis, man. I collect likkle-likkle from each one.

HOPEY

(Taking bag with fruits.)

I going give it back.

(He takes the bag; moves towards the AUDIENCE; starts handing them fruits from the bag.)

HAWK

(To the AUDIENCE.)

Him mad! Him fool! Don't pay him no mind. Don't tek dem. Dem is props! Poison! Soon him wi tell yuh how I pick yuh pockets.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

(HAWK runs to HOPEY and grabs the bag away from him.)

This is mine! I have a right to it. Any man don't like it, grab me up, drape me! "The fruits of the earth is for every living thing for meat..." If the vultures didn't pirate up di land wid dem jinalship, man would free to pick fruit and eat, stretch and sweat, eat and sleep. Cyaan do dat again or some big landowner lock you up for trespassing. So, I mek him stretch and sweat, and when him nah look, I tek! I sweat, too, sometime I do some things to make a living – cold sweat wash me! I picked di prime minister gold watch and win a bet of a hundred dollars. Every time I tink bout it... I bathe!

DAY

(To HAWK.)

You waan get I-and-I family arrested? Relax yah, Hopey, it would only make matters worse to give it back now. What dem don't know won't hurt dem.

HOPEY

It hurts my conscience to know we have a thief in the group and we protect him.

DAY

Is the best drummer we could get to tour with us.

HOPEY

I know him good, but nobody else will work wid him because him so dishonest.

DAY

Relax... Look, Hawk, if you must be a clepto, practice somewhere else. Whether we desire this food or not, not important. Getting things like this too easy, and dem will lock you – us – up. And flush the key. Only Mad Dog would stand a chance. Nothing is easy, don't care how simple it look, and short cut bring blood. Let's stick to our original idea. The show has problems. It is my fault, and I'm sorry, but it's no need to do stupid things and jeopardize our future, Hawk. Or ridicule the show. Come, please, pick up your instruments. We are birds of one feather so let's continue together.

(They pick up their props and exit.)

Masqueraders

HOPEY

(Breaking flashback; limping with his cane again as he addresses the AUDIENCE.)

It wasn't the last show either. And maybe it should have been. I still feel the aches of that last show which forced us here. My back still hurts.

(MAD DOG re-enters as HEIRSTONE; flashing back to his last meeting with the group.)

HEIRSTONE

You need to exercise some more, much more! Get that body in shape. But I love it, just love that improv! What is the name of that piece?

HOPEY

We, er, call it, ah....

HAWK

(Re-entering.)

Chicken coop!

(HAWK clucks and acts like a chicken.)

HEIRSTONE

You should clarify your theme, though, and it would have been much better if you were all physically fit. Wasn't bad, though, for an amateur piece of theatre. Real professional groups exercise regularly, work on their technique. The show which is on here tonight is good, real professional stuff. You should see it.

LILLY

(Entering.)

Mad Dog said he saw the same group in the States, but they were much better there.

HEIRSTONE

He travels, eh? Anyone else in the group travels?

DAY

Only from market to market doing our show.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

HEIRSTONE

I meant overseas. I must speak to him. He is so good as the farmer. Where is he?

DAY

He isn't feeling well, a little upset. He went outside.

HEIRSTONE

I know his face, I'm sure. Is he a—?

DAY

My food or something like that, his family name.

HEIRSTONE

What's he doing with...? Oh well, never mind.

LILLY

(Acting like a chicken.)

Would you like to see some more?

HEIRSTONE

Love to, love to! But it's almost time for tonight's audience to start coming in, and now one of your actors is ill.

FATTY

We're sorry about the hold up. If he doesn't feel better soon, can we finish this audition another day?

HEIRSTONE

No.

LILLY

Ple-e-ease?

HEIRSTONE

I can't.

FATTY

Why?

Masqueraders

HEIRSTONE

A reggae musical we did here has been invited to New York. I'm leaving the island in the morning for two or three weeks. I was hoping to see the rest of your show tonight, and if I liked it, give the go ahead to my business manager. If the play was half-way professional, you would have gotten the place for the next two weeks. There is a lull now. And if people liked the show, we could extend the run.

FATTY

Wah we do now?

HOPEY

Work out something... sign some paper or something?

HEIRSTONE

What's the name of your group?

HAWK

The Spades.

HEIRSTONE

I like you guys. You have some guts, some visions. You may go places. I'll risk it and give you your chance. Tell the "farmer" when he's feeling better to come and pick up a letter. If he isn't better before I leave, he can deal with my business manager. Remember, no ganja smoking or anything illegal. Professional people don't need crutches, and only professionalism goes on here. Who teaches you technique? The concentration was good. Where did you study?

DAY

We teach wiself. We had talent, and we developed skill.

HEIRSTONE

But where did you study?

Give me a mediocre professional to beautifully skilled amateurs any day!

FATTY

Life was our lesson and time our teacher.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

HEIRSTONE

So you didn't study then?

HOPEY

Not formally.

LILLY

I did.

HEIRSTONE

Where?

LILLY

Here. Mister D taught me.

HAWK

You have to excuse her. She don't know no better, always making up likkle stories. None of us study nutten. I didn't get further dan primary school. Maybe dat's why we cyan amount to anyting.

HEIRSTONE

If all of you didn't look like the smelly end of a mountain goat, you would be more employable. Why don't you guys trim up and look more presentable? An actor should be a neutral sort, so he can play any character.

DAY

(To HEIRSTONE, in a rage.)

Damn your character and your elitist, individualist theatre.

(To the rest of the ACTORS.)

I tell yuh we wasting we time. Society jus toying wid us. I leaving and taking my chances in di street wid my people again. I won't stand this insult any longer.

(Taking up his bags and preparing to leave.)

HEIRSTONE

(Taken aback.)

What's the matter with him? Is he mad or... stupid?

Masqueraders

LILLY

Both.

DAY

(To the ACTORS.)

What happened at our last show at Solace Market was just a little set back. We will overcome. We don't need to prostrate ourselves before society. We can be in the streets with our brothers. Mek di man keep him dead building. Mek I-and-I go. Our world awaits.

HOPEY

(Trying to stop him.)

You mad? You waan dem kill us?

(Referring to the AUDIENCE.)

We need the security of this place. Don't pay him any mind, sir, he's confused and not sure which scene we playing now. Day, please, Day, apologize. Tell the man you don't know what yuh saying. Now we have a chance, yuh waan lose it? Tell the man yuh confused.

DAY

You think so? You think so? It's not important to me to play this individual character or that... Individual characters are merely vain-coloured feathers reflecting the banalities of some obscure life before it finally dies. I will not allow my spirit to be trapped like that. Give me eternal roles in the epic drama of life which challenges our hopes and fears... It's not the character of the individual king that's dramatic, it's the role of king itself. And the rigidity of the grotesque masks we wear in our masquerade does not restrict but liberates... Who knows if characters come before the actor who plays them or his life before theirs? If the chicken comes before the egg? And who cares? My art and this group are young eggs with full potential for life, so we'll just grow from here. Make our mind and locks grow to their full potential. Can't contain them in your dead institutions or we'll never hatch into our own. Every spoil is a style, so accept what you see and help it to grow; you can profit, too – or we have to go.

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HEIRSTONE

(Pausing.)

I really like you guys. You may have something, yes! You have your chance. That fellow there, the one who never speaks, what's his name?

HAWK

We don't know.

HOPEY

Call him Pitchy-Patchy, Clown, Mascot, Jonkonnu, anything.

HEIRSTONE

He was good, too.

(Referring to HOPEY's limp.)

How you manage to damage yourself like that? Acting? Dancing...?

HAWK

(Referring to AUDIENCE.)

Because of them.

HOPEY

Because we had no theatre. You have no idea what getting this place really means to us.

LILLY

A chance to save ourselves.

HOPEY

Such hate and fear inside them. Dem beat me, yet dem was afraid. I was sorry for them – for us... humanity as a whole. I didn't feel much, not until afterwards.

HEIRSTONE

Who beat you?

HOPEY

(Indicating the AUDIENCE.)

Them!

Masqueraders

HEIRSTONE

Why?

HOPEY

I don't really know.

HEIRSTONE

Liars! When was this?

HOPEY

A fortnight or so ago, was it?

(Asking other ACTORS; but they aren't sure.)

Some members of the audience attacked us. We had our first show in the city and the last we did. I didn't like the place, the people's vibration. I told Day, yet he insisted on performing in the stinking place. We performed in the country before where people were suspicious, but not physically hostile. They started to like us in some places, so Day wanted to move to Kingston, and we started that Saturday in Solas Market.

(PITCHY PATCHY dances downstage-centre while LILLY and FATTY become higglers and HOPEY moves upstage.)

(MAD DOG, DAY and HAWK become part of the CROWD in Solace Market.)

1ST CROWD MEMBER (MAD DOG)

Hey, look deh....

(He points past PITCHY PATCHY, in the direction of the AUDIENCE.)

Is dem!

2ND CROWD MEMBER (HAWK)

Who?

1ST CROWD MEMBER

Remember...? Di same mad people we did see some time ago at Linstead market, talking to di air? Look like dem travel round di island wid dem madness. Wah dem doing in Kingston?

3RD CROWD MEMBER (DAY)

Dem still look like dem out fi obeah we. Is wah dem really want? Dem mighta

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meet dem solace in dis market.

(Pointing to PITCHY PATCHY.)

Dat one... look like him keeping class, but him nah say nutten.

2ND CROWD MEMBER

Dem up to some jinalship.

3RD CROWD MEMBER

Waan lamps we... fool we up.

FATTY (as HIGGLER)

(Running onstage, screaming.)

Tief! Tief! Help! Stop tief! Stop dem!

(She hangs on to HAWK.)

Tief! Him tiefing out we food and putting it into dem bag when we looking at di masquerade!

HAWK

Leggo, woman!

(HAWK breaks away, and runs: the place is in an uproar.)

1ST CROWD MEMBER

After dem! Don't let dem get weh.

(After running in circles for awhile and building up a hectic pace; HOPEY, FATTY and PITCHY PATCHY exit. The other ACTORS freeze.)

(HAWK, DAY and MAD DOG, as members of the CROWD, focus on LILLY: she looks back at them.)

3RD CROWD MEMBER

See one of di damn animals yah.

1ST CROWD MEMBER

We have a lesson fi yuh.

(They chase LILLY.)

Masqueraders

3RD CROWD MEMBER

(Cornering her.)

Try to distract us while yuh friend pick we. Well, yuh succeed... yuh have we total attention. No one else in yah. All yuh friend dem run leave yuh... half di market after dem.

2ND CROWD MEMBER

What we gwine do wid her?

1ST CROWD MEMBER

Have fun! Come yah, gal.

(He grabs at her but misses.)

Yuh fast. Try get weh from chree a we.

HOPEY

(Entering with cutlass in hand.)

Leave her alone! Cowards! Tek on somebaddy your own size!

(They look hard at him.)

2ND CROWD MEMBER

The brave hero.

HOPEY

Run, Lilly, run! I'll keep them off.

LILLY

(Hesitating.)

Wah bout yuh?!

HOPEY

Di van round di back. Now move!

(As LILLY runs off: 2nd CROWD MEMBER starts after her, but HOPEY trips him.)

2ND CROWD MEMBER

(Getting up.)

Yuh going sorry fi dat. No likkle dancer batty-bwoy going trip me up and live

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to laugh bout it.

3RD CROWD MEMBER

After we beat yuh, yuh lucky if we decide to turn what leave of yuh over to di police. Yuh ever see what market mob do tief before police come?

(HOPEY tries to run.)

1ST CROWD MEMBER

(Blocking HOPEY.)

Not so fast, friend... not before we get acquainted some more.

3RD CROWD MEMBER

Maybe him planning to dance out a dis.

2ND CROWD MEMBER

Tink him smart. Waan spread loose morals around di country. Facety! Call people John Crow because dem eat chicken. Well, God mek vulture to clean up corruption like you. Grab him!

(Throwing lasso over HOPEY.)

1ST CROWD MEMBER

(Grabbing HOPEY.)

Wiggle all yuh want, yuh nah get away.

3RD CROWD MEMBER

Is real man huol yuh now, bwoy – not dem fenky-fenky sissy in yuh dance group.

2ND CROWD MEMBER

Hole him tight, mek I kick him in him batty—

1ST CROWD MEMBER

Yuh mad? Maybe him wi like it. Yuh waan di bwoy have body come down an embarrass wi?

3RD CROWD MEMBER

How much people you tief so far?

Masqueraders

HOPEY

Leave us alone!

2ND CROWD MEMBER

To corrupt di nation?

1ST CROWD MEMBER

What yuh hope to achieve? Going around acting like yuh mad? Go look a job and stop tief and sell yuh batty.

2ND CROWD MEMBER

Hold him deh.

(He kicks HOPEY in the ass.)

Yuh like dat, ee? It nice yuh? Yuh waan mi do it again?

(He kicks HOPEY again.)

It sweet yuh, ee? Ah would a mek yuh gi mi a blow-job, but ah don't know weh yuh mouth coming from.

3RD CROWD MEMBER

Dutty likkle shit.

(Boxing HOPEY to the ground and pulling off his cap.)

A locks man at dat! Dreadlocks doing ballet dance like gal?! Is a shame.

1ST CROWD MEMBER

A wolf man.... A one weird wolf. Mek we trim di bwoy.

2ND CROWD MEMBER

Di Bible warn wi bout people like dem, who do strange tings wid dem bodies and members.

3RD CROWD MEMBER

Dat's why him dreadlocks. Fi get long hair like woman. Lift him up again mek ah kick him ass, too.

2ND CROWD MEMBER

(Lifting up HOPEY against his body.)

Ah tell you im like it. Him getting hot. Him heart beating fast. Ah feel it hot in him breast against mi chest. Smell di excitement in him sweat. Him give

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himself up to us. Him not fighting anymore.

(He lets go; HOPEY falls to the ground and groans.)

1ST CROWD MEMBER

(Spitting on HOPEY.)

Scum! Tiefin, gaping shit-hole! If we ever see yuh or yuh tiefin set around dis or any odder market again... trying fi jinal people and spread yuh immoral ideas, yuh won't get off so easy! Next time, ah hot machete fi yuh and push it up inna yuh batty-hole.

HOPEY

(Singing faintly.)

“Singers and dancers and players of instruments will be there,
that's the way I heard—”

3RD CROWD MEMBER

Shut up, man-bwoy!

(He kicks HOPEY again and MAD DOG, DAY and HAWK move upstage as HOPEY groans.)

(FATTY comes running out.)

FATTY

Hopey? HERE HE IS!

(She runs over to him.)

Hopey. Hopey. Poor ting. Dem hurt yuh bad?

HOPEY

(He is barely audible.)

Mi back.... Mi back.

LILLY

(LILLY comes running out.)

Hogs! Bullies! Big brutes!

(HOPEY groans again.)

Masqueraders

DAY

(DAY comes over to HOPEY.)

Let's move him.

(He tries to break flashback.)

Alright, Hopey, yuh can get up now.

(HOPEY continues to groan.)

HOPEY

Mi back... Mi back.

LILLY

(Breaking flashback.)

Why di two of you always tek tings to di extreme?

FATTY

Yuh know him have a bad back, yet yuh kick him for real.

HAWK

Let's jus say we were possessed.

DAY

Him okay, man. Him did want audience participation, and he got it!

LILLY

(Resuming flashback.)

You would say so. When I tell yuh to come right away to help Hopey wid dose brutes, yuh hesitate and mek dem nearly kill him. You are a coward, Day. That's all. A big bully of a coward... One day we'll defeat you. Just watch! ... You won't be King forever. Hawk, you always hated him, ever since him give back yuh stolen goods. I finish acting with dis group—

FATTY

(Breaking flashback.)

Yuh lucky if yuh see mi back tomorrow.

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HOPEY

(Groaning and getting up slowly.)

Help me. Please help me.... Mi back.

MAD DOG

After your behaviour, Day, what will the critics say? You expect the audience to come back or tell their friends about the show? We right back where we started. I wouldn't come back for you alone. I really only act to help Fatty's baby.

DAY

You need us. They all do. Two hours ago, we were nakedly exposed to them, and now they are exposed from experiencing us... exposed by realizing they are us, rudely thrown back in their faces, but freed by the realization that they, too, can make a meaningful show from the absurdities of life... endure to the end and all is vindicated! And if dem never come back, too bad for dem! I did this performance as if it was my first and only show. They can't take that glory from me.

(DAY dances to centre-stage with HOPEY's cane in his hand. He does a tap dance while he sings.)

DAY

CAN'T TAKE OFF THIS SHINE
LUSTY FEELINGS OF SATISFACTION
LIKE A WINE
IT GOES TO MY BRAIN
CAN'T UNDO THE INFLUENCE
WE HAVE ON YOU NOW
OR MAINTAIN YOUR INNOCENCE
TO HIDE BEHIND AGAIN

ALL

WE SHOWED THE WAY IT GOES
THE WAY LIFE AND CIRCUMSTANCES FLOW
CLAP YOUR HANDS, WRIGGLE YOUR TOES
SHOW ME EYES AS TINY GLOWS
OF GLORY, FOR THE LIFE OUR ACT SHOWS

Masqueraders

(All ACTORS sing and dance.)

SO WHETHER YOU DANCE, WHETHER YOU SING
WHETHER COLD, TURN OFF OR BORED
WE'RE SURE WE BRING
JOY TO SOME, AND MAKE THEIR ILLS SEEM CURED

FATTY

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME
YOUR INDULGENCE WITH OUR ACTIONS
REASONS AND RHYME
ALL OUR CRAZY STANCES

LILLY and FATTY

COME ALL WHO STRIFE
WE WELCOME YOU
TO CELEBRATE THIS LIFE
IN SONGS AND DANCES, TOO

ALL

WE SHOWED THE WAY IT GOES
THE WAY LIFE AND CIRCUMSTANCES FLOW
CLAP YOUR HANDS, WRIGGLE YOUR TOES
SHOW ME EYES AS TINY GLOWS
OF GLORY, FOR THE LIFE OUR ACT SHOWS
BUT WHETHER YOU DANCE, WHETHER YOU SING
WHETHER COLD, TURNED OFF OR BORED
WE'RE SURE WE STILL BRING
JOY TO SOME, AND MAKE THEIR ILLS SEEM CURED
SO AS YOU GO
REMEMBER WE SAY SO
HOWEVER THE ENERGIES FLOW
LIVE LIFE AS IF IT IS YOUR FIRST, YOUR LAST
AND ONLY SHOW
REMEMBER YOUR FIRST, YOUR LAST
AND ONLY SHOW
AND ONLY SHOOOOOOOOW!

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(The curtain call is done to the overture: a medley of the show's songs, from the last to the first. As the ACTORS take their bow, they invite the AUDIENCE onstage to dance and celebrate with them.)

(LIGHTS out.)

THE END

Whiplash

by
Ginger Knight



ahdri zhina mandielas as Sweetie (left) and Trenton Allen as Dennis
in a scene from the original production of *Whiplash*.

PHOTO: DONALD "JIMMY" BELL

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Ginger Knight was born in 1951 in Kingston, Jamaica. He attended Kingston College where he was taught by the playwright Trevor Rhone who deeply influenced him. From 1979 to 2006 he wrote and produced sixteen plays including *Underwriters Undercover*, *Whiplash*, *Part-time Lover*, *Boy Blue*, *Higglers*, *Don Man* and *Don Man2*, among others. In 2007 he wrote, produced, directed and acted in the movie *Room for Rent*. He also produced a six-part TV series titled *Teenagers*.

Violence, Political Disillusion and the Image of the Violent Jamaican: An introduction to Ginger Knight's *Whiplash*

There has been a dramatic rise in gun violence in Jamaican communities on the island and in its diaspora since the 1970s. Those whose lives are most jeopardized by this are almost always working class Jamaicans. The majority of those killed are under 40, and so young Black men from the inner city expect to live short lives, while young women anticipate sexual and domestic violence. The wasted lives and the traumatic pain inflicted on families and individuals defy representation.

Colonial violence long ago structured the formation of the Americas and its integration into the global order but this does not explain why is it that, in spite of all the efforts to overcome this conflicted genesis, violence continues to intrude on contemporary social urban relations in ways that disproportionately deform and threaten the lives of people who are materially poor and of colour? Ginger Knight's *Whiplash* offers a sustained meditation on this difficult question. While the figure of "the violent Jamaican" has become a common but contentious image circulated in the mainstream media of Europe, North America and even Jamaica itself, Knight's offers a counter narrative to this, giving an insider's account of why and how communities and individuals were simultaneously forced into violence and how they justified and resisted it. His play dramatizes the violent crisis that interrupted the project of decolonization in the late 1970s. The play is a vivid dramatization of the hope and disillusion of that decade. It demonstrates how and why many Jamaicans have become deeply mistrustful of formal political systems. It makes a bold comment on the misrule of national and economic political elites suggesting that their collaboration with those that preside over the world order has had traumatic effects on the urban Black working class of Jamaica.

At the time of its production (1983) the play was a courageous public revelation of the cynical manipulations and cruel instigation of community violence by politicians of both parties. *Whiplash* achieved critical acclaim, enormous popularity and commercial success – a very rare combination. Knight accomplished this by fusing elements of popular Jamaican 'roots' drama with social realism. In so doing

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he mobilized a mode of theatrical address that privileged Black Jamaican urban working class perspectives and deepened older, more stereotypical portrayals. His work both represented and appealed to an emerging subjectivity that differed from earlier performed versions.

The action of the play sketches the lived experiences that led up to the current economic and political crisis in the Caribbean where a complicated mix of colonial legacies, local and global neoliberal economic policies, combined with the weaknesses of local and political structures have led to the escalation of violence. *Whiplash* dramatizes the ways in which Cold War politics and ideologies were superimposed on already existing local conflicts. At the time global power struggles between the USSR and the USA were fought outside and inside the geographical borders of these two superpowers. In the Third World, the US systematically supported local opposition to socialist alternatives in countries such as Argentina, Angola, Chile, Cuba, Ethiopia, Jamaica, Nicaragua among others while the Soviet Union backed liberation struggles in many of these countries.¹ In Jamaica when Michael Manley declared a commitment to principles of democratic socialism. He supported Cuba's stance against the apartheid regime of South Africa which had invaded Angola. This incurred the wrath of the United States of America which opposed these policies vigorously. The local opposition, with support from the US, challenged the rule of the socialist government resulting in heated armed combat in the capital city.² Estimates of the number of people killed between 1976 and 1980 (the period of the "civil war") vary but it is usually put at over 1400. Much later, in one year alone, 2009, over 1600 people were murdered in a population of 2.5 million. *Whiplash* illuminates brilliantly the factors that led up to this enduring crisis. It tells the story of a family divided by the undeclared civil war of the 1970s, and according to Knight is based on observation of actual experience. He tells us:

"When you grow up where I did with so many single mothers growing their sons, this story is similar to quite a few. I combined incidents from different situations to create one story."³

Two brothers, both sons of Miss Inez, are talented footballers. As a result of partisan political clientelism and poverty, they are unable to pursue their dream of becoming professional sportsmen and have trouble finding and keeping work. Soon they are forced to participate in armed warfare on opposing sides of the

1 Westad 2005; Grandin 2000.

2 Stephens and Stephens 1986.

3 Knight personal correspondence, March 2, 2009.

Whiplash

political divide. They have no choice but to do this if they want to survive. Over time they become rival area leaders or “Rankin Generals”. Sweetie, the lover of one of the brothers, persuades them to unite working class foot soldiers against the political elites who determine the on-going war. The brothers unite and organize others to join the movement against violence but they are tricked and the plan fails: both die in gun battle. A subplot tells the story of Sweetie and Miss Inez, the women of the family who search for satisfying familial and sexual relationships, a secure income and a safe and loving space in which to bring up their children.

The play boldly references landmark atrocities committed by both sides during the war that was never named as such. The Green Bay massacre (1978), in which a friend of one of the brothers was killed, remains a traumatic memory for many Jamaicans. It was an attempt on the part of the state to eradicate gunmen aligned to the opposition. Undercover, members of the military infiltrated a gang in Southside, Kingston and promised them guns and jobs if they collaborated with government. They agreed and were taken to the military zone of Green Bay where they were ambushed. Five men were killed and the rest escaped to tell the tale. Alton’s line “No angels died at Green Bay” (p.191) is actually a quote from one of the politicians implicated in the affair. The Orange Lane fire (1976), also discussed in the play, was another landmark atrocity in which JLP gunmen surrounded the home of PNP supporters set it on fire and refused to allow the victims, which included eight children and three adults, to escape. The Gold Street massacre (1980) in which Alton is implicated took place when PNP gunmen attacked a fundraising dance in a JLP community in the city.

The peace plan which Sweetie proposes and which drives the plot to its bloody resolution is again loosely based on actual events. When area leaders made an agreement to stop the civil war, they also attempted to challenge the formal system of power and the two major political parties. The idea for making peace came when two leaders from opposing sides, Bucky Marshall and Claudie Massop, decided to stop fighting and enlisted the support of the musician Bob Marley and others. The legendary *One Love Peace Concert* in 1978 celebrated the end of the war and thousands attended (including me). In an amazing moment, Marley called the two leaders of the rival political parties on stage and made them join hands over his head in a symbolic performance of commitment to peace-making. The moment demonstrated the power of Rastafari, which along with the apparatus of the popular cultural industry, operated as a force for peace that people deeply

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desired. Given the divisions that existed and their unresolved roots, the peace was not possible and like many others efforts since, soon fell apart.

The powerful elites implicated in the violence of this period have never faced accountability. Some still hold prominent public positions. While it is now acknowledged that the fighting was exacerbated by external intervention, this does not account for or explain the particular forms which the violence took. At the time, the atrocities shocked the entire country, raised questions as to how such sadistic practices (particularly those against children) could take place. They led to discussions about the meaning of violence for justice, reciprocity and community. The play offers one explanation of how and why people came to commit acts of violence and it proposes that people *simultaneously colluded and resisted it*. It proposes that 1980 marked a critical turning point in popular commitment to the ideals of the postcolonial nation. The end of the play effectively leaves the audience with deep suspicion and mistrust of formal political systems and practices. It signifies the destruction of anticolonial aspirations and demonstrates the transformation of the project of decolonization into one of accommodation.

Downtown voices and Roots theatre

Unlike the other creators assembled in this collection, Knight identifies himself as someone who speaks for downtown or working class Kingston where he was born in 1951. He attended one of a few colonial (Anglican) high schools, Kingston College, when access there was still limited. He is not a college or university graduate and he asserts proudly that his only formal exposure to playwriting was one class with Trevor Rhone who taught him at school. Rhone cast him in a production of *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men* by Lonne Elder and allowed him to watch *Smile Orange* fifty-two times for free. "That's where I learned to write," says Knight. Asserting that he honed his craft as a playwright at the 'University of the Street', he recalls that "as a teenager I used to 'lock' the street at nights so that I do not miss anything. Next day I would be telling dramas, jokes and everything that happened the night before. No formal way of telling except to entertain. Else I lose my audience quickly."⁴ Like other writers in the realist tradition Knight places emphasis on keen observation of his society. He is influenced by Trevor Rhone's (1987) comic sensibility and oral storytelling style but, unlike Rhone, he does not focus on the middle class and the rural peasantry. He focuses on the city and his eventful plot is heavily driven by the overwhelming and debilitating effects

4 Knight, personal correspondence, January 11, 2009, with Ford-Smith.

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of the urban social environment which the leading male characters are unable to overcome.

Knight draws on and moves beyond the stock dramaturgical situations and characters of the popular 'roots theatre', a term which is shorthand for popular, comic, often farcical, melodramatic and vulgar morality plays laden with exaggeration and braggadocio. Roots plays typically depict sexual intrigues, rivalries, and the material adventures of the urban poor and lower middle class. The characters are often recognizable stereotypes, oversexed Jezebels, hard working women, matriarchs and tricksters. Like the early 20th century grandfather of the genre, the actor Cupidon, the beloved Oliver Samuels and the contemporary androgenous actor Shebada, tricksters are often portrayed as sexually ambivalent figures. The plays in which they feature almost always offer a message or a moral about what it means to negotiate good and bad in everyday life without embracing either extreme and how one should behave in matters of sex and love.

Roots plays have evolved out of a downtown or working class tradition that dates back to yard entertainments and variety concerts, and include comic duos such as Ike and Mike, Bim and Bam, Ranny and Lee, and more recently Bello and Blakka. These acts were often staged as front of curtain acts at the cinema and were standard fare at Edelweiss Park (the home of Garvey's UNIA), entertainments and church hall concerts alike. Contemporary roots dramas tend to be cheaply produced so as to travel easily both locally and just as importantly within Jamaican diasporic communities in North America and Britain. There they form an alternative to the formal theatre by offering a space to affirm Jamaican identity and a chance to connect memories of home to the diasporic community.

In the 1970s and 80s the plays were also influenced by popular radio and television dramatic structures. Radio serials such as Elaine Perkins' long-running *Dulcimina: Her Life in Town* dramatized everyday working class dilemmas in empathic ways and riveting ways. Perkins' remarkable gift for storytelling and dialogue meant that the characters she presented were often far more nuanced than those associated with imported Australian soap operas. Perkins work drew an enormous audience that listened devotedly as the serial was broadcast for several years on one of the two Jamaican radio stations that existed at the time. American sitcoms also presented family intrigue as standard fare on the island's single television station. These radio dramas helped to cultivate popular tastes for theatre even as they marketed stock characters.

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Talking back to the image of the violent Jamaican

One such stock character is the cardboard stereotype that transnational media audiences have come to know as “the Jamaican” – shorthand for a manufactured image of Black criminal masculinity that is gun-toting, irrationally brutal, sexy and lawless. This image has a long complex colonial genealogy and Knight’s play can be read as a response to this discourse. The figure has its roots in the discourses of the plantation which created, disciplined and punished angry Black men, especially those who rebelled. The action of the play is haunted by this past which is invoked by the title. *Whiplash* literally refers to the lashing action of a whip (OED) but perhaps it also refers to the after-effects of a trauma to the body – in this case, the trade in Africans. As Mimi Scheller (2003) reminds us, the region has always produced so that others can consume. In *Consuming the Caribbean* Scheller expands Eric Williams’ (1944) and C.L.R. James’ (1963) argument that European development depended on slavery and plantation by showing that consumption of the region’s bodies and labour underlies the expansion of European civilization and systems of knowledge. Her point, like Aimé Césaire’s, is that the humanist face of Europe depends on the creation of a savage Other inhabiting a marginal “elsewhere”.⁵

After slavery this image of the violent but also often childlike Other went through several incarnations. Thomas Carlyle (1853) portrayed Jamaican men as a contradictory mixture of lazy and greedy, effeminate and dangerously violent. These actions, he proposed, threatened Western civilization. Early film perpetuated the circulation of this figure, generating a racial stereotype. *Birth of a Nation* the early D.W. Griffith narrative of the American nation, circulated images of men like Silas Lynch whose violent sexual desire for white women made him the foundation of the stereotypical Black buck. *Whiplash* was also produced a little after the period in which the figure was marketed through the Blaxploitation films of the 1970s, which featured drug dealers, pimps, big guns and “attitude” and were often set in inner cities.

Knight counters the enduring image of the violent Black man through his representation of the everyday culture of Jamaicans, his nuanced characterization and his depiction of family. Knight lays out the emotional texture of everyday working class life in urban Jamaica and the way it was lived – football and music, laughter, easy repartee, serious discussions, storytelling, Sunday dinners, the frailties and

5 Edmondson 1999.

Whiplash

fortitude of mothers, the sexual politics and normalized acts of domestic violence that make up the lives of ordinary city dwellers. He portrays the cool desperation of sons who, beguiled by the unattainable myth of the male breadwinner seek elusive notions of masculine strength and personal respect in violence. Knight resists depicting Jamaican culture as “exotic” or emphatically different from other societies by placing exaggerated emphasis on spirituality, music, dance, sex and ganja. While these issues enter the play they do not do so gratuitously or sensationally. Rather they enter in relation to the theme of survival in the context of urban poverty and global and local political corruption. Knight depicts the warmth and endurance of intimate and community relationships. He affirms the value placed on children and demonstrates that when predatory politicians test the bonds of family it is the attempt to keep faith with the ethic of reciprocal respect and hope that leads to resistance.

While Knight depicts stock roles such as the matriarch, the rebel youth and the loyal girlfriend, his characters are psychologically, intellectually and linguistically complex. He neither romanticizes them nor does he present them as helpless victims. He places all his characters in situations that resonate with political, moral and ethical challenges and then shows how they grow. Tricksters are not completely self-serving, nor are they buffoons as they were often portrayed in folk musicals and some roots theatre of the time. Mr. Williams, the shopkeeper who Miss Inez marries, represents an alternative to violent masculinity even in the midst of deep divisions. Knight’s female characters are particularly nuanced mixtures of vulnerability and agency battling for survival against enormous odds while simultaneously attempting to stand up for what they believe in.

Most important is Knight’s portrayal of the urban Jamaican working class family as a positive and working structure. Female-headed households, overbearing Black women and absent or irresponsible fathers are frequently represented in the mainstream press as the causes of Black male criminality, a view which *Whiplash* contests. Like the African-American family, discourses on the Jamaican family represent it as “dysfunctional” and “dislocated.” Instead Knight offers a functioning family which is female headed. He shows the stresses born by single mothers without pathologizing them. In his hands the matriarch is not masculinized or asexual. Miss Inez, mother of the two warring brothers wants her sons to be responsible citizens, but this goal constantly eludes her grasp. She is, often on the edge of despondency, struggling to cope with all the crises life throws her way. Within the constraints of her context, she exerts agency in the most

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obvious way available to her – through cunning relations with her baby-father and through her ability to create warm family life around good cooking and conversation. Both Sweetie and Miss Inez are sexual without being Jezebels, and are active, loving and loyal without being sentimental or dependent. While they are often reduced to using sex as a way to leverage money, this is not something that they do casually and they always retain a responsible loyalty to their families. The play actively demonstrates Sweetie’s search for alternatives to poverty and dependency through education and employment just as it represents Miss Inez’s shame about her children’s paternity. Neither character is robbed of autonomy or dignity. As single mothers they are not disfigured imitations of the western patriarchal model; rather they are a composite mixture of resilience and weakness. It is the women who most clearly reject violence and reach for something else and it is the warmth of the families that they create that offer an alternative to the world of the street.

Sweetie, supported by Miss Inez, invents and articulates an alternative to violence. Drawing on what she has learned about other anticolonial and African diasporic struggles she encourages the two warring brothers to fight for peace:

SWEETIE

You can do it like Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi. Peaceful resistance. Non-violent revolution. Mek di man dem hand in di guns an organize a march up Cross Roads, Half Way Tree and New Kingston every day from nine to five. Everybody off di road by six so you don’t have no mistake. If half a million ghetto people march every day, somebody mus tek notice. (p. 218)

Sweetie portrays the ideological divide between the working class supporters on either side as shallow. The conflict is created by the political elite whose power depends on their ability to speak for and represent the poor. The play proposes that the politicians need the poor to fight each other in order to maintain their rule. Nationalist politicians mimic the behaviour of colonizers who “divide and rule” so as to live off the poor in a predatory bid to hold on to power. Rather than catalyze a transformation of the ugly social divisions in the society, the play argues that political elites usurp power to enforce old patterns of patronage and domination in new ways.

While *Masqueraders* and *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine* render different races and classes on stage, in *Whiplash* middle class characters are absent from the action on stage. This underscores the invisibility of the middle class and the brown, Chinese, white and other minorities in the lives of most Jamaicans.

Whiplash

Knight's play dramatizes the thwarted desires and wasted brilliance of those like Alton and Dennis. Like Perry Henzell's film *The Harder They Come*,⁶ released in 1970, the play demonstrates that honesty leads nowhere in the over-determining brutality of the formal system of Jamaica. Instead, achievement may only be possible by recourse to "outlaw ethics,"⁷ a system of values in which the poor attempt to win power by enacting a combination of trickster heroics and violent maneuvers derived from film genres such as Westerns and gangster movies. Like Ivan, the singer-gunman in *The Harder They Come*, Alton and Dennis want to get their share now on earth. Like Ivan, they learn that only by fighting violently can they win a modicum of respect. Unlike Ivan whose violence is mainly directed at the corrupt police force, Alton and Dennis end up injuring folks who are like themselves, including the women and children they love. Meanwhile the powerful do business as usual. Their challenge to the status quo leads to betrayal by their comrades and their murder. *Whiplash* demonstrates that freedom of choice and individual autonomy are myths in the harsh reality of urban Kingston where the forces that constrain choice are simultaneously local and global. Within the Caribbean itself, the enduring colour-coded regional social hierarchy and the myth that "faren is better" (All things foreign are better) suggests that those who have will always have more and those who don't won't. Ginger Knight puts it more bluntly: "Di golden rule is, di man who have di gold make di rule."

Whiplash demonstrates that humans rarely successfully struggle for liberation while enduring dire poverty, injustice and violence. Extreme hardship and social exclusion creates desperation especially when it is justified or denied by formal systems of governance. When belt tightening strategies fail to yield results, hard work has no reward. In spite of Miss Inez's efforts to keep her boy children on the straight and narrow, they die violently. Sweetie, the pragmatist, concludes that the only way to lick the problem is to survive and get rich, no matter the moral flexibility required. She says: "My mother poor. My granny poor. An so far as I can work out, her people dem did poor right back to slavery, and as far as I am concern di poorness stop wid me. My pickney dem haffi get a chance in life" (p. 195). Sweetie's words are a classic statement of popular neoliberal ideology. Perhaps justice can be brought into being by long term collective struggles, but only if those who make the struggle can survive and, as Sweetie shows, survival in

6 Please also see the novel of the same name: Thelwell (1980), *The Harder They Come*.

7 For a further discussion of this see Obika Gray's (2004), *Demeaned but empowered: The social power of the urban poor in Jamaica*. Kingston: UWI Press.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

urban Jamaica depends on individual wealth. Citizenship and its attendant rights are therefore guaranteed not by so-called electoral democracy which sends us to the polls every few years, but rather on the requirement of having enough money to participate in the consumption patterns of the society.

Hannah Arendt long ago proposed that violence is not the ultimate expression of power as is commonly thought; rather she proposes it is a substitute for power. She contends that where people can express their power collectively there is little violence.⁸ Perhaps *Whiplash* bears her out and the violence it depicts is an expression of a sense of collective powerlessness. But, in an ironic sense in spite of or perhaps because of its emphasis on the overdetermined context, *Whiplash* recuperates the hope that paradoxically continues to emerge over and over again against all odds in the Caribbean. When the lights go out at the end of the play, the audience is left with a choice between desolate acceptance of the grim pattern of violence depicted and the stubborn imperative of recuperating hope in the face of despair. The resolute dejection of the ending can provocatively offer the spectator the space to take up a conscious and ethical oppositional stance against despair. Saying no to the violence and the hopelessness of the ending is not a rational act but it may be one that has historically sustained the region's people over centuries of difficulty.

The violence that accelerated in the 1970s has never stopped, though it is no longer associated with the Cold War nor with obvious struggles for control of a state. The small nation state is bankrupt after years of bowing to unsustainable models of development, the divestment of resources to foreign capital, and conditionalities exacted by internal and international lending agencies such as the International Monetary Fund. Internal corruption and human rights violations further complicate matters. Continuing cycles of attack and reprisal play out transnationally in urban community wars that are sometimes, but not always, linked to illegal economies or to fights over resources including the right to safety and the liberal guarantees of citizenship.

In the meantime the illegal economies of the present, eerily replay the scenarios laid down in the past. "You Can't Blame the Youth," Peter Tosh's song from the same period, argues that the values of unrestrained violence are the formational values of a profoundly divided society that remains based on them. He says:

8 Arendt 1969.

Whiplash

You teach the youth about Christopher Columbus
And you said he was a very great man
You teach the youth about Marco Polo
And you said he was a very great man
You teach the youth about the pirate Hawkins
And you said he was a very great man
You teach the youth about the pirate Morgan
And you said he was a very great man

So you can't blame the youth of today
You can't fool the youth
You can't blame the youth
You can't fool the youth

All these great men were doing
Robbing, raping, kidnapping and killing
So-called great men were doing
Robbing, raping, kidnapping

WHIPLASH

by *Ginger Knight*

PRODUCTION HISTORY

This play opened in 1983 at the Theatre Inside, Green Gables, Kingston. Subsequently it played at the Barn Theatre also in Kingston. The original cast was as follows:

Cast

<i>Sweetie</i>	Sharon McGlashin
Audrey Brown <i>aka</i> ahdri zhina mandiola	
<i>Alton</i>	Ronald Goshop
<i>Dennis</i>	Trenton Allen
<i>Miss Inez</i>	Norma Allwood

Director	Pablo Hoilett
Set Design	Pablo Hoilett
Stage Manager	Charles Knight
Production Manager	Charles Silvera

Whiplash

ACT I – Scene 1

SWEETIE, DENNIS and ALTON enter a one-room house. DENNIS carries a football.

DENNIS

(DENNIS passes the football to SWEETIE.)

Blow-wow! A di wildest football match mi ever see – inna my life! Di only match weh ever come near dis is when KC and di Brazilians school boys did play inna '64 and KC win.

SWEETIE

Dennis, ah proud a yuh! Yuh want to hear dem girls a tease mi, seh mi gwan like a only my man alone can play football.

(SWEETIE returns the ball.)

DENNIS

Den Alton nuh play good, man? Yuh nuh see how much goals him save?

ALTON

Cho! It never mek any difference. Unu nuh still win.

DENNIS

(Passes ball to ALTON.)

If it wasn't fi yuh, ah woulda ten me alone put in.

ALTON

One love give unu di cup an a you score di one. So it nuh mek no difference how much me stop. But when yuh score di goal, is a nice bruk yuh give mi!

SWEETIE

(Intercepts ball.)

Bloodshot eyes! A di best salad mi ever see. Hey Dennis!
Mek wi do it and show him nuh!

DENNIS

Yuh mean, how mi pass di general? Mi seh, mi rock two time and when mi tink di man run gone, di man deh-deh wid mi same way. So mi jus lick di

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

ball pon him foot. Ole massa tek di bait and push out him foot. Man, mi just draw it back. Cho! Yuh waan see General Alton a skate cross di cycle track, man!

(Everybody laughs.)

SWEETIE

Mek wi do it again!

(DENNIS and SWEETIE square off. DENNIS places the ball between them. Then shifts his body left and right. SWEETIE does not move. DENNIS gently kicks the ball to SWEETIE with his left foot, then quickly draws it back with his right. SWEETIE slides for the ball but is beaten. DENNIS dribbles around her, then takes a shot.)

DENNIS

GOAL! See di goalie yah! Him don't even know what a gwan.

(There is good-natured laughing.)

DENNIS

Bwoy, Alton, don't feel nuh way, but is a rahtid bruk yuh get today.

ALTON

Yes, yuh hold mi wid dat one.

DENNIS

Remind mi a Bruce Lyn when him use to play defence fi Georges: nutten couldn get pass him. Dem use to call him "The Rock", but I going call you General Alton, "Rock No. 2".

ALTON

Cho! Is a pity though, else is a whole heap a beer woulda drink up a Wilson Town tonight. Anyway, mi a go bathe off and go up deh. Yuh nuh cyan come wid mi?

DENNIS

No-I. I a go stay wid my people tonight.
A big session keeping on the corner later and I am di hero.

Whiplash

SWEETIE

Den yuh nuh hero long time? Yuh is my hero.

(She rubs DENNIS' head and neck.)

ALTON

Dem nuh call yuh "Sweetie" fi nutten, ee. Yuh cyaan even wait fi di man sweet talk yuh. Yuh haffi sweet talk him first.

SWEETIE

Him fast pon di football field, but him kinda slow wid dat, so mi haffi help him out. Don't it, darling?

DENNIS

Rest, man. How yuh mean fi tell people seh mi cyaan talk?

SWEETIE

Den is lie? Hey Alton, remember when unu just move on yah and dem did have a session down di Centre? Yuh waan see him inna one likkle corner a peep-peep pon di people. Fraid fi beg dance.

DENNIS

Rest, man. Is tru mi did new an mi never know who is who, so mi just cool, cause mi never waan cause no trouble.

SWEETIE

Mek ah talk! Me and mi friend dem a tek him in, man. And mi say to Babsi, dat likkle guy deh nuh look too bad.

DENNIS

Rest yuhself. Mi look good from morning.

SWEETIE

Weh? A since mi start chat to yuh, yuh start look like somebody.

ALTON

Is true dat.

DENNIS

Wait. Unu out fi gang me?

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

SWEETIE

Mek ah finish. Mi stop and go over and seh, “Hey yuh new on yah?”

Him seh, “Yes.” Mi seh, “Weh yuh name?” Him seh, “Dennis.” Mi seh, “Yuh want a beer?” Hear him nuh... “I-man nuh use to stranger gal a buy mi beer, but I will hold one still.”

(Everybody laughs.)

So mi buy him di beer. So mi seh, “Wah happen, yuh nuh waan dance?”

Cause is me alone haffi do di talking. Him say, “Alright.” And wi start dance.

Mi say mi a put on a nice likkle dub pon di boy. Him a gwan like him nuh waan lean back. Dat time a Wailers music a play, “I am gonna put it on.” Yuh see when ah put on some more dub, yuh waan see ole maasa a hold on tight and a rock back, and a smile-smile up inna mi face.

(Laughs.)

DENNIS

Look like di football loosen yuh tongue. I a fret seh tonight when yuh have two beers inna yuh stomach, yuh a go just chat mi out.

SWEETIE

But yuh cyaan seh is lie, though? Yuh nuh see from dat time weh him deh? Right yah soh!

(She rubs DENNIS' head on her stomach.)

So yuh tink is mi mouth alone sweet?

ALTON

A nuh lie, cause when Mama check him and ask him how him just inna yuh soh, him say, “Mama, is tru you don’t know. Sweetie is sweet both in name and nature.”

DENNIS

Yuh cyan chat, ee, man? Now yuh going mek she feel she is God’s gift to man.

SWEETIE

To you.

(Sings.)

Whiplash

“I am gonna put it on.”

(She rubs DENNIS' head a little on her stomach, MISS INEZ comes in with a shopping bag. She watches the spectacle. ALTON sees her first.)

ALTON

Rass... tafar-I! Mi gone bathe.

SWEETIE

Weh yuh a go aready, Alton, man? Yuh nuh know seh if Miss Inez come see di tree a we, she might nuh seh nutten, but if she see only me and Dennis, she will tink seh someting a gwan.

(Sings.)

“I am gonna put it on....”

ALTON

Rrrass-ta-fa-r-I!

SWEETIE

Alton! Stop yuh foolishness nuh, man!

(She realizes that something is wrong... She sees MISS INEZ who is just looking.)

ALTON

Wait! Wah happen, Mama? Mek ah tek di bag.

SWEETIE

L-later, darling. Ah mean Dennis, Miss Inez.

(She rushes out. DENNIS smiles sheepishly.)

DENNIS

Wait. Wah happen, Mama?

MISS INEZ

Look like sweetness inna yuh blood fi true. All inna yuh dream yuh a call her sweetness.

DENNIS

Is Sweetie she name. Mama, why yuh don't like har?

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

MISS INEZ

She too bright and loose and all she waan do is get pregnant fi yuh.

DENNIS

Mi nuh tell yuh seh she deh pon di pill.

MISS INEZ

Uh-huh? Den how she get pregnant?

DENNIS

She forget to take di pill dat day, man.

MISS INEZ

Is a good ting she lose di baby.

DENNIS

What yuh mean by dat?

MISS INEZ

You not working. She not working. Me not working. Yuh brother not working. And to get any money from either a yuh faada, mi haffi go down a dem work place and gwan bad and disgrace miself.

DENNIS

Sorry bout dat but nuh you pick di wrong man fi go have pickney fah?

MISS INEZ

(She throws toothpaste at DENNIS.)

Shut yuh mouth! I notice is me alone yuh have back-chat for but when Miss Sweetness a chat yuh up, all yuh do is rub yuh head pon her belly and go on like when puppy dog a look wife.

ALTON

A nuh lie. Yuh waan see him face!

(ALTON mimics DENNIS, then takes the ball and fakes some moves.)

MISS INEZ

Like how di football season done, unu gwine haffi look work.

Whiplash

ALTON

But yuh don't even ask mi how di match go.

MISS INEZ

From ah reach the bottom a di road ah hear and ah proud a unu. But unu cyaan eat di football. So unu going haffi look work.

ALTON

Dem call we up fi national squad.

MISS INEZ

What? More football? Listen nuh, I won't carry you forever.

ALTON

Dat covered. Di coach organize dat wi get a work at di waterfront.

MISS INEZ

To do what?

DENNIS

Drive forklift. And we get off early so we can train.

MISS INEZ

When yuh going start?

ALTON

Monday morning.

(MISS INEZ looks at her sons. She is very proud.)

MISS INEZ

Dat is good. At least we will have some money coming in for a change.

DENNIS

Yes, and Sweetie can have my baby.

MISS INEZ

Shut yuh blasted mout! Save your money, den yuh cyan afford to have children. Dat is why poor people will always be poor. Dem just breed up and breed up. My madda always tell my bredda seh, find somewhere to put yuh head before yuh put yuh—

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

ALTON

Other head. Right, Mama?

MISS INEZ

See yah, bwoy! Unu is pickney! Ah not into any argument wid unu, but mek ah tell yuh one ting: don't get dat girl pregnant! Yuh still young! Set up yuhself first before yuh start tink bout dat.

Whose bike dat park outside?

ALTON

One a mi friend.

MISS INEZ

Where him get it from?

ALTON

Him buy it from Issa.

MISS INEZ

Yuh sure is buy him buy it? Dem tiefing a whole heap a bike and I know seh yuh friend dem nuh have no money. Alton, why yuh don't stop go back up Wilson Town? I notice seh yuh start mix up wid bad company. I move, but yuh still go back up there.

ALTON

But is up dere mi born and grow.

MISS INEZ

But yuh live down here.

ALTON

My friends up dere.

MISS INEZ

Yuh putting yuhself into a position where anybody can do yuh anyting and seh yuh is spy. Di politics is getting too hot.

DENNIS

As yuh talk bout dat, half-time at di match today dis bredda yah...

Mousehead... yeah... him nuh check me and say how mi is traitor fi a play fi

Whiplash

Hyatt and if ah ever score any goal, weh him a go do wid mi after di match.

ALTON

Weh di rass! Why yuh never tell me? Wait till ah go up deh tonight, ah going beat him up. Dat likkle germ!

MISS INEZ

Nuh bother wid dat. Ah know yuh ignorant when yuh ready, so ah telling yuh from now, nuh bother wid dat.

ALTON

Dat likkle bwoy deh too facety, man. It look like him mussy get gun now, so him just a gwan like him bad from di odder day.

MISS INEZ

Same ting deh! Listen nuh: ah don't want yuh go up there again.

ALTON

Mama, mi cyaan hold dat tonight. Although we lose di match today, mi a star, mi haffi go.

MISS INEZ

Every day yuh get more and more into di bad company. Election coming up soon and ah fretting dat someting will happen to yuh. Dennis, talk to him nuh.

DENNIS

Tell him what, Mama? Alton cyan tek care of himself. Mi gone bathe.

ALTON

Hold on, man; mek ah bathe.

MISS INEZ

Yuh turning big man and yuh don't listen to me again.

ALTON

Yuh worry yuhself too much, man. Nutten nah happen to me, man.

MISS INEZ

Ah going to Mr Williams for a few minutes. Jus wait till ah come back.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

ALTON

Yuh nah see me when yuh come back.

(He exits. MISS INEZ hesitates and then exits. SWEETIE enters.)

SWEETIE

Weh Miss Inez gone?

DENNIS

Blow-wow! Sweetie, man! Yuh come in like secret agent. Wah kinda James Bond movement dis yuh a gwan wid?

SWEETIE

Mi waan hear weh she a seh, man. Weh she gone?

DENNIS

Mr Williams.

SWEETIE

Dat mean she nah come back fi now.

DENNIS

I don't tink is a whole heap a tings she going pick up.

SWEETIE

It nuh matter. Mr Williams like her, and when she go into him shop, him always keep up long argument wid her.

DENNIS

Fi what?

SWEETIE

Him nuh like her? And ah tell yuh someting too, I don't think she mind him.

DENNIS

Is weh yuh get dat from?

SWEETIE

Eh? Yuh waan see him face light up when she come inna him shop.

DENNIS

Maybe him like her, but right now di old lady not into nutten like dat.

Whiplash

SWEETIE

Uh-huh? Then how she pass Miss Berger shop and Mr Wong-Kie shop and gone way down a Mr Williams shop? And fi-him shop don't have as much tings as fi Wong-Kie shop.

DENNIS

Den suppose is him alone give her trust when she broke?

SWEETIE

Miss Berger give everybody trust and she grounds.

DENNIS

Den suppose Mama don't like her?

SWEETIE

Den suppose Miss Inez like him? Wah happen? She nuh somebody too? How yuh a defend her so strong? What she say when yuh tell her?

DENNIS

Bwoy, ah couldn't tell her. I just mention seh like how I get di work, yuh cyan have my baby – blow-wow! Di woman nearly nyam off mi head! Mi couldn tell her yuh pregnant already, else she woulda mus buss a blood vessel.

SWEETIE

Mi cyaan understan why yuh madda a fight against me soh. Because according to how old she is, she suppose to have you and Alton when she was younger than me.

DENNIS

She don't waan our pickney dem fi struggle like how she haffi struggle wid us. But mi waan my likkle youth.

SWEETIE

And mi waan have pickney fi yuh.

DENNIS

But yuh shoulda wait likkle longer. Is just three months ago yuh lose the baby and yuh two months pregnant already.

SWEETIE

Mi body strong. Yuh talk like is me alone do it.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

DENNIS

Den mi nuh man. Mi will always waan my piece. All yuh haffi do is nuh give me.

SWEETIE

Anybody woulda tink seh I have someting fi yuh.

DENNIS

So wait? A nuh mine again? Yuh tek it back?

SWEETIE

Ah did just lend yuh. Anyway, my belly cyaan hide fi much longer. Miss Inez must know eventually.

(ALTON enters.)

ALTON

Miss Inez must know what eventually?

DENNIS

Look like Sweetie pregnant.

ALTON

Den Mama nuh know seh she did pregnant and lose di baby.

DENNIS

Different ting this.

ALTON

Yuh mean she pregnant again? Already?

(DENNIS nods.)

Bloodstone! Wait, yuh have breeding temper?

SWEETIE

How yuh make it sound so bad?

ALTON

Yuh must waan breed, man. Look how long I deh wid Norma? Over year and a half and she nuh breed yet and mi nah use nutten.

Whiplash

SWEETIE

Maybe yuh cyaan breed nobody.

ALTON

Gweh! Mi buss jacket pon Jango. Yuh remember Jango? Ah hear seh di pickney favour me, yuh see!

DENNIS

Nuh Patsy him deh with?

ALTON

Uh-huh. Ah hear seh one day one a her friend go seh how di pickney look like me. Patsy seh every minute him jus a look pon di pickney and den look pon her strange.

DENNIS

Then yuh nuh see di baby yet?

ALTON

No sir. Mi nah go up a her yard. Mi cyaan mek him see me and her. Ah hear seh him seh if him ever find out seh is my pickney him going chop off her head.

DENNIS

Nuh bout five years Patsy deh wid him now?

ALTON

Uh-huh. But she seh she did want a little change cause him get sof.

SWEETIE

And seeing dat yuh hard, ee?

ALTON

Di best.

SWEETIE

I hear seh yuh carry weh Babsi di other night. Yuh show her how good yuh is?

ALTON

A weh yuh waan know? Come outa mi life, man. Weh she waan know, Dennis?

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

SWEETIE

I don't know if you and she gwan wid anyting, but I know Monkey-man give her a arsin when she come back. Him beat her till she swell and all kick her down. She spit blood. If we never drag her weh and lock her up inna Winsome house, all now him woulda still a beat her.

ALTON

A dat him do? Ah going kick him inna him face when ah see him again.

DENNIS

Den wait. Yuh waan fight di man over him woman?

ALTON

She and him nuh deh.

DENNIS

So she seh, but him nuh seh soh, and mi hear di one Badword a tek up di argument and a seh because yuh a football star yuh waan just screw-screw every man gal.

ALTON

Yuh see dat bwoy Badword? Mi nuh like him. Him fi just stay out a mi argument, else me an him going have someting.

DENNIS

Is more serious than dat. Night before last dem shot Winston.

ALTON

Mmmm-hmm. Mi hear seh a Pepe do it.

DENNIS

And Pepe come from up Wilson Town and yuh clown up deh, so Badword kinda bitter gainst you cause Winston was him key and him figure seh you and Pepe a friend.

ALTON

But me and Pepe a nuh friend.

DENNIS

So mi show him; but him seh from yuh rest deh-soh, yuh is opposition.

Whiplash

ALTON

But mi nuh inna no politics.

DENNIS

It nuh mek no difference, from yuh live a Tivoli, Rema, Payne Avenue, Jungle, McGregor Gully, yuh inna politics. And like how election a come up, yuh haffi watch yuhself.

ALTON

Dem youth cyaan do mi nutten!

DENNIS

Badword have gun now.

ALTON

Mmm-hmmm.

DENNIS

Look like inna '67 when him was bout fourteen him use to carry gun fi di ranking man dem, cause police never use to search di yout den. But it look like him graduate. Him have him own gun now.

SWEETIE

Mi see it di other day.

ALTON

Dat mean him bad now.

DENNIS

Di man gwan wid one piece a ting yesterday: seh a mi a save yuh and if him buck yuh up anyting cyan happen.

ALTON

A weh yuh a seh?

DENNIS

Mi haffi show him seh a foolishness him a talk.

ALTON

Weh yuh do?

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

SWEETIE

Dennis grab him up and dem guy part dem.

ALTON

So weh Badword do?

DENNIS

Cho! Him seh a nuh me him out fah. Is you.

ALTON

A pure mouth him have.

DENNIS

The '72 election look like it a go wild, so mind yuhself.

ALTON

Easy, man. Mi a ride out.

SWEETIE

Yuh cyan give mi a spin pon yuh bike?

ALTON

A wah do yuh, Sweetie? Any gal who go pon dat bike deh a fi-mi, and right now yuh a nuh fi-mi, so mek it pass. Seen?

SWEETIE

So wait? Yuh cyaan give me a ride without yuh a look someting?

ALTON

No-I. Mi nuh inna no church work. Is a ride for a ride and seeing dat yuh is my brother woman, ah won't give yuh no ride, so yuh won't have to owe me. Seen? Plus yuh nuh seh yuh a breed? Bike ride might jerk out di baby.

DENNIS

To how mi see she throw down herself this evening, mi woulda believe seh she waan throw weh this one too.

SWEETIE

Mi young an strong so dat won't hurt me. Di only ting I haffi fret bout is you, cause yuh don't give me a break.

Whiplash

(They laugh.)

(LIGHTS fade.)

ACT I – Scene 2

MISS INEZ is onstage. ALTON and DENNIS enter.

MISS INEZ

What unu doing home so early?

ALTON

Di man dem lay we off. Dem say, no work. Dem haffi lay we off.

MISS INEZ

Alton, tell me di truth. Unu do anyting wrong?

ALTON

No, Mama. Di only ting Dennis tek is dis tape and dat is di least, cause mi see big stereo a swim cross di harbour and nobody nah say nutten.

MISS INEZ

Dat don't mean you must tek someting too.

DENNIS

If yuh down di water front and don't tek anyting, dem will tink seh yuh is informer.

ALTON

Is politics, ole lady. Politics. Is ten ships come in since Monday. Dem tek on twenty-five man Tuesday and let we go today.

MISS INEZ

So how politics come into this?

ALTON

Di man say inna election we never defend di party and Dennis is opposition, so we lose di work.

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MISS INEZ

I going check di counsellor for di area.

ALTON

Den who yuh tink tell we? Di man say, “A nuh footballer time this. A fi-we time now;” meaning, activist, gunman, bogus votes.

DENNIS

Same ting did happen when our party did win.

MISS INEZ

Yuh inna dis politics business now?

DENNIS

No, but from wi live down here, we is JLP, whether wi vote so or not.

MISS INEZ

So what unu going do now?

DENNIS

The coach seh him going send wi to a man wid a construction firm tomorrow. In di meantime him will try and check out a football scholarship fi we.

MISS INEZ

From ever since, ah telling unu, learn a trade. But no. Unu love bruk and slide tackle till see it here: unu don’t have no work and unu don’t have no trade.

DENNIS

Mama, don’t bodder start dat again. Because of di football wi get work. Because of di politics wi lose di work. Mek wi try and work out someting, instead of quarreling mongst one another.

(Pause.)

MISS INEZ

Alright, mek we try again.

SWEETIE

(Off-stage.)

Whiplash

Miss Inez! Miss Inez!

MISS INEZ

Weh she want...? YES!

SWEETIE

Ah carry di baby come look fi yuh!

MISS INEZ

Look from when him born. Is just now she feel fi bring him?

DENNIS

Give her a break nuh, man. At least she come.

MISS INEZ

Mussy you tell her fi come.

DENNIS

Cho! Come nuh, Sweetie.

(He goes to the door.)

SWEETIE

Dennis, how comes yuh deh home at dis time a day? Good afternoon, Miss Inez.

MISS INEZ

Is bout time ah see my gran-pickney; unless yuh not so sure mi is him gran-madda.

SWEETIE

Miss Inez, yuh musn't talk tings like that. I not keeping no man wid Dennis and ah don't rude to you.

MISS INEZ

Not in here.

(SWEETIE starts to leave but DENNIS restrains her.)

DENNIS

Is alright, Sweetie. Mama, how yuh always a fight gainst my baby-madda?

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

MISS INEZ

Bring him mek ah see if him is really your baby.

(Pause.)

Well, him have your eyes and your ugly mouth, so I suppose is yours.

(ALTON turns on radio. U-Roy's "Wear you to the ball" is playing.)

Shut off di blasted radio! Before yuh tink bout weh yuh going get work, yuh a listen to dis blasted Chik-a-bow.

(ALTON turns off the radio.)

SWEETIE

What happen? Unu not working again?

DENNIS

No. Dem lay wi off.

SWEETIE

How comes? Dem take on a whole heap a man from up a Wilson Town—

ALTON

Yeah. Dem seh mi never fight fi di party. Dennis is opposition, so we lose di work.

SWEETIE

Weh unu a go do?

DENNIS

Is it wi deh-yah a try work out.

MISS INEZ

Unu can always go down Mr Morrison. Him say him will teach unu fi weld.

ALTON

How much him going pay me, ten dollars a week?

MISS INEZ

Ten dollars better than nutten.

DENNIS

Ten dollars cyaan mind pickney.

Whiplash

MISS INEZ

So what yuh going do, ee? I never tell yuh fi go have no pickney, but tru yuh cyaan hear. Listen nuh, just tek dis from mi.

(She shoves the baby into DENNIS' arms and walks out, almost pushing down SWEETIE.)

DENNIS

Sometimes di ole lady gwan a way I don't like.

ALTON

Easy, man. Den she nuh bear wid wi all dem years when wi a play football? She want a ease now. So yuh haffi see wid her.

DENNIS

Cho. So weh wi a go do?

SWEETIE

If worse come to worse, unu might haffi sell weed.

ALTON

Yuh mad! Yuh waan give di old lady epilepsy?

SWEETIE

She haffi understand. Dat better dan tief or turn gunman. Badword sell weed and him alright.

ALTON

Badword a gunman.

SWEETIE

Him have two work. You don't have none.

ALTON

Watch yah, yuh better gwan a yuh yard... Like how di ole lady don't like yuh from mornin....

DENNIS

Hold on deh! She seh if worse come to worse we cyaan sell di weed. She never say we must go do it now.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

ALTON

Yes, ah hear weh she say and mi nuh have nutten gainst it. As a matter of fact, my spar dem cyan set up someting fi mi any time mi ready. Is just dat I know Mama going gwan bad if she hear seh mi a sell weed.

(MISS INEZ comes in on the last line. She looks at them, shocked.)

MISS INEZ

What dat yuh say a while ago?

ALTON

Ah... er, we just a work out someting.

MISS INEZ

I just hear weed argument a while ago. How dat go?

DENNIS

Is just a suggestion.

MISS INEZ

Who suggest it?

DENNIS

It don't matter who suggest it.

SWEETIE

Is me suggest it.

MISS INEZ

How yuh come to be suggesting dat to mi pickney?

SWEETIE

Your pickney is my baby-faada and fi-him pickney haffi eat. So I suggest it.

MISS INEZ

Yuh know what I suggest? Take yuh backside out here!

DENNIS

Yuh cyaan talk to her dem way deh!

MISS INEZ

Is me in charge inside here. I can do anything I want. Moreover, she a

Whiplash

encourage yuh fi tun criminal. Is wah kinda woman dat? Come out a mi house, man!

DENNIS

Watch yah, Sweetie, yuh better gwan yaw.

(He shepherds SWEETIE out.)

Is wah kind a ting dat yuh gwan wid a while ago?

MISS INEZ

Yuh nuh see she waan bring down disgrace pon unu?

DENNIS

But yuh neva haffi talk to her dem kinda way deh.

MISS INEZ

Ah talk to her any way ah like. Yuh have di likkle pissing tail gal a wrap yuh round her likkle finger.

DENNIS

Right now, ole lady, a folly yuh a gwan wid.

(MISS INEZ tries to slap DENNIS, but he holds her off. ALTON joins the fracas.)

Rest nuh, man.

ALTON

(Chucking DENNIS.)

Yuh a fight di ole lady?

DENNIS

Mi nah fight. Jus tell her fi rest, man.

ALTON

Easy, Mama, cool....

MISS INEZ

So yuh a fight mi fi yuh woman. Ah feel fi just chop yuh!

ALTON

Mama, cool nuh, man.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

DENNIS

Hey, ole lady, yuh cyaan just embarrass people dem way deh.

ALTON

Watch yah, man, we a move togedda too long now. We cyaan afford fi start live like puss an dog.

MISS INEZ

Nuh him a try bring dis.....John Crow inna di house!

DENNIS

Tell me someting, yuh tink wi going live togedda fi di rest of wi life?

MISS INEZ

From unu is likkle pickney, is me alone mind unu. I had to be father and mother and friend, cause unu faada don't want unu. Is me haffi buss my ass and send unu to school.

DENNIS

Mama, mi know dat.

MISS INEZ

You will never know. Yuh think yuh know, but you will never know.

ALTON

Mama, yuh a blow dis outa proportion.

MISS INEZ

You is another one. I notice how yuh jus a follow up dis bad company, so I move from up a dat place, but it look like yuh done mek up yuh mind dat yuh waan turn criminal.

ALTON

Is wah mi do now?

MISS INEZ

I hear seh inna di election yuh was riding wid gunman.

ALTON

Foolishness dat. Mi know di man dem but mi nah gwan wid nutten. If mi was one a dem how come mi lose di work?

Whiplash

MISS INEZ

Yuh not inna it big yet, but by di next election yuh nuh will turn one of di ranking? Don't two of yuh friends get killed?

ALTON

Yes,... but—

MISS INEZ

What going happen to dem pickney? Dem going just grow up and turn gunman like dem puppa. Di only person who win is di politician dem. I try my best. I don't know what else to do.

(She sits, exhausted.)

DENNIS

Easy, Mama. See some money here. We will go check out di work ting.

ALTON

Yes. Look bout some food and stop worrying yuhself.

(DENNIS and ALTON put some money on the table, then exit, leaving MISS INEZ. She slowly takes up the money.)

(LIGHTS fade.)

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

ACT I – Scene 3

DENNIS enters. Looks for dinner in cabinet in kitchen. No food. ALTON enters with a bag, he is smoking a cigarette.

ALTON

No dinner not here? Di man never leave any money?

DENNIS

Only sixty-five cents mi did have.

ALTON

Rahtid! Only forty cents mi have.

DENNIS

Weh wi a go do?

ALTON

I carry someting.

(He takes out a small bag with ganja.)

DENNIS

Di ole lady a go wail.

ALTON

Right now is either she cool herself or I going jus leave. It rough outa grass deh. Is either wi do dis or stick up a man.

(MISS INEZ enters. ALTON hides the bag. MISS INEZ is obviously distraught.)

DENNIS

Wah happen to you?

MISS INEZ

(After a while....)

Ah see unu never have any money so today ah go look fi unu faada.
Your faada...

(She points to ALTON.)

Whiplash

...seh mi don't have any pickney fi him again, cause you is big man from long time and when yuh shoulda study yuh book or learn a trade yuh a play football. Him say fi tell yuh fi send go ask "Pele" fi arrange a work fi yuh.

ALTON

Only dat him seh?

MISS INEZ

Your faada...

(She is pointing to DENNIS.)

...him seh him have him wife and children fi look after and him don't have any money fi waste. So ah mussn come back, and him tell di security guard at di gate not to call him if I come dere again.

DENNIS

Is soh him handle yuh? Ah feel fi go up dere and check him.

MISS INEZ

Fi what? Him have every right to seh what him seh. Yuh pass twenty-one long time....

(Both brothers look at each other, ALTON goes for the bag.)

ALTON

We will deal wid dis from now.

MISS INEZ

What unu gwine do?

(He empties bag contents on table. Ganja in different packages falls on the table.)

Jesus Christ! Is ganja unu a go sell? I tell yuh seh yuh follow dat gal too much!

ALTON

We not following nobody. We follow wi own mind.

MISS INEZ

Ah not talking to you, cause yuh done bruk out aready.

DENNIS

Mama, yuh nuh deh yah and see seh nuh money nuh deh? Weh yuh want

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

we fi do, hold up people? Yuh nuh hear how much people a get lay off? Even you get lay off. If Alton was inna politics him woulda have work.

MISS INEZ

So unu mek up unu mind. Well if unu waan sell ganja ah cyaan stop unu, but unu go somewhere else wid it. No ganja not selling inside here.

(She throws ganja off the table.)

ALTON

Di only odder place we can sell it is up a Wilson Town.

MISS INEZ

Well, gwan up dere wid it.

DENNIS

If Alton go, I haffi go, cause is di two a wi inna business.

(Knocking is heard at the door.)

MISS INEZ

Police! I know dis was going happen! Unu bring down disgrace pon mi!

ALTON

Dennis, go look and see is who.

(DENNIS goes off. ALTON packs up the stuff. DENNIS comes back.)

DENNIS

Spanner a buy a round a weed.

(Both brothers laugh. DENNIS takes weed out, then returns with 50 dollars.)

ALTON

Wi bruk wi ducks.

MISS INEZ

How dis Spanner know seh unu a sell weed?

DENNIS

Den if we gwine open shop, we nuh must check out di customers first?

Whiplash

MISS INEZ

So unu plan dis long time. Unu have to come outa di place! Mi heart cyaan tek dis.

(Another knock. ALTON goes and then returns.)

ALTON

Claw want a quarta ounce.

(They measure out the amount. ALTON returns with two dollars.)

ALTON

Look deh, we don't even open up shop good and look how much we sell already.

DENNIS

Mama, tek dis and go look bout some dinner.

MISS INEZ

Is ganja money. I don't waan no ganja money.

DENNIS

(Looks at the money.)

I don't see no ganja mark pon dis. Yuh see any, Alton?

ALTON

No, I only see pineapple. Mama, we hungry. Just go look bout di food.

MISS INEZ

(MISS INEZ hesitates.)

Alright. But as soon as tings get better, unu shop haffi close.

ALTON and DENNIS

Right.

MISS INEZ

Ah going down Mr Williams. Ah soon come back.

DENNIS

Why yuh haffi go so far? And yuh have two nearer shops?

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

MISS INEZ

If di money not enough, Mr Williams will trust mi.

DENNIS

But don't Miss Berger give trust, and she have more tings inna her shop.

MISS INEZ

Miss Berger chat people business too much.

DENNIS

Uh-huh? Only dat?

MISS INEZ

Den dat nuh enough reason? Ah free fi spend my money any way I want.

DENNIS

Yuh always tek long when yuh go Mr Williams, and right now wi hungry.

MISS INEZ

Is alright. Ah not going take long.

(She exits.)

ALTON

Is what happen?

DENNIS

Look like Mr Williams like her.

ALTON

Weh yuh a seh? Heh-heh! Di ole lady a get wassy inna her old days.

(They laugh. SWEETIE bursts in. They scramble to hide the weed.)

SWEETIE

Wah happen?

ALTON

Weh di ra... Hey gal, yuh mus knock!

DENNIS

Blow-wow! Di ole lady mussy leave di door open.

Whiplash

(He locks it.)

SWEETIE

Miss Inez say anyting bout di weed selling?

ALTON

She wail an ting but we bring in some money, so?

DENNIS

She soon come back, so yuh cyaan stay long.

SWEETIE

Mek wi go take in “The harder they come” nuh.

ALTON

Yes. It wild, and mi due fi see it bout five times so mi a go back go see it tonight.

SWEETIE

Who yuh a carry dis time? Mi hear seh last week yuh carry out di likkle mawga gal from up soh. Is weh yuh see pon her? Her leg dem mussy fat like mi hand.

ALTON

Yuh gwan laugh. Yuh ever hear bout wissy-wassy yet? Well, is di wasp dat. Mi seh, mek mi start from scratch. We inna Carib, and from di light go down, mi know seh she don’t see nutten on di screen. Di pickney deh all over me. Den tru her hand dem small dem come in like rope. Is like somebody a tie mi down. Well, due to how she look like she ready, mi seh, “How yuh so eager?” Mi carry her round a Liberty Hall Hotel. Yuh see when mi turn off di light, mi haffi turn it on back quick, man.

DENNIS

Wah happen?

ALTON

Mi couldn see di gal. All mi see is a likkle framework pon di bed. Den tru she so fragile mi decide seh mi nah go pon top. Mi nuh waan dem charge me for breaking and entering, so she come pon top and is now mi know why dem call her Miss Wissy-Wassy. Mi say all mi hear is “wiss, wiss, wiss....” But she

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

nice. Lord, she nice. Uh-huh! Mi tell her seh, “If yuh put on twenty pounds ah will deh wid yuh fulltime, but right now ah cyaan take nuh more jook from dem bones.”

(Laughs.)

SWEETIE

Dat gal a Miss Wiss. Anyway, Dennis, mi a go start a crash programme work tomorrow morning.

DENNIS

What yuh going do?

SWEETIE

What yuh expect mi to do? Nuh report to work, chop two times pon di street an go finish mi crochet. Friday mi just go collect mi twenty-six dollars.

DENNIS

Well if a soh, go deal wid it den, nuh. Yuh still a go tek in di show?

SWEETIE

Yes, man. Dem have a saying dat dere is no girl like a new girl, but ah feel ah going wassie back pon Miss Wiss. Mi sure she never see di show di last time.

(They laugh, pack away the stuff and exit.)

(LIGHTS fade.)

Whiplash

ACT I – Scene 4

ALTON is cleaning a gun. There is a knock on the door. He quickly hides the weapon and opens the door. SWEETIE enters.

SWEETIE

What happen? Cyaan see you these days?

ALTON

Bwoy, mi haffi out deh a look it how mi cyan get it.

SWEETIE

Mi nuh hear seh yuh did have a whole heap a copper wire di other day.

ALTON

Mi haffi skank some from Public Service.

SWEETIE

Lend me twenty dollars, nuh?

ALTON

Wah do yuh, Sweetie? Mi is a bruk man yuh know. Mi only have enough money fi go watch di test match. Yagga Rowe a bat and mi cyaan miss dat.

SWEETIE

But yuh nuh pay fi go inna Sabina Park. So how yuh a gwan soh?

ALTON

How yuh just a back mi up soh?

SWEETIE

Mi nuh have no money fi feed di pickney.

ALTON

But mi a nuh yuh man.

SWEETIE

Yuh never haffi tell me that. If Dennis was here, mi wouldn come to yuh.

ALTON

Dat may be so. But mi never tell him fi go bruk fight inna prison.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

Look how much money spend fi make dem drop di gun charge. Him woulda be out yah now, but him mek dem give him two more years.

SWEETIE

Yuh shoulda know seh Dennis wouldn bruk fight unless dem bring it to him first. Anyway, mi still a borrow twenty dollars.

ALTON

Wah happen to yuh crash programme work?

SWEETIE

Di man dem never take me back after mi have di baby.

ALTON

So how yuh a go get money fi pay me back? Yuh owe me bout eighty dollars already.

SWEETIE

When Dennis come out you will get back your money.

ALTON

Dennis nah come out now. Suppose mi cyaan wait so long fi mi money?

SWEETIE

Wah yuh waan me fi do?

ALTON

Mek a move wid mi one night an everyting will be alright.

SWEETIE

Mi deh wid Dennis and yuh want mi deh wid you?

ALTON

Mi nuh waan deh wid you. Mi just waan make a move wid yuh. Nobody don't haffi know. Is long time mi like yuh, but is tru you and Dennis did deh.

SWEETIE

Den me and him nuh still deh?

ALTON

Him deh a prison.

Whiplash

SWEETIE

Him nuh will come out?

ALTON

So yuh a go keep it whole a two more years? You who love yuh tings soh?

SWEETIE

Watch yah! Mi gone.

ALTON

Or yuh a go give it to Badword? Dat is if yuh don't start give him aready.

SWEETIE

"F" off!

(She storms out. ALTON turns the radio up loud. MISS INEZ enters.)

MISS INEZ

Turn off di radio! Alton, ah just coming from di jail and it look like Dennis might come out before di sentence up.

ALTON

Who seh soh?

MISS INEZ

Dennis say di head warden call him di other day and tell him dat if him don't get into any more fight dey might release him earlier.

ALTON

Dat good. When him might come out?

MISS INEZ

Maybe another six months from now. Ah going send unu away. Unu cyan go live wid my sister in New York.

ALTON

Wi nuh have no visa. Wi nuh even have passport.

MISS INEZ

Passport nuh hard fi get and Mr Williams seh him know somebody who know somebody who cyan arrange di visa. It going cost five hundred dollars

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

each. Mr Williams seh him will lend mi di money and when unu start work unu cyan send it back. Dey might call election late dis year or early next year and I don't want unu bout di place. I hear seh yuh involve inna hold-up already and ah don't want hear seh anything happen to yuh.

ALTON

Mi did just come on deh when dem hold up di man. Mi never have nutten fi do wid it.

MISS INEZ

Sometimes ah see yuh wid money and ah wonder weh yuh get it from, seeing dat yuh nah work. But ah don't say nutten. Dennis deh a jail. Di situation in di country getting worse so ah sending unu away.

ALTON

What Dennis seh bout this?

MISS INEZ

I don't tell him yet. I just listen to what him tell mi bout di early release and mek mi plans.

ALTON

Suppose him don't like di idea.

MISS INEZ

Don't talk fart ah mi ears! Is either unu go weh or unu come outa mi yard!

ALTON

What going happen to Dennis pickney?

MISS INEZ

I going tek him. Dennis hear weh Miss Sweetness and Badword ah gwan wid and him don't waan nutten fi do wid her. I see her down di corner a while ago. Go call her so I can tell her di position from now. Dat likkle slut!

(ALTON exits.)

MISS INEZ

(To herself.)

Ah hope dis likkle pissing tail gal don't give mi any trouble. Just a fling-fling

Whiplash

herself bout di place like dem likkle slut dog.

SWEETIE

(Enters.)

Good afternoon, Miss Inez. Alton seh yuh waan see me.

MISS INEZ

Yes. Ah talk to Dennis dis morning and it look like dem might let him out before time.

SWEETIE

Yuh have any idea when?

MISS INEZ

Anytime from now to six months.

SWEETIE

Jesus! Ah cyan sit down, Miss Inez? Mi foot dem tired.

MISS INEZ

After yuh fling-fling yuhself bout di place, yuh body nuh mus run down.

SWEETIE

(She gets up.)

Yuh have anyting else to say to me, Miss Inez?

MISS INEZ

When Dennis come out ah going send him and Alton to di States, fi go stay wid my sister. So I going tek Trevor—

SWEETIE

Dennis tell you to tek di baby?

MISS INEZ

No, him don't even know him going weh yet.

SWEETIE

If Dennis don't say soh, you cyaan tek di baby.

MISS INEZ

What yuh mean, cyaan? Is my grandson!

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

SWEETIE

From when since?

MISS INEZ

Don't facety wid me! I hear seh yuh pregnant fi Badword and it will be easier if yuh don't have somebody else pickney fi mind.

SWEETIE

Mek me worry bout dat.

MISS INEZ

Plus I don't want my grandson fi grow up inna any Rasta influence.

SWEETIE

Is when since yuh so concern bout yuh grandson?

MISS INEZ

Don't is mi son pickney? Mi must be concern.

SWEETIE

Yuh sure is yuh son pickney?

MISS INEZ

How yuh mean? Don't is Dennis pickney?

SWEETIE

I remember one time when yuh wasn't so sure. So how come yuh waan claim him as grandson now?

MISS INEZ

Don't ask me no more question. Facety. When Dennis come out, yuh won't give me no trouble.

SWEETIE

Neither you or Dennis cyan tek weh mi pickney.

MISS INEZ

Yuh think I want my grandson fi grow wid you?... Di way how yuh a live, yuh likkle slut, yuh!

Whiplash

SWEETIE

From I know you, and wid all how yuh gwan wid towards me, I never rude to you yet. But you of all person musn't call nobody slut.

MISS INEZ

How yuh mean? Me of all persons?

SWEETIE

I hear from a very good source dat yuh was keeping Dennis faada while yuh was wid Alton faada.

MISS INEZ

Where yuh get dat from?

SWEETIE

I hear dat when you was pregnant wid Dennis, Alton faada seh is not his child because yuh did have man pon di side. Di man who yuh call Dennis faada seh, is not fi him because yuh live wid man. And I hear seh not even you sure who-fah pickney it is. So di two man dem left yuh and yuh call Dennis him faada name.

(MISS INEZ's aggressiveness turns to defiance, then to despair. Tears fill her eyes.)

Miss Inez, I know everyting about you.

MISS INEZ

I was just eighteen. Eighteen and have pickney and live a house wid man. Turn woman too quick, but I wasn't ready. I had a good man but I never realize till it was too late. Him leave mi. Dennis father seh I might do di same ting to him too. So him never bother stay....

(Pause.)

You remind me of how I was. That's why I didn't waan you stay round Dennis....

(Pause.)

I waan tell you sorry....

SWEETIE

Is alright, Miss Inez. I understand.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

MISS INEZ

I going beg yuh. Don't say nutten to di boys.

SWEETIE

Nor Mr Williams.

MISS INEZ

Nor Mr Williams. Thank you.

(LIGHTS fade.)

ACT I – Scene 5

DENNIS enters. Drinks water.

SWEETIE

(Outside.)

Dennis....

(Enters.)

Yuh nuh hear mi call yuh?

DENNIS

Uh-huh.

SWEETIE

So why yuh don't answer?

(DENNIS looks at her long. Not hard, just long.)

If I did know dat yuh was coming out today, I woulda come meet yuh. Dis nuh stop mi from walk.

DENNIS

Is six months yuh don't come look for me. So why yuh woulda waan come today?

SWEETIE

I figure dat when somebody come outa jail it good when somebody else

Whiplash

close come meet him.

(Silence.)

Dennis, mi did get Trevor into Vaz Prep. After a while mi never have no money to pay di school fee and—

DENNIS

So why yuh never send him to All Saint or Congregational or St Annie's?

SWEETIE

(Defiantly.)

Mi waan my pickney go good school and any way mi haffi get di money, mi get it.

DENNIS

So yuh go to Badword? Look how much man deh bout di place.

SWEETIE

So what happen to Badword? Him nuh man too?

DENNIS

Everybody know seh me and Badword move. Yuh couldn chat to smaddy else?

SWEETIE

Right now mi never see nobody else cause mi never a look no man.

DENNIS

Is long time I a watch yuh and da bredda deh and I notice unu well waan to gwan wid tings.

SWEETIE

Mi know Badword long before yuh come live on yah, so if mi did waan gwan wid tings wid him, dat woulda happen long time. A foolishness yuh a talk.

DENNIS

Foolishness nuh?

(DENNIS spins around the table to cut off SWEETIE's escape. They circle, then DENNIS jumps on a chair and onto the table and grabs SWEETIE. He starts punching her in her face, her belly, all over. When she doubles over and drops,

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

he kicks her, she is screaming and choking, MISS INEZ rushes into the house.)

MISS INEZ

Jesus Christ! Yuh a go kill her?

(She pushes DENNIS violently. Then hurries SWEETIE out as DENNIS attempts to throw a chair. They exit. DENNIS slowly puts down the chair. After a long while ALTON enters.)

ALTON

Wah happen? Mi never know seh a today yuh did a come out.

DENNIS

Bwoy, di man just call me dis morning and seh mi cyan leave.

ALTON

So weh di man a seh?

DENNIS

Mi nah seh nutten.

ALTON

Mama want fi send you to her sister in New York.

DENNIS

Me alone? Or di two a we?

ALTON

Mi nah go. What I going up dere fi do? Hide from immigration? Loaf bout di place?

DENNIS

When you stay here, what yuh going do?

ALTON

Mi get promotion to di inner circle round my MP. Dat means if election keep either late '76 or early '77 mi going be one a di ranking. If we win back mi have at least four big contract fi get.

DENNIS

If yuh live.

Whiplash

ALTON

If mi dead, mi dead, but if mi live, mi haffi live good. Mi tired a di skiving and hustling.

DENNIS

Right now mi nuh inna di politics ting.

ALTON

Politics get yuh outa jail.

DENNIS

Wah yuh a talk bout?

ALTON

My MP work a ting. Mi check him and show him yuh situation and him mek two contact. Mi haffi gwan like mi nuh know because mi nuh waan di ole lady know.

DENNIS

A wah yuh a seh? But is one ting, if mi go inna politics, mi nah defend your man, mi a stay down here.

ALTON

Him know that. Him and your MP a key spar, yuh know. Dem all have couple business weh dem own. Dem cuss one another in public but inna private dem is soh. As a matter of fact, my MP done arrange wid your MP fi give yuh a work so a man soon check yuh and tell yuh fi report to di constituency office.

DENNIS

When yuh see smoke yuh know seh fire deh behind. Ah notice over di last month di prison warders and even di prisoners start treat mi better. So is dis it come down to. According to how di system stay, people like me and you don't have no chance. So we haffi get it di best way available.

ALTON

Is di same ting Sweetie seh. Das why she chat to Badword. She say she want betterment fi her pickney, and anywhere she can get it, she haffi get it.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

DENNIS

She tell yuh dat?

ALTON

Uh-huh.

DENNIS

So she tell mi a while ago.

ALTON

An yuh still beat her up?

(Silence. Then MISS INEZ enters in a rage.)

MISS INEZ

How yuh mean to beat up di child soh, Mr Dennis? Yuh don't out a jail two hours yet and look wah yuh do aready. She seh she just a talk to yuh and yuh start beat her.

DENNIS

She just a talk to me wid di big belly in front a her and me is her man.

MISS INEZ

Yuh inna prison fi eighteen months and was to stay more. Di pickney haffi go school. What she mus do?

DENNIS

She never haffi send him to no expensive school. She coulda send him go All Saint. Mi go All Saint.

MISS INEZ

And what, ee...? What you become? Yuh turn footballer. Yuh don't even work. Yuh sell ganja. Yuh go a prison an just because di girl don't waan her pickney fi come like him puppa, yuh near kill her wid beating.

DENNIS

Is dat she use mek excuse. She did waan do dat long time.

MISS INEZ

No, my son. Don't hide behind dat. Mi see she keep herself quiet up to di first year yuh inna prison. Is when yuh get more sentence, she start deh wid

Whiplash

Badword.

DENNIS

Tell mi someting: don't yuh never like her from morning? How come yuh a defend her so much?

MISS INEZ

Right is right, regardless. An mi understand what she going through.

ALTON

Anyting serious happen to her?

MISS INEZ

She going lose di baby and Badword say him nah deal wid her again because him never waan her come talk to you.

(Silence.)

DENNIS

Mek wi talk bout someting else.

MISS INEZ

Yuh said dat yuh was involve inna fight but yuh never tell mi how it happen.

DENNIS

A prison warder never like mi and him put me in a cell wid two batty-man.

MISS INEZ

Why?

DENNIS

Dem did waan dem rape me. Mi did have a knife, so mi cut dem up. When yuh inna prison yuh haffi learn fi defend yuself.

MISS INEZ

(Pauses.)

Ah making arrangement fi send yuh and Alton to stay wid my sister in New York.

DENNIS

Mi not going nowhere. No. Mi staying right here.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

MISS INEZ

Stay here and do what? Sell more ganja? Go back a prison? What yuh going do?

DENNIS

Stop suffer.

MISS INEZ

What yuh mean by dat? What him mean, Alton?

ALTON

Ah suppose you will soon find out.

(Music. LIGHTS fade.)

ACT II – Scene 1

DENNIS is reading a newspaper. ALTON enters.

DENNIS

Look yah, dis likkle jockey bwoy buss up man bet Saturday.

ALTON

So what yuh do, bag him?

DENNIS

I show di bwoy seh him mussn win because I bet on a different horse. Him seh di horse too fit.

ALTON

Den him nuh know to hold back racehorse?

DENNIS

Tru him have him big man friend who bet on fi-him horse, him nuh go mek mi lose my money.

ALTON

How much money yuh bet?

Whiplash

DENNIS

Five thousand: one thousand down a di track, and four thousand all bout di place. If my horse did win,... cho! Track woulda bawl. Bookie man woulda bawl. And is just a head di horse lose by. My friend seh him couldn do nutten.

ALTON

And yuh woulda get a nice money, ee?

DENNIS

Di whole a dem down a track know seh when mi set up my business, no guy don't mash it up. Is like di odder day: I make sure tell every jockey in di race seh just mek my horse win. Hear wah happen. Di apprentice weh ride my horse deh way a di back of di race seh him did a wait to make a last-minute run.

ALTON

Him mek di run?

DENNIS

(Kisses teeth.)

Mek di walk. By di time him make fi-him run, five horse pass di winning post. Him and another jockey inna one big fight fi last. After dat mi hear seh other gambling did pon di race and my prentice sell me out.

ALTON

So what yuh do to him?

DENNIS

Beat him up an bruk him hand. Him still inna hospital, so mi tink seh di others dem realize seh mi is a serious hombre. Dis little guy come mash up my gambling. Mi jus drop him.

ALTON

Yuh haffi clap two head sometimes. Den nuh same soh inna my construction business? Di man dem know seh no building cyaan go up unless my portion is dere. Sometimes when mi send my man go collect, di paymaster a talk bout seh him nuh see my name pon file. So every now and den mi haffi clap two head.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

DENNIS

A soh yuh haffi do it.

ALTON

Yuh see tru mi was in detention camp inna '76 election an di whole heap a excitement did a gwan out here, when mi come out and suppose to control certain "Terry", some a di man dem nuh figure seh mi cyaan just come and control. Mi haffi bus two head and make dem know seh mi bad like a... anyone a dem.

DENNIS

Cho! Yuh tink is you one?

(Kisses teeth. Silence.)

See di last of di peace man dem dead.

ALTON

Bwoy, mi know seh it never did a go work. Di man dem don't waan wi unite.

DENNIS

A nuh lie. Di odder day me and my MP a drink two beer and him get tipsy and him mouth slip. Him say, if di ghetto people ever unite, people like him cyaan control dem. When him see mi look pon him, him seh di peace ting cyan work. Is a good ting and he is on record as a supporter.

ALTON

Everybody deh pon record as supporter, but who doing anything bout it? Pure talk and parson man a tour and chat foolishness, and di people dem hungry.

DENNIS

Di youth dem have gun. Election done. Wah dem must do?

ALTON

Yuh nuh see Orange Street and Princess Street a burn down? After dis is bank and big payroll.

DENNIS

Yuh nuh see what happen to di youth dem a Green Bay? Promise di youth dem work and kill dem off. Mi know one a dem. Di same night when him a go, him baby-madda tek in fi have baby. She did all a tell him to come wid

Whiplash

her, an him a tell her seh is work. Money fi she and di youth. An look deh. Him nuh even see him pickney.

ALTON

No angels died at Green Bay. Right now some M-16 a come in. Don't fi-yuh people get some?

DENNIS

Uh-huh.

ALTON

When mi check it out, yuh have roughly a equal amount a JLP and PNP gunmen out deh. It good because at least one party can't overthrow di other party. But it bad because wid so much serious man out dere wid gun, by di time next election, it a go dread.

DENNIS

Yuh a talk bout next election. Right now di man dem a gwan like dem mad. See some a dem face yah...

(He screws his face.)

...Mi say, if yuh look pon dem too hard, cho! Is pure gunshot.

ALTON

As yuh talk bout that, di odder day my MP seh, yuh see how inna '38 Busta take off him shirt and seh, "Shoot me, but let my people go"?...

(Kisses teeth.)

...If it was ever now, is dead meat dem pick, man.

(Forced laugh.)

DENNIS

Dem bwoy deh woulda nyam it raw. Anyway, when dis start, mek sure seh yuh is one a di general an nuh mek wi haffi fight one anodder. Yuh get yuh M-16 yet?

ALTON

Ah wah do yuh? Mi inna di first lot. But I-man drudge this most of di times.

(He takes out a hand gun.)

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

DENNIS

Bloodstone! Magnum. Dis lick hot, yuh know.

ALTON

Yuh a tell me. One time I clap a guy right inna him face. Is like him head just explode.

DENNIS

Yeah, I cyan imagine. Anyway, put it up cause di ole lady wouldn like it if she see yuh wid gun. She hear tings, an she suspect but she not sure.

(Just then SWEETIE calls.)

SWEETIE

Dennis....

DENNIS

Yeah, come in.

(SWEETIE enters, she is pregnant.)

SWEETIE

I did want yuh to carry me to register di baby but yuh never come home last night. Again.

DENNIS

Which baby yuh going register?

SWEETIE

(She touches her stomach.)

Dis baby.

DENNIS

But di baby don't born yet, so how yuh registering it?

SWEETIE

Yuh have to register dem early else yuh cyaan get no space. What happen, Alton?

ALTON

Nutten much. What a way yuh love this school. All want register di baby

Whiplash

before it born.

SWEETIE

Is going be a girl. See Trevor last two reports here. Him not doing too bad.

(DENNIS and ALTON take one each.)

DENNIS

But him bright, man.

ALTON

Him mussy a go turn Prime Minister.

(Laughs.)

DENNIS

Or Governor of the Bank Of Jamaica.

ALTON

Yuh nuh haffi bright fi turn dat. All yuh haffi know is how to operate a printing press.

(Laughs.)

DENNIS

Him haffi do some kinda sports.

ALTON

More dan likely him a go turn footballer like we. By di time him reach sixteen, Jamaica mus cyan mek it to di top twenty-four inna World Cup.

DENNIS

Yuh like how di man dem get out Brazil and mek Argentina win di World Cup, old man?

ALTON

Racket reach dem. I must remember to buy him a pair a boots.

SWEETIE

Alton, I woulda prefer yuh buy di next set a books fi him instead.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

ALTON

Wait, wah happen to football? Di youth haffi learn a sport!

SWEETIE

Mek ah tell yuh someting. Di odder night Trevor ask me to help him wid him sums and mi couldn do it. It mek mi tek a stock a miself. Mi leave school an never have any GCE. It hard to get work now. Mi want him to get him education.

ALTON

What yuh waan work for? Dennis nah mind yuh?

SWEETIE

Suppose him lef mi or go jail again an stay long time?

ALTON

The man have contacts. Him will come home quick. Yuh nuh see dem charge mi for murder and mi get weh.

SWEETIE

Cause dem kill di witness.

ALTON

Dat is di witness bad luck.

SWEETIE

Suppose Dennis get shot?

DENNIS

Res dem argument, nuh man. From di other day yuh just deh pon dis dead business. All a send Insurance Man to me. Is people like you just bring down dead pon people.

SWEETIE

Mek I tell yuh someting. My mother poor. My granny poor. An so far as I can work out, her people dem did poor right back to slavery, and as far as I am concern di poorness stop wid me. My pickney dem haffi get a chance in life.

(MISS INEZ enters.)

Whiplash

MISS INEZ

Two motor cars park outside my gate an I haffi walk an struggle wid grocery bag.

DENNIS

Mi just did a come for you, but nuh Sweetie wid her argument mek mi forget.

MISS INEZ

Unu forget every time. Wah happen, Sweetie? What kinda argument unu into now?

DENNIS

From di odder day di one Sweetie a follow me up wid dis dead-insurance business.

MISS INEZ

Why yuh call it dead-insurance business?

DENNIS

Nuh only when people dead yuh get any money?

MISS INEZ

Hi! Nuh talk soh make people hear yuh. Dem will think seh yuh jus come from country. Unu don't have to die to benefit from insurance.

DENNIS

Who yuh know ever get anyting from insurance?

MISS INEZ

Mr Young and Miss Tina have insurance from long time and retire now and get money every month.

DENNIS

You have insurance?

MISS INEZ

No.

DENNIS

Why?

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

MISS INEZ

Nuh fool mi fool, but I going buy a policy for di baby when she born.

ALTON

So what happen to Trevor?

SWEETIE

I have a policy for him already. A student educational policy. When him reach twenty-one, him get di money.

ALTON

Suppose him don't reach twenty-one?

MISS INEZ

Miss Wilson likkle boy get kill inna car accident.

Miss Wilson get di money and go pay down pon a house over Waterford.

DENNIS

So tell me someting: if Trevor dead who get di money?

SWEETIE

Right now is my name on di policy.

DENNIS

Mind unu kill off mi pickney, yuh know.

(Nobody laughs.)

Hey. Is joke ah making. Buy di insurance if yuh want, but leave me outa this.

SWEETIE

Di salesman going come to you again because him seh your occupation is hazardous.

MISS INEZ

As yuh talk bout dat, is a likkle while I waan talk to di two a yuh. January coming is three years since Dennis come out a jail. Di two of yuh big up inna this politics till dem start calling unu "Ranking." Unu have a whole heap a money and unu drive BMW motor car, and I hear all kind a tings bout unu.

ALTON

What yuh hear?

Whiplash

MISS INEZ

Dat one out a di two of yuh have a hand into di Orange Lane fire, di Rema eviction and fire, di Greenwich Town and some odder killings dat tek place. I hearing too much tings to continue corking my ears. Dis is why although unu offering to buy mi new house and furniture I say no. I still keep my old tings. I don't want nutten dat unu blood money buy.

DENNIS

Is lie dem a tell yuh. Yuh nuh see we get contracts an win race.

MISS INEZ

I hear seh everybody down di racetrack fraid a unu. Dem don't waan lose dem life.

ALTON

Mama, from yuh live inna dem area yah, yuh inna politics; man an man haffi defend dem area.

MISS INEZ

If yuh don't attack di odder side and di odder side don't attack yuh, yuh don't haffi defend no area. Unu make di stinking politicians tell unu all kinda shit. And unu just believe. From di odder day all I hear is, "My MP say" and "My MP say."

Last week ah go down dead house wid Miss Amy. Dem kill her son Tony. Yuh know Tony? Him not even eighteen yet. Dem dig out him eye. Use wire choke him. Stab him bout ten times and den shoot him. When I see him lay down on di slab I say, "Jesus Christ, dat coulda be Alton or Dennis."

DENNIS

Mama, yuh don't have to worry yuhself bout me.

MISS INEZ

Then I say to myself, "From what I hear, you might be doing dis to people."

ALTON

No, ole lady. No, man. Sometimes we have to rough up a guy, yes, but we don't go so far.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

MISS INEZ

Den suppose your MP say—

ALTON

No man cyaan tell me to kill nobody and mi do it.

DENNIS

Mama, yuh suppose to know we better dan dat.

MISS INEZ

I don't know unu again. From unu gone into this politics business I cyaan swear for unu again.

DENNIS

Watch yah, mi a go up di road, yaw man.

SWEETIE

Dennis, yuh promise to buy ice cream fi me and Trevor.

ALTON

Where yuh buy di cream?

SWEETIE

Creamy Corner.

ALTON

Uptown. Right. Mek we mek one ting and di whole a wi go.

SWEETIE

Come, Miss Inez.

MISS INEZ

I don't feel for no drive dis evening.

SWEETIE

Alright, Miss Inez.

(They exit. MISS INEZ sits, puts her head in her hands.)

(LIGHTS fade.)

Whiplash

ACT II – Scene 2

DENNIS is agitated. SWEETIE comes in. She is not pregnant.

SWEETIE

Weh Miss Inez?

DENNIS

She gone a supermarket.

SWEETIE

Yuh hear wah happen down a Gold Street last night?

DENNIS

If mi hear? Mi just leave from on deh.

SWEETIE

Yuh did down dere?

DENNIS

Den nuh dat mi tell yuh, man? Mi did want me and you go down dere but when mi check yuh yard dem say yuh did gone a yuh sister.

SWEETIE

Yes, mi go look for her. So what happen?

DENNIS

I hear seh not even five minutes after mi drive off di man dem come. Dem dress up inna army clothes an move like guerilla. Gunshot like dirt.

SWEETIE

Yuh see Alton yet?

DENNIS

Him nuh come yet, but him must know bout dis. Him better watch himself too. Some a di guys a threaten fi do him someting.

(A car approaches. SWEETIE runs to the door, signals to DENNIS. ALTON enters.)

ALTON

Wah happen?

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

DENNIS

Di man hear bout last night shooting down a Gold Street?

ALTON

Uh-huh.

DENNIS

Di man know bout it?

ALTON

No.

DENNIS

Mek ah tell yuh someting. Di man dem down yah bitter gainst yuh. Dem seh yuh cyaan live down here and a defend up dere.

ALTON

Mek dem rest demself, man.

DENNIS

Mi cyaan save yuh all di time.

ALTON

I nah depend pon di man fi save I. I can defend myself.

DENNIS

Di man dem seh a you kill Monkey-man.

ALTON

Watch yah, man. I don't know nutten bout dat. Seen? Don't ask me no more question.

(He walks off.)

SWEETIE

Mi did come to tell yuh dat dem accept mi to go Kingston Technical High Evening School.

DENNIS

Fi do what?

Whiplash

SWEETIE

Four subjects inna GCE. If I get through I can do a Secretarial Course.

DENNIS

So who going look after di pickney?

SWEETIE

Is night school ah going. Your mother seh I can leave dem here and pick dem up in di morning.

DENNIS

Wah happen? I not giving you enough money?

SWEETIE

I don't say no, but I don't know if dis going last forever.

DENNIS

Don't bother bring up no dead-ass argument now.

SWEETIE

"In the midst of life there is death." See what happen down a Gold Street last night. Right now yuh a live dangerous, so anyting can happen to you. Plus ah hear seh yuh a check a school ting name Rosie and a bumpy face tough gal name Lurch.

DENNIS

Mi nah check dem. Mi just give dem a drive. That's all.

SWEETIE

Don't tell me no lie. Yuh suppose to know me by this. When I say anyting, it done check out.

DENNIS

(Pauses.)

Mi just a check dem for a likkle piece. Dat's all.

SWEETIE

I can understand di likkle school gal cause she look nice. But dat deh bumpy face gal! Yuh mek mi shame, man!

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

DENNIS

Yuh jealous?

SWEETIE

Suppose she breed fi yuh?

DENNIS

She can't breed fi mi, man. Don't yuh know dat is only you cyan be di mother of my children.

(He tries to hug SWEETIE. She brushes him off.)

SWEETIE

Dat's why yuh make Baby G dash weh belly?

DENNIS

Bloodstain! Yuh hear everyting, ee?

SWEETIE

Dat's why mi nah go wait pon you nor no man. Mi a go get myself qualified. Yuh see how much place a shut down? Dat means work harder fi get. Mi not having no more pickney. If dem say mi too young to tie off mi going make sure mi take two pills every day.

DENNIS

Yuh nuh see di birth control ting nah work? Look how it mek Babsie get big and bloated and some pass blood clot. Birth control nuh fi tek, man.

SWEETIE

Is di plan to kill out black people, nuh? So what I must do? Have pickney every year and fret if my man a go lef mi because mi too old fi him?

DENNIS

How yuh mean too old? Yuh nuh just twenty-one.

SWEETIE

Right now mi feel like thirty-five.

DENNIS

Yuh want a holiday, man. Why yuh don't go look for yuh uncle inna di States? Stay for two weeks or even a month if yuh want.

Whiplash

SWEETIE

Yuh woulda glad fah dat, ee?

DENNIS

Cho! Rest dem arguments deh, man.

SWEETIE

And what happen when I come back?

DENNIS

How yuh mean? We nuh nice back again as usual.

SWEETIE

Yuh mean, back to di sweet screwing, and breeding till by di time ah reach thirty, ah look like old turbit?

DENNIS

Is wah do yuh, baby? Is who trouble yuh?

SWEETIE

Look pon Jackie who is just twenty-seven an look like forty. She have five pickney an don't have no man right now. She bounce round so much dat she don't even remember how much time she catch gonorrhoea. She jus a walk round di place wid a piece of slippers pon her fassi-fassi foot dem. An she smell bad like.... Mi nuh want that happen to me.

DENNIS

So yuh a go lef me?

SWEETIE

Mi nah leave yuh, but mi nuh waan depend pon yuh.

DENNIS

Yuh cyaan chat to no odder man, else I will beat up you and him.

SWEETIE

Yuh don't haffi tell me dat, an no man woulda waan tek no chance and chat to me cause dem know seh you is ranking. Moreover, mi nah look no man, so you don't haffi come kill nobody over me.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

DENNIS

Is weh yuh a talk bout?

(He moves to her. MISS INEZ enters. She looks ragged.)

Mama, what happen to yuh?

(ALTON enters.)

MISS INEZ

Jesus, dem nearly kill me.

ALTON

Den a who do dis to yuh? Weh yuh a come from?

MISS INEZ

Supermarket....

(Pauses.)

ALTON

Supermarket! An stay soh?

MISS INEZ

Is a riot I pass through a while ago. There was about hundred a we inna di place an dem send out one box a milk. One deggae-deggae box. Di poor man have di box pon him shoulder when we sight him. One big trapping woman give him a slide tackle. Him fly soh. Di woman fly soh. And di milk fly everywhere. I feel shame fi say dis but I push down four woman fi get two tin a milk.

(Laughter.)

DENNIS

Weh dem deh?

MISS INEZ

Somebody tief dem when mi did a rush fi some rice.

DENNIS

So weh di rice deh?

Whiplash

MISS INEZ

Mi nuh get none.

(Laughter.)

MISS INEZ

But hear mi nuh! A piece a pushing an fighting gwan inna di place. About four shelves turn over. Den yuh waan see di woman dem inna di bruk-up Dettol bottle and toothpaste a look fi milk. Jesus Christ! A pregnant lady inna di rush big, big. Next ting all we hear is, “Woi, woi.” Pure bawling. She inna labour. Dem haffi call taxi an carry her gone a Jubilee. Is police haffi restore order cause everybody start push inna di store room an ransack di place.

SWEETIE

Den yuh did inna dat, Miss Inez?

MISS INEZ

Den nuh must.

DENNIS

An nuh get nutten?

ALTON

Ole lady, mi nuh tell yuh seh mi have contacts fi get di tings dem fi yuh.

MISS INEZ

I don't want nutten from you. When I was coming ah stop a dead house. Is di only place mi cyan visit to see is which one a wi dead now.

(Pauses.)

Dem bring in a likkle fella dat dem call Monkey-man. Poor Miss Kathleen she bawl soh till. Her one pickney dead. An dem say dat you, Mr Alton, have someting fi do wid it.

ALTON

Mi never have nutten fi do wid it, but dat bwoy fi dead long time, man.

MISS INEZ

How yuh mean di woman pickney fi dead long time? Is you bring him here?

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

DENNIS

Right now Monkey-man was my personal key an mi vex. So hear what? Go stay which part yuh clown before me an yuh have someting.

ALTON

Weh yuh a go do? Go way wid dat blood stain argument before I just—

DENNIS

A weh di ra—

(DENNIS chucks ALTON. ALTON draws his gun. MISS INEZ jumps between them.)

MISS INEZ

A weh yuh a go do? Shoot him?

ALTON

Shoot him blood seed, yes. Watch out! Mek I just...

(He is trying to get around MISS INEZ who is shielding DENNIS.)

DENNIS

Hey bwoy! Tru yuh have gun yuh feel yuh bad. Watch me an you!

(He runs off.)

MISS INEZ

I don't want no murderer inna my house. Come out a mi house!

ALTON

Who a murderer? Di bwoy too facety, man.

MISS INEZ

Come out a mi house before I call di police pon yuh!

ALTON

Call police fi what?

SWEETIE

Alton, gwan nuh, man.

ALTON

Come out a di argument!

Whiplash

MISS INEZ

Leave her an come out a mi house!

(She pushes him. DENNIS enters with an M-16.)

DENNIS

Hey, bwoy! Yuh waan blood seed try it now?

(He is trying to aim at ALTON. MISS INEZ and SWEETIE are shielding him.)

MISS INEZ

Dennis! Come out a mi house an go put down di gun. Move!

Shut yuh blasted mouth an come. Move!

(She pushes DENNIS through the door.)

ALTON

Wah happen? Res nuh. Weh yuh a push mi fah? Yuh tink dis a house?

MISS INEZ

Yes, I know. Yuh tek yuh blood money an buy big house. Go up deh. Mi nuh waan no murderer in yah. Come out, murderer!

(Pause.)

Yes! Come out! Come out, yuh shit!

(ALTON leaves.)

Look weh mi live come see! Is what mi do wrong? O Jesus Christ!

SWEETIE

Cool down, Miss Inez. Mek I catch some water for you.

(She goes off.)

MISS INEZ

Mi two pickney. Mi two loving pickney. Lord, I prefer yuh take dem off di face of dis earth. I cyaan live wid it.

(SWEETIE brings in the water.)

SWEETIE

Drink di water, Miss Inez. Drink some.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

(MISS INEZ drinks.)

MISS INEZ

Sweetie, look how I try wid dem bwoy. Look how I try, Lord. Mi body feel cold.

(SWEETIE hugs MISS INEZ.)

SWEETIE

Is alright, Miss Inez. Is alright, Mama. Come sit down.

(MISS INEZ sits heavily.)

MISS INEZ

(Pauses.)

I remember when Jamaica was to decide if we was going to join di Federation or go it alone as an independent nation. Father Manley was walking round my area and everybody was a laugh and shout, “Comrade!” An di likkle pickney jump round him. It was lovely... Out of di crowd him just pick me out. Him say, “Little mother, remember this: United we stand, divided we fall. Federation is for the good of all. But more importantly, regardless of who you vote for, go out and vote...” Den him shake mi hand... I never wash it for two days.

SWEETIE

I hear seh him was a nice man.

MISS INEZ

Very nice. When Mr Bustamante come round, him seh, “You have to be independent before you federate. Man must good a yard before you go abroad. But most importantly you must go and vote, and when you vote, vote for me.”

SWEETIE

(Smiles.)

I hear him was a nice man too.

Whiplash

MISS INEZ

Very nice.

SWEETIE

So who you did vote for?

MISS INEZ

Mi did vote for Federation. We lose but everybody still happy. Di last decent election. When you compare nowadays election wid di candidates an di gunman an di shooting and murdering an when I realize dat my pickney dem out dere doing dat, I cyaan live wid it.

(Silence.)

SWEETIE

Di odder day Trevor teacher ask me what sort a work Trevor father do because Trevor tell di children dat his father is a “Ranking General”.

MISS INEZ

Lord have mercy!

SWEETIE

Di children want to know which army him lead. I had to tell di teacher dat him is really a contractor. What I going tell di children when dey get bigger? Dat their father is a top ranking gunman who kill people? Miss Inez, mi fast making up my mind dat before mi mek my pickney dem grow wid dat stigma, mi nyam dem to rass!

(MISS INEZ goes to SWEETIE.)

MISS INEZ

No child. Don’t talk like dat.

SWEETIE

What I can do, Miss Inez?

MISS INEZ

Pray, mi child. Pray.

SWEETIE

Mi nuh know how fi pray again.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

MISS INEZ

Fight then. Fight for yuh pickney. Fight for yuhself. Fight child. Don't give up.
(MISS INEZ is comforting SWEETIE.)

(LIGHTS fade.)

ACT II – Scene 3

SWEETIE and MISS INEZ are tidying the house.

MISS INEZ

Yuh shoulda tell dem today, Sweetie.

SWEETIE

If dem still vex wid one another an no come, well... But I have to tell dem. Over six hundred people dead since di year start, and you still have another month before election. I wouldn't like nutten happen to none of dem.

MISS INEZ

Sweetie, I pray every night when I hear bout di killing. I say, "Lord, what have we done wrong?"

SWEETIE

Jamaican people have too much patience. Dat is fi-wi sin. We mek someting reach di brink before we do something bout it.

MISS INEZ

In di meantime di suffering goes on.

SWEETIE

And it going get worse. I only hope Dennis listen to me today; I cyaan put up wid dis much longer. Miss Inez, yuh seh yuh have something to tell me.

MISS INEZ

Yes, but you is di first person I going tell, so hold yuh mouth.

Whiplash

SWEETIE

Cho! Miss Inez, yuh nuh know me better dan dat.

MISS INEZ

Mr Williams say him waan get married to me.

SWEETIE

Yuh lie!

MISS INEZ

Last night him tell me.

SWEETIE

What him say? What him say, Miss Inez?

MISS INEZ

Him say, "Inez, I think it would be good if we could grow old together."

SWEETIE

Pardon me! Him must be use to read dem True Love comic. So what yuh say?

MISS INEZ

I say, "Roy..."

SWEETIE

Roy?

MISS INEZ

Him say mi mus call him Roy cause it don't look so good fi him to call me Inez and mi calling him Mr Williams cause him is not much older dan me....

SWEETIE

Roy and Inez! Yes, mi dear!

MISS INEZ

I says, "Roy we can't grow old together if you live down the street and I live up top. Moreover, I am a big woman but I am not that old." He says, "That mean we have more time to spend together."

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

SWEETIE

Excuse me.

MISS INEZ

Him say, "Inez, from di very first time I saw your calves, I knew you were di girl for me."

SWEETIE

Calves! Mr Williams is a calf man?

MISS INEZ

Wait nuh! I say to him, "Roy, there is a lot more on my body that you will see before you see my calves."

SWEETIE

So what him say?

MISS INEZ

Him say him see di rest of mi but him want see if mi calves is in proportion to di rest of my body, cause him like woman who is well balanced.

SWEETIE

Is what dis pon me! Den yuh believe him, Miss Inez?

MISS INEZ

Den nuh must. When you reach my age an lonely for so long, you believe all what nuh go soh.

SWEETIE

Den tell me someting, Miss Inez, mi see you and him go out and come back late a night. Unu gwan wid anything yet?

MISS INEZ

But see here! Mi is a big woman, you know!

SWEETIE

Dat don't answer my question.

MISS INEZ

Di man have mi as a decent lady. Yuh can't expect mi fi gwan wid tings already?

Whiplash

SWEETIE

Wait, a puss-in-a-bag business this?

MISS INEZ

Den mi nuh healthy smaddy?

SWEETIE

I don't say nutten bout you, but suppose is three left foot him have?

MISS INEZ

Den mi nuh jus straighten one. Wait! Tru yuh see mi on yah, yuh tink mi easy. Dem call you Sweetie. Alton father used to call me Sugar. Him seh is mus me Sparrow write di song bout.

SWEETIE

She have sugar up deh. Heh-heh! Miss Inez, yuh old but yuh not cold.

MISS INEZ

Who old? Yuh just wait till dis ting settle. Yuh going see how late him open di shop a morning time.

(SWEETIE laughs.)

Alton father use to call it Morning Glory.

SWEETIE

Yes, Puppa!

MISS INEZ

(Sober.)

Him use to say dis was one blessing him not passing on to nobody. Dat's why him was so vex when him find out bout me an Dennis father. Up to last year him tell me seh him will never forgive me, cause mi mek somebody else share him Morning Glory.

SWEETIE

And Mr Williams will soon know what joy cometh in di morning. Miss Inez, mi glad fi yuh! Mi know yuh not going spoil dis one.

(DENNIS enters.)

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

DENNIS

What happen, ole lady? Long time no see.

(He embraces MISS INEZ.)

MISS INEZ

I still live at di same place, but in dis case I can say wid respect dat absence make di heart grow fonder.

DENNIS

An wid respect, di way to a man's heart is through his stomach. When Sweetie tell me dat yuh want me to come for dinner I realize how much I miss your cooking. Not dat I don't like Sweetie cooking.

SWEETIE

When you is dere to eat?

DENNIS

Ole lady, what yuh cooking?

MISS INEZ

Curry goat.

DENNIS

What? My favourite. Yuh really a work pon me.

MISS INEZ

I cook roast beef too.

DENNIS

But nuh Alton favourite food dat? Is what unu up to?

MISS INEZ

Nothing much. I just waan see my two sons together one more time before I die.

DENNIS

How dead business come into dis?

MISS INEZ

I have blood pressure an migraine headache an di doctor says I cyan get a

Whiplash

stroke anytime.

DENNIS

So what causing dat?

SWEETIE

Fretting bout you an Alton.

DENNIS

Cho! Dat is foolishness.

MISS INEZ

Yuh cyaan do dis for me?

DENNIS

I will do anything, but suppose Alton not up to it?

SWEETIE

You just do your part, alright?

(DENNIS nods as ALTON drives up. MISS INEZ meets him at the door.)

MISS INEZ

Hello, son. Long time no see.

ALTON

If yuh cook roast beef more often, yuh will see me more often, man.

MISS INEZ

I cook curry goat too.

(ALTON enters and sees DENNIS. They stare at each other.)

ALTON

I will come back another time.

MISS INEZ

If you leave now di next time you see me will be at my funeral.

SWEETIE

She has been to di doctor four times since you an Dennis quarrel.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

ALTON

Why yuh allow dat to bother yuh? Don't wi okay?

MISS INEZ

You are alright dis way an he is alright dat way, but you are not alright togedda. And dat is how I know you.

ALTON

I have a man who is a spy in your camp. Him tell me everyting yuh do, everywhere yuh go. Dat is why we don't clash.

DENNIS

Same me too.

(They look at each other.)

ALTON

You have anything to drink?

(MISS INEZ gives them each a beer.)

MISS INEZ

I have something to tell you. Mr Williams want me to marry to him.

ALTON

What! Dat short man? He cyan do anyting?

DENNIS

So what? Yuh a go married to him?

MISS INEZ

Uh-huh.

DENNIS

Where yuh going live?

MISS INEZ

Up his house. Is him own di place yuh know.

DENNIS

Sound like yuh alright. Me glad fi know.

Whiplash

ALTON

Yeah. At least you won't have to walk so far to buy grocery again!

MISS INEZ

So unu don't have anyting against it then?

DENNIS

No, man. Just take care of yuhself. If him ever lick yuh, send come call Alton.

MISS INEZ

Rahtid! Mek ah check mi pot!

(She runs off stage.)

SWEETIE

I waan talk to di two of you.

ALTON

What happen, you getting married too?

DENNIS

(Goes to ALTON.)

Just rest dem argument deh.

SWEETIE

Is alright. Mi not pushing nobody. Listen, unu have to really try arrange another truce.

ALTON

Is what do yuh, Sweetie? Yuh see what happen to di last one?

SWEETIE

Yuh nuh see what happening to di country? If yuh nuh mind sharp, civil war bruk out. Look how much people dead since di year start.

DENNIS

True. If we organize it like last time, all di man dem haffi do is kill di leaders and scatter di rest.

SWEETIE

I know a way. You can do it like Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

Peaceful resistance. Non-violent revolution. Mek di man dem hand in di guns an organize a march up Cross Roads, Half Way Tree and New Kingston every day from nine to five. Everybody off di road by six so you don't have no mistake. If half a million ghetto people march every day, somebody mus tek notice.

ALTON

When somebody tek notice, what going happen? Dem don't have no work.

SWEETIE

No. Not yet. But if dey build trade centres in di depressed areas den di girls will be trained to make clothes an grow flowers. There is a big market for Jamaican flowers abroad. Teach di men to make goods efficiently so dat dey can compete in di marketplace. Yuh don't see what happen to sugar? Jamaica soon cyaan sell one pound a sugar abroad. We soon cyaan even sell to ourself. It going be cheaper to buy sugar from foreign, especially since efficiency is di name of di game and dem a defend politics. When dem cyaan sell di sugar we going see who di sugar workers going vote for!

DENNIS

Wait! Yuh gone too high! Is dem tings dem a teach secretary nowadays?

SWEETIE

Not really. I switch to History and Economics and later I going do Management. We can set up cottage industries like what dem have in parts of France.

ALTON

What name soh?

SWEETIE

Little family or community business dat make goods and sell to a distributor. I figure if dey don't import cars for one year and set up something like what I just describe, within five years di country going feel little better. Wi going earn some foreign exchange, cut down on di unemployment and di crime rate going drop.

(DENNIS and ALTON look at each other.)

Whiplash

DENNIS

Anyting else?

SWEETIE

I know it going be difficult at first. Certain people going try mash it up and our own ghetto people going try rob di goods. But we will know who a rob what, and either wi turn dem over to di police or wi bag dem wiself.

ALTON

But yuh serious!

SWEETIE

Sacrifice haffi mek and discipline haffi involve.
Is we haffi fight fi our life and future for our children.

(Pauses.)

DENNIS

Yuh seh Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King did lead someting like dis.
Dem mek any headway?

SWEETIE

Yes, man. India get independence from Britain an black people in America get a whole heap of benefits dat dem never used to get as equal human beings.

ALTON

What happen to dem?

SWEETIE

Dem assassinate dem.

(DENNIS and ALTON look at her.)

Listen, I know it dangerous because you have powerful forces dat don't waan see wi unite. But is not more dangerous dan what yuh doing now. Still, if anything happen to you at least your pickney dem can hold dem head wid pride and seh dem faada died to help people, instead dem say dat dem faada was a gunman.

(Silence as the brothers consider.)

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

DENNIS

Yuh nuh have nobody else to use as example?

SWEETIE

Yuh have Jamaica's own Norman Manley and Bustamante. Dem always advocate peaceful change. Di only time when Busta was involve in anything name violence, is when him open him shirt front an tell di oppressors to kill me but let my people go....

(Emotionally.)

Him was defending di people.

ALTON

Mi hear bout dat.

SWEETIE

With Norman Manley and Bustamante, it was friendly rivalry. If you ask Miss Inez, she will tell you dat all di violence dey had was friendly jive and a stone, now and den, nothing like what is going on now...

(Pauses.)

...an if it make you feel better, dem die of natural causes.

DENNIS

Mi prefer dat.

ALTON

Dennis, if wi organize a chain of command so if anyting happen to we, somebody cyan take over; maybe it coulda work?

DENNIS

Wi cyan do dat after di election. Meantime, we cyan tone down di violence so dat di bitterness don't go much deeper.

SWEETIE

I proud of you, already.

(She beams at them.)

Hey, I forget to tell you. Trevor into a play at his school. They putting it on for Christmas.

Whiplash

DENNIS

A weh yuh a seh. Him a go turn big actor like Ranny Williams.
Hey, Mass Ran nuh did dead?

SWEETIE

Uh-huh. An him did really carry di flag long and high.
Unu shoulda take a drink for him.

ALTON

Yes, to Mass Ran.

(They drink.)

SWEETIE

Maybe Trevor will take to this. Mi watch him di odder day at rehearsals
and him good. Teacher say him have natural talent. Maybe him will turn
another Oliver Samuels or Volier Johnson or turn a playwright like Trevor
Rhone.

DENNIS

How yuh know so much?

SWEETIE

Then mi nuh read newspaper and watch School Challenge Quiz pon TV?
Anyway, when di school have end-of-term concert I want di two of yuh to
come. Right?

ALTON and DENNIS

Right.

(They sip beer.)

ALTON

Back to di argument. For a while, it going be rough, but I think wi cyan start
someting.

DENNIS

I know my MP not going like dat.

ALTON

Mine not going like it either. Dat means, is a fight, and di golden rule going

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

apply. Yuh know what I mean by di golden rule?

SWEETIE

Something like love thy neighbour as thyself?

ALTON

If it was dat, we wouldn't have no problems. Di golden rule is, di man who have di gold make di rule. And right now, di MP dem control all of di contracts. Everything.

DENNIS

It going be tough, but we going try.

SWEETIE

Yes, try. And anything I can do, I will do.

ALTON

Anything?

SWEETIE

(Defiantly.)

Anything.

ALTON

Sure?

SWEETIE

Sure.

ALTON

Well, gwan go help di ole lady wid di food. Mi hungry.

DENNIS

Yeah. Mi too.

(Laughter.)

(LIGHTS fade.)

Whiplash

ACT II – Scene 4

SWEETIE and MISS INEZ on stage. MISS INEZ has a baby in her arms.

SWEETIE

See it deh! Dem shoot a MP and yuh don't know where it going stop now.

MISS INEZ

Di country gone to di dogs. Who cyan leave a leave.

SWEETIE

Who cyaan leave, haffi stay and fight.

MISS INEZ

For what? Yuh change one, yuh bring in another one. Swap black dog fi monkey.

SWEETIE

Dennis say him a try tone down di violence and is like di man dem turn pon him. Say him a get sof. Him say some a dem all a tek drugs.

MISS INEZ

Yuh see how it stay?

(Ironically.)

Everybody a call for peace. Politicians, preacher, everybody. But no peace.

SWEETIE

Everybody a talk, but nobody nah do nutten.

MISS INEZ

Jamaica want a storm fi just wash di place. Cleanse it. Too much evil on di land.

SWEETIE

Mek yuh wonder what yuh pickney cyan look forward to..

MISS INEZ

I tell Roy di wedding too near election day but him seh him waan married di first Saturday in November, him seh regardless of who win di election, him

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

going win me.

SWEETIE

Is one of di things I like bout Mr Williams. Him always cheerful an love give joke.

MISS INEZ

Yes, him nice. Rude, but nice. Him more daring wid di rudeness, and him too boasty. Mi tell him: “Mek we just go to di parson an get married and if anything keep a likkle party.” No-no. Him want big wedding a hotel if you please!

SWEETIE

Nutting nuh wrong wid dat.

MISS INEZ

It too expensive, man.

SWEETIE

But him nuh tell yuh seh him was saving him money for a special occasion an dis is very special to him? Yuh want see him a look pon yuh.

MISS INEZ

Last night I dream bout di wedding. We was getting married into dis big church. All my sister dem come down fi di wedding. Then Roy, him wearing a blue shiners suit wid gun mouth pants, yuh know dem old time shiners cloth?

SWEETIE

Uh-huh. A weh him get dat from?

MISS INEZ

Is dat everybody inna di church say. But Roy nuh business, puppa. Den yuh want see likkle Trevor bringing di ring, man....

(She holds baby before her.)

When we were going to di car, guess who come check me?

SWEETIE

Who?

Whiplash

MISS INEZ

No Alton father! Him whisper into my ears, “Remember di Morning Glory.”
(*Laughter.*)

When I wake up an realize it was a dream, I cry.

SWEETIE

Is happy yuh happy. Yuh going on honeymoon?

MISS INEZ

Den mi nuh tell yuh seh is a special occasion. We going to a north-coast hotel for a week, child.

SWEETIE

Yes, puppa! At least yuh don’t have to fret bout getting pregnant.

MISS INEZ

Wah?

SWEETIE

Den yuh nuh pass change-of-life?

MISS INEZ

Mi is still a young woman an Roy say him wouldn’t mind a son.

SWEETIE

Miss Inez, mind yusef!

MISS INEZ

Second life, mi child. I have no objection too.

SWEETIE

Ah glad for yuh, though. Mek I go up a di house an see if Trevor come yet.

(*DENNIS enters. He is greatly agitated.*)

DENNIS

Alton come yet?

SWEETIE

No. What happen?

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

DENNIS

Watch yah. If him come tell him don't stay. Tell him fi park him car somewhere inna Spanish Town an tek a mini-bus and go a Brown's Town. I will meet him dere.

MISS INEZ

What is happening? Why you an Alton have to leave?

DENNIS

Yuh see like how a MP dead last night, orders come down seh dem nuh trust me an Alton again. Dem mek it sound like seh me an Alton a stir up di man dem against di MP dem. We haffi leave di city cause anybody cyan drop wi. Di man dem a look fi Alton, and Badword a patrol di area wid some of our guys.

SWEETIE

Den suppose dem do yuh someting?

DENNIS

One or two man woulda like try a ting but most a dem fraid a me. If dem see Alton is pure gunshot. If him come tell him don't stay.

MISS INEZ

Where yuh going?

DENNIS

Ah going leave a message one or two spots seh him nuh fi come here.

SWEETIE

I coming wid you.

DENNIS

No! Tek di baby dem and stay wid Mama. When everyting cool down, we will see what happen. I will check back here before I leave.

(He exits.)

MISS INEZ

Jesus. I hope nutten don't happen to them.

Whiplash

SWEETIE

When I was coming down here this morning, mi see di one Badword an some of di man dem. Dem have blood inna dem eye an dem nah hide di gun dem.

MISS INEZ

Dear Lord, I just dying fi dis election pass an gone. So much blood.

(Sound of a car. ALTON enters.)

ALTON

Weh Dennis?

SWEETIE

Him gone look fi yuh. Him say you must leave di city.

ALTON

Is dat I waan tell him too. Di man dem don't like how wi a try bring peace. Dem give order to drop wi.

MISS INEZ

Him know. Him seh yuh mus leave yuh car a Spanish Town an tek a mini bus to Brown's Town now.

SWEETIE

Him seh yuh mus leave di area right now cause Badword and dem man will shoot yuh.

ALTON

Mi drive pass dem up di street and dem a point, point pon me.

SWEETIE

Alton, yuh better go. I gone fi my pickney dem.

(She exits.)

MISS INEZ

Alton, drive down di lane. Don't go back where Badword is.

ALTON

Mi nuh afraid a dem! If any a dem ever try anyting, ah buss up him blow-wow.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

(He takes out his gun.)

MISS INEZ

Alton, nuh drive dat way. Do what Dennis say. Leave di area now.

ALTON

Mi a go leave, but a right up deh so mi a drive.

(He goes to the door.)

MISS INEZ

Alton, do! Don't drive dat way.

(But he is gone. Car drives off. MISS INEZ still holds the baby.)

MISS INEZ

Lord, I know they are not without sin, but watch over them for me.

(She paces the floor with the baby.)

If this is your inheritance, you nuh have a chance little one. Life without hope.

(Enter SWEETIE, breathless.)

SWEETIE

Miss Inez! Dem shoot Alton!

MISS INEZ

Yuh sure? Which part?

SWEETIE

Up di street.

MISS INEZ

Mek ah go look.

(She tries to pass SWEETIE, who blocks her.)

SWEETIE

Don't go, Miss Inez. Mr Williams say him will look after it. Alton head mash up. Mash up, mash up soh-till it almost come off a him body.

Whiplash

MISS INEZ

W-a-a-a-a-a-i-i-i-i!

(She cries out with a great voice, then staggers to the wall and wails.)

No God! Noooooooooo!

(She holds her head.)

SWEETIE

Him was driving past when Badword man dem step out in di middle of di lane and tell him fi stop. Him never stop an dem open fire pon him.

MISS INEZ

U-u-u-h-h-h-h-h!

SWEETIE

Him ram Badword wid di car. Badword dead too.

MISS INEZ

When Alton was about ten and first start play football, him seh to me, "Mama, I going be di best footballer in di world. I gwine get rich and buy a house an a ship an a plane for you"... I say to him, "Buy a house, but leave di ship and di plane... leave di plane."

(The sobbing goes for awhile... then suddenly the sound of car tires, then shouting....)

COP 1

See di odder one deh, Sarge!

COP 2

But him don't have no gun!

COP 1

Shoot him rass anyway!

(There are a lot of gunshots. SWEETIE is rushing to the door when DENNIS staggers in. He is bloody. SWEETIE screams. DENNIS drops. MISS INEZ then takes the baby, SWEETIE kneels at DENNIS' head.)

SWEETIE

Dennis! No! No!

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

(DENNIS tries to talk...)

DENNIS

Sweetie, look after di pickney dem...

SWEETIE

Don't shut yuh eyes, Dennis. Don't shut yuh eyes.

(DENNIS dies. SWEETIE is bawling.)

(LIGHTS dim and hold. Then the song "Woman Hold your Head And Cry" starts to play. Midway a news flash...)

NEWS FLASH

The police information centre has announced that well-known gang leaders Alton Brown and Dennis Blackwood were killed a short while ago.... Brown was shot when he attacked a group of men belonging to a rival gang. Blackwood was killed while engaging in a shoot-out with the police. One M-16 automatic rifle and a .37 Magnum revolver were recovered. More about this in our main newscast tonight.

(The song starts again. MISS INEZ hushes the baby. SWEETIE cuddles DENNIS' head while sobbing.)

(LIGHTS fade slowly.)

THE END

Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine

by
Patricia Cumper
Honor Ford-Smith
Carol Lawes
Hertencer Lindsay
Eugene Williams



Honor Ford-Smith (left) as Katie and Carol Lawes as Letty in the final scene
in the original production of *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine*.

PHOTOGRAPHER: Owen Minott

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

The collective creation that produced this play took place under the auspices of the **Groundwork Theatre Company**. Founded by Dennis Scott in 1980 as the Graduate Theatre Company, it was originally the performing company of the Jamaica School of Drama, the company later established itself independently under the directorship of Carol Lawes but it maintained ties with the school where Ford-Smith, Lindsay and Williams worked.

Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine was created in workshop in 1986 and 1987 and opened in 1987 at the Studio Theatre (now the Dennis Scott Theatre) at the Jamaica School of Drama, Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts.

Patricia Cumper joined the team having written and produced *The Rapist, Rufus, Mansong and Buss Out* (with Sistren Theatre Collective). She is currently the Artistic Director of **Talawa Theatre Company** in Britain. Recent works include *The Key Game, Sweet Yam Kisses* and radio adaptations of Rita Dove's *Darker Face of the Earth*, Alice Walker's *Colour Purple*, and Andrea Levy's *Small Island* for the BBC.

Honor Ford-Smith was the founding Artistic Director of Sistren Theatre collective from 1977-1989. Her publications with Sistren include *Bellywoman Bangarang* (Sistren in Waters and Edgecombe 2001) and *Lionheart Gal: Lifestories of Jamaican Women* (UWI Press 2005). She is currently Associate Professor in Community and Environmental Arts at the Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University.

Carol Lawes was Artistic Director of the Groundwork Theatre Company and then director of Culture at Caricom, the secretariat of the Caribbean community. Her most recent work includes a solo performance *Letters from the Dead: Vigil for Roxie*.

Hertencer Lindsay was formerly Director of the Jamaica School of Drama. She directed and co-created Sistren's *QPH* (Sistren in Gilbert 2001) and presently works as a therapist in Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

Eugene Williams is Director of the Jamaica School of Drama, Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts. He teaches and works as a director in Jamaica and throughout the Caribbean.

Playing Contrapuntally: An introduction to *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine*

Edward Said (1994) contended that one goal of intellectual work is to understand history and oneself in relation to the Other without suppressing the difference. To live “contrapuntally” as he put it, is to exist in dialogue with those whose experiences, traditions and beliefs are different, without coercion and domination. The question of how to engage in dialogue with and across hierarchies of difference is one of the challenges that *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine* tackles. The play can be seen as an example of how this contrapuntal dialogue might take shape in the context of decolonization. It presents this dialogue as a feminist allegory of nation in which the characters, action and setting become metaphors for the post-colonial condition. *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine* explores how women who are positioned on opposite sides of the colonizer/colonized divide, continually perform memories of this colonial relationship and in so doing recreate, reiterate and transform it.

Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon both famously demonstrated that colonizer and colonized are dependent on each other and that the freedom of one depends on the freedom of the other. In the imagination of both Césaire and Fanon these subjects were men. For Fanon (1967), Caribbean women were never entirely trustworthy allies. In his discussion of the work of Mayotte Capécia in *Black Skin White Masks* he argues that Black Martinican women have been collaborators with imperial patriarchs from whom they wrestled concessions while ignoring the marginalization of Black men and leaving the colonial relationship unchallenged. The principal protagonists of the wars of colonial liberation were in Fanon’s view male, and the wars themselves were to be enacted in the public sphere. Postcolonial nationalist citizenship was envisioned primarily as male and middle class. The danger of this for colonized women was that colonized men would claim the patriarchal powers of the colonizer in addition to asserting pre-colonial patriarchal traditions. Women would then continue to be subordinated in the postcolonial nation. At the same time, many white feminist scholars saw white women as subordinate within imperial patriarchy and therefore innocent of imperial desires.

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

Feminist scholars of colour have repeatedly pointed out that white women colluded with and benefitted from imperial power and became mistresses of women of colour, with a stake in the perpetuation of their exploitation, in spite of whatever subordination these white women might themselves experience as women.

Fallen Angel performs this complex problem and explores the mix of roles that women lived in colonial settings. It also shifts the terms of anti-imperial struggle from the public to the domestic sphere on which the public sphere depends and in so doing reframes notions of nation, community and belonging, dependency and interdependency. The play tells the story of two homeless women – one white, one Black – who battle for control of a derelict colonial mansion which both call home. At the start of the play Katie adopts the persona of the daughter of the colonizer who she says left her the house where the action takes place. She compulsively pens letters to her brother Lawrence in England asking him to substantiate her claim to the house. Lettie masks herself as a ladies' companion and loyal friend to an upper class near-white woman who with her help built the house and who she says left her the house as a reward for her years of faithful service. Each of the women attempts to persuade the other that the house belongs to them, and to justify their claims they weave tales of belonging based on old colonial narratives of the good servant and the good daughter.

Katie and Lettie respectively signify stereotypical colonial representations of the degenerate near white creole and the Mammy. They engage in a highly gendered struggle for control of the crumbling old mansion that symbolizes the home they desire and which each claims has been willed to her. Each acts out a complex mix of desire for domination and control of the Other. Both are subordinates, but both also have particular sources of power which they turn against each other – writing and literacy, spiritual traditions and the law. They perform versions of their histories as they wish, hope or fear they might have been. The characters inhabit the stereotypes and work from within them to transform the complex colonial discourses on which these stereotypes rest.

Katie, the dispossessed white creole, compulsively performs ritualized memories of the role of mistress of the manor and the favourite daughter, claiming the house as a legacy from her father and contending that she is waiting for her brother to probate the will. In fact she has been long abandoned and forgotten by her family who seem to have migrated North and so she attempts to literally live off Letty, a process symbolized in the battle over Lettie's cooking pot on which she depends to eat. Lettie deflects Katie's attempts to imprison her in the role of servant, while

Fallen Angel & the Devil Concubine

boasting about her competence as household manager construction foreman, cook and companion. It is her employer, Miss Delisser, who left her the crumbling mansion as a reward for her service.

Obsessed by a compulsive search for justice, Lettie collects discarded colonial legal documents that she ties onto her body to invoke protection, to seal the power of the spirits of the righteous and the just and to use these documents as a form of obeah to convince Katie of her right to the house. Both women unite briefly when threatened by the boys in the neighbourhood who harass them repeatedly and strip the house of whatever they can. As soon as the boys are gone, they start quarrelling again.

Eventually each woman discovers the other's secrets and with these each peels off the other's racial mask. It turns out that Katie romantically sought a solution to the restrictions of the plantation and its incumbent racial conflict through romance. She rejected her inherited privilege by running off with a fisherman, her childhood sweetheart and a poor Black youth from the village where she grew up. As a result her family disowned her and in due course left the country. So, after the death of her husband and child, she finds herself homeless, unable to provide for herself or to negotiate the realities of the streets except through the mask of remembered plantation rituals of power and dominance. Lettie, on the other hand, was never able to meet the standards of the demanding Miss DeLisser with whom she worked for all her life. Apart from enduring DeLisser's tirades ("Your best not good enough!") and beatings as a young girl, she helped care for the goats on Miss DeLisser's property, only to be raped by a headman¹ on the estate. Regardless, Lettie loved the child of this violence who was sent to her mother so that Lettie could continue to work. But the child was given away to a stranger by Lettie's mother before Lettie had a chance to visit, leaving her devastated. Once these complex stories of devastating loss are out in the open the women can begin to disentangle themselves from the tentacles of the past and to make a shared place of belonging in the present which they can both call home.

Fallen Angel vividly portrays the collision of temporalities of past and present and like *Masquerders* presents this collision as both restriction and condition of possibility. The final act of the play suggests that the dichotomy between colonizer/colonized is resolvable only if both parties are willing to exercise struggle with each other to work through its legacies and to treat each other with mutual respect

1 A headman is the name given to the head worker in charge of labour teams on an estate. In the Jamaican context headmen were at the top of the working class hierarchy and were usually Black.

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in spite of and perhaps even because of the memory of past violence. Such respect is only possible if the white colonizer attempts to relinquish material and cultural privilege so as to be able to hear and make sense of the situation of the Other. In attempting to give up privilege she can approach respect for the intrinsic and potential value of the Other and recognize the damage done by the violence of the past. Only when each woman refuses the binary position of victor/victim can the dialogue begin. This means they have to be able to empathize with aspects of each others identity in spite of all the violence that has gone before. This does not mean that they are the same, nor does it mean that they accept injustice as natural and assert their common humanity in spite of it. Rather it proposes that they agree to struggle with and against each other so as to exorcise the ghosts of the past and reinvent the terms of the future in a difficult dialogue.

Both women are faced with the challenge of interdependence. In the end they recognize that there is no choice but to exist in a condition of interdependence across difference and a constant process of negotiation. It is the terms of this interdependence that must be continually re-negotiated. Lettie accepts the challenge of interdependence by listening and responding to Katie's pain without silencing, trivializing or obliterating it. Katie drops her fractured mask and allows her vulnerability to be seen by those she had believed were subordinates, just as she agrees to attempt to comprehend Lettie's vulnerability without judgement. For Lettie, accepting Katie depends on letting go of fantasies of revenge. For Katie, it involves letting go of ideas of entitlement and normalized superiority. It is entirely due to Lettie's ability to let go of this romance of reversals that the conflicts between both women can reach an uneasy resolution. Nevertheless it is Lettie who recognizes that the social arrangements of the past cost both of them incalculable losses – children, family, intimacy and love; and that one way to redress this is to commit to struggling together for something different in the face of the violence that continues to surround them and to live within them. This imperfect intention, the play seems to suggest, is all that there is and all that there can be given the past. Nonetheless, the living of this possibility is full of promise.

Collective creation and the theatrical process in *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine*

Fallen Angel was a collective creation in which all members of the collective came together to create the piece. It was developed through improvisations which were then structured and scripted. The relationship between performance and written

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word, action and text is different from the other plays in this collection, which were written by single authors without consultation with actors and without improvising alternative dialogue and action. The improvisations were originally generated in workshop by Carol Lawes and myself who were the actresses. Initially, the play focussed on a suitcase which held objects symbolizing our memories. Gradually in improvisation, objects emerged such as Katie's letters, Lettie's keys, her cooking pot, the two-by-four inch board and the shiny clothes that represent the colonial aristocracy. Each became symbols of character and social relations. We worked under the direction of Hertencer Lindsay and Eugene Williams who designed the focus of each improvisation and created containers for action such as the meeting, the dinner party, the discovery. The structure of action for each improvisation allowed each character to play out her dreams, nightmares and suppressed memories and to develop her character from shards of action. As we worked, the action came to rely a great deal on personal props such as Katie's letters, Lettie's guards, keys and her legal documents.

Both characters were loosely inspired by personal memories of particular oral narratives, metaphors for these narratives, observations and popular religions. As a child, I plagued my grandmother, who was from Bluefields in Westmoreland, to tell me tales about what seemed to me to be the gothic era of plantation society of western Jamaica. One particular story, which she swore was true, was about a white woman who defied her planter father to run off with her lover, a fisherman, only to be hunted down at gunpoint by her father and his friends who threatened to kill the fisherman. There was another story of a great-aunt who became pregnant by an impoverished man and had a disabled child. I drew on these stories for Katie and combined them with popular tales of sibling fights over property and wills made overseas. Carol Lawes developed Lettie from stories about destitute and aged domestic servants who had given their lives to care for their employers in exchange for meager wages and impoverished old age. She also observed homeless women on the streets of Kingston. For example there was one homeless woman of the period who daily set up an elaborate cooking ritual under a tree in a green area opposite the commercial centre of Kingston. She cooked over an open fire and held conversations with invisible presences all the while. Carol's choice of the keys as a significant personal prop developed initially from the idea that keys are symbolic of ownership, but later the keys along with several other objects came to function as guards or objects endowed with protective powers.

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This use of potent objects as well as the title *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine* came from Jamaican popular religions. Revivalism and Pukumina are spiritual traditions that combine elements of Christianity and African spirituality. Both popular religions hold that the spirits of the dead can manifest in the bodies of the living. These spirits include ancestors, great revival leaders, the Holy Spirit, Satan, the apostles, archangels and Old Testament prophets (Senior 2003: 417-420). Spirits send messages through the bodies of worshipers and also through dreams. This is what Katie refers to when she tries to control Lettie by telling her, "I get a dream for you last night." She literally means that the ancestors or spiritual powers have given her a message for Lettie. Drumming, singing and dancing are part of the act of worship, not mere additions to it. The particular rhythms and poly-harmonies invoke spiritual manifestation and protection. Lettie's song at the start, "I am only a visitor here," is from the Revival tradition as is the reference to a revival leader called Mother Simpson, whose name Katie invokes to threaten the young men attacking the house.

During the creation process improvisations were taped and then ordered into a sequence by Eugene Williams. The tapes and the structure were then given to writer Patricia Cumper who observed the action and dialogue, took notes, transcribed, edited the tapes, and finally fixed the dialogue and precise action and order of the sequences. She remained remarkably faithful to the dialogue generated in the improvisations but she also added dialogue. One of her major contributions along with the director, Eugene Williams, was to order the final sequences of the play. She reorganized the motivational sequence in the material to give continuity and to create the turning point. She clarified the actions leading up to the resolution of the piece and the dénouement, and in two weeks returned a written draft to the directors and writers. This was then further refined in rehearsal and later in production. Elements such as Lettie's pantomime with Katie's clothes in the second act and Katie's discovery of Marie's birth paper were not in the written script and consequently were not reproduced in the several productions of this play which have been mounted since the original. These have been incorporated into this script.

For some centuries in the Anglophone and colonial theatre the playwright has been seen as the sole creator with the performer and others enacting the subordinate role of interpretation of the text through his or her body and voice. It was the convention to abide by the traditional dichotomy between the written and the embodied, and the division of labour between creator and interpreter. It was the

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practice to give full credit to the individual playwright even where the individual playwright depends on words and actions generated by the actors and directors. The concept of the author tended to give respectability to the theatrical, where actors have been characterized as degenerate and sexually licentious. While writing is a sophisticated craft, in the colonial context it was a skill associated with the elite and was the particular technology required to create and disseminate ideas associated with the ruling authority. Writing became the polar opposite of embodied cultural production, which was associated with Blackness and which was always potentially threatening to the social order and therefore always had to be disciplined. We see this relationship between writing and the word of mouth re-inscribed in the play through the characters' use of letters and documents to substantiate their oral claims.

Operating within and between these polar forces, the director and the writer have an ambivalent and shifting position in postcolonial theatre, depending on factors such as his or her relationship with the script and the performers. In some cases of collective creation, the director and the writer have been the same person. In a famous example, Athol Fugard operated as both director and writer and was credited with the sole authorship of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972) and *The Island* (1972), even though it is widely recognized that he collaborated with John Kani and Winston Ntshona as co-creators.² On the other hand, popular theatrical traditions such as *comedia del arte* or vaudeville have often had no writer, just as Ashani's band of actors in *Masqueraders* have no writer and when they do write a script, they burn the written object as a confining document that can be manipulated against them by their enemies.

Sole authorship is clearly appropriate where the writer works alone to develop the theatrical concept and create the setting, dialogue and plot; but where actors and directors make oral and embodied contributions which are then translated into print, this collective process needs to be recognized. This is especially the case in colonized societies where suppressed memories are often encoded in oral and embodied memory. These memories are critical to the transformation of knowledge production that underlies the way power circulates.

Translating the oral into the written in the context of collective creation is a particular skill which depends on translating the disappearing immediacy of the performing body into text. It depends on being able to record proposals around action, gesture, sound, dialogue, and the scenic, and later synthesize the various

² Fugard, Kani and Ntshona 1976.

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proposals. This requires moving beyond notions of the writer as a gifted individual and the player (in the improvisational process) as an instrument of his or her imagination and as an interpreter of text on stage.

Accordingly, the team that created *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine* decided to apportion credit to all the creative parties, equally recognizing the work of actors, directors and writers in contributing to the script. This arrangement, which was finally agreed on after much discussion, argument and negotiation, attempts to give value to both the written, the oral and the embodied, and the translation stages and processes of production. In this way the work process contributes to the transformation of the hierarchical power relations that underpin the relationship between individual and collective, writing and the body, past and present. These altered relations aim to complicate the dichotomy between brain and hand and to echo and transform the old and violent processes that historically have structured Caribbean societies.

To live “contrapuntally” as Said suggests, is to exist in constant dialogue across differences, without coercion and domination. This contrapuntality, which is never linear, informed the creation of *Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine*; and, as in all dialogues, conflict and difference were highly generative as creative principles that shaped both its process and product.

FALLEN ANGEL & THE DEVIL CONCUBINE

by

Patricia Cumper
Honor Ford-Smith
Carol Lawes
Hertencer Lindsay
Eugene Williams

PRODUCTION HISTORY

The play was first produced on 20 May 1987 at the Jamaica School of Drama. in the Dennis Scott Theatre at the Jamaica School of Drama. It was created collectively in improvisation and then written down.

Cast

Lettie
Katie

Carol Lawes
Honor Ford-Smith

Directors

Eugene Williams
Hertencer Lindsay

Script

Patricia Cumper

Set Design

Henry Muttoo

Costumes

Winston Bell

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THE CHARACTERS

KATIE

In her late seventies. White. She shows all the signs of neglect: missing teeth, sallowness. Her hair has not been combed properly for a long time and she has a persistent cough, but she clings in her mannerisms to a very genteel persona which changes only when she becomes too absorbed in something to notice that her speech, etc., is not what it should be. She dresses like a woman flea-market, adding layers of frills and grubby finery as she goes. She always wears a pair of mismatched high-heeled shoes. She moves with a shuffle and is capable of considerable deviousness and vulgarity, her principal weapons of survival..

LETTIE

In her early seventies. Black. Physically strong in a wiry way, she is purposeful in her movements. She exhibits the marks of a poor diet. She dresses in old clothes, layered and stained. Around her waist is tied a bit of string or old cloth into which she pushes her bundles of documents and on which she has hung an enormous bunch of keys, a talisman of possession. She is afraid of the supernatural and so has armed herself with a collection of objects that she believes will protect her. One of these is a piece of wood (a 2"x 4" plank).

THE SET

The play is set in an early 20th century wooden house in downtown Kingston. The house is an upstairs one which in its heyday would have been elegant, with carved mahogany banisters and delicate fretwork, high ceilings and cool rooms. Now the area in which it stands is derelict, a combination of ruins, shabby concrete government housing and shacks, a place where crime is ordinary. The house is like the area, in a state of collapse. The steps creak and there is an almost sinister air of dilapidation. The entire play takes place in this one interior set, within the fantasies of the women living there.

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The stage is divided into three areas: *Stage left* and *Stage right* are preset as the rooms of each of the women, both with old furniture and bits and pieces. KATIE's room is dominated by sheets and sheets of writing paper and hung with clothes; ruffled, glittery, lacy old clothes. LETTIE's room is full of practical things: her stove and cooking pots, lengths of wood and old newspapers. A rickety old table stands in the area between the two. A third area lies in front of these two.

THE TIME

Now.

ACT I : The Meeting

KATIE

“Dear Lawrence.... If the truth be told, I can no longer pretend that your indifference... and neglect... is of no consequence. It is nothing but cruel hypocrisy. You have.... surrounded me with..... elements of destruction and suffering, and my spirit...”

(She pauses.)

No.

(She pauses.)

My girlhood spirit? ...No... “my spirit is cramped... and twisted... a curse on you, my brother.”

(LETTIE fans her stove, stirring her cooking. Abruptly she breaks off from her cooking to walk around her room, cross in hand, setting objects in their right places, strange objects in odd places. As she seems to finish and is about to return to her cooking, she goes back and places them one more time. Satisfied, she returns to her cooking. She realizes that her water bottles are empty and she sets out to fill them. She passes KATIE's where there is silence. On her way back, she hears noises in the room. Instantly alert, she quickly gets her 2"x4" piece of wood from her room and circles the area sprinkling white rum.)

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LETTIE

(Sings.)

*I am only a visitor here,
I am only a visitor here,
And I have no time to stay.*

(KATIE rustles and mutters. LETTIE strikes the wall of KATIE'S room with her 2x4.)

KATIE

(Screams then freezes.)

LETTIE

(After a pause.)

Somebody?

(No response. LETTIE bangs again. This galvanizes KATIE into grabbing up all her letters and stuffing them into an old suitcase in her room. She crouches in the corner over them protectively. LETTIE strikes the wall again.)

Somebody in deh?

KATIE

(Screaming.)

Yuh damn right smaddy in yah, and if yuh nuh move yuh stinking self from round mi door, yuh a go dead today! Yuh fi stop molest old people! Go home to yuh Mumma, dutty bwoy, if yuh know who she be.

(While KATIE shouts, she burrows further and further into the old clothes she has around her room, pulling them on as a kind of protective armour. LETTIE pushes the door and the two women stare at the other in silence. LETTIE retreats post haste to her own room where she takes up a rough cross she has made for herself. She examines where her amulets/objects are placed, the same ritual as before.)

LETTIE

A who inside deh? A duppy or trespasser? Tikya yuh a duppy. White duppy. Worse kind a duppy. A tek set pon me. Tek set. White duppy inna mi house! Smaddy trouble mi guard dem... mek duppy come in...

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(KATIE, seeing that LETTIE is gone, begins to relax; makes sure all her letters are tidied away; then starts to put on, over the clothes she is already wearing, a very frilly, tattered long dress and a pair of dilapidated, mismatched spindly-heeled shoes. She crosses to LETTIE's room and enters.)

KATIE

Good day.

LETTIE

Yuh nah go tek set pon mi in yah today, duppy or no duppy... damn white duppy.

(Brandishes cross.)

Come out! Mi seh, come out! Yuh nuh have no need a di house no more....

KATIE

(Exits room and crosses centre pursued by LETTIE.)

What are you doing? Don't be silly. I am not a duppy. See? Just flesh and blood. Like you.

LETTIE

Weh yuh come haunt mi fah? Mi never mean fi disturb yuh. Shelter is shelter.

KATIE

That's what I say too. No need to be afraid of me.

LETTIE

Well, if yuh a nuh duppy, yuh a trespasser den, cause mi nuh give you no permission fi come inna dis house. Either one, mi seh yuh fi come out!
COME OUT MI HOUSE!

KATIE

Do you really live here? So do I. What a lovely coincidence! I was wondering where I could get help in the area, and here you are: right on my doorstep, so to speak. I really desperately need someone to help me around the house: these young girls just don't know what a day's work is and I was wondering if you would be interested....

LETTIE

Fallen angel! Dat is what. If yuh a nuh duppy, yuh a fallen angel.

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(LETTIE crosses to her room. KATIE follows.)

LETTIE

Weh yuh a walk back a mi fah? Sinting in yah belong to yuh?

KATIE

No. But...

LETTIE

So weh yuh a tan up deh a look pon? Gwan go pack up yuh karuochiz.

KATIE

Do you or don't you want the job? I can't wait forever for you to make up your mind.

(LETTIE takes a long look at KATIE, who grows more and more uncomfortable under her stare: she has the 2x4 piece of wood in hand again.)

LETTIE

Weh yuh say yuh live?

KATIE

Right here. In my house. I have been occupying a charming little room at the back until the money comes for me to fix up the main house. The will has to be probated, you see. These things take forever.

LETTIE

Which part a fi-yuh house? See yah, woman, weh yuh tek dis ting fah? When Miss Delisser will dis-yah house to me, she mek it quite clear dat mi is not to take in no tenant whatsoever. Christie, she say to me, people must live into dem ownna house. Di ongle way mi is going to leave dis house to you is if you never tek no form nor kind nor variety of tenant into di place.

KATIE

(Sullenly.)

But this house belongs to me! I told you so.

(LETTIE answers with the 2x4 piece of wood: KATIE cowers.)

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LETTIE

Wipe yuh nose. Yuh nuh see seh yuh face dirty. Yuh trouble wid yuh head, don't it? Mi cyan see dat. Mi is not a wicked person, though sometimes life force yuh fi do cruel tings. What yuh say yuh name is again? Yuh remind me a one likkle cousin weh Miss Delisser did have, one puss-yeye gal weh dem call Katie. Me is not a wicked person, Katie....

KATIE

My name is Lillian, Lillian Lascelles... ahm....

LETTIE

Yes, Katie, me is not a cruel woman, but if Missa Wilson di lawyer come yah dis evening come find you, is worries. So yuh just tek yuh tings and come out.

KATIE

Lillian Lascelles... ahm. I know there was another name... I just can't remember... Lascelles... ahm... a blow to the head... a few years ago now... and I just can't...

(LETTIE turns to leave, but KATIE follows her.)

LETTIE

Weh yuh a follow follow me to? Di matter done sekkle already.
Wipe yuh nose, man. Go pack up yuh karuochiz.

KATIE

I won't be able to pay you your wages immediately, you understand. I am a little out of pocket at the moment. My brother Lawrence lives in England, and he usually sends me an allowance every month, regular as clockwork, but this month it seems to have been a little delayed.

LETTIE

Yuh head a tek yuh, ee, Katie? Nuh mind. Listen to me one more time. MI NUH WAAN YUH INNA MI HOUSE. Just go do wah mi tell yuh before Missa Wilson come.

KATIE

THIS IS MY FATHER'S TOWN MANSION! We used to come up here every

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year, once or twice a year from the property. All of us. In the buggy with two carts full of luggage. Party dresses, you see! We always had so many parties to go to in town. Oh, I remember the night of my engagement party, right here in this very house. Just like yesterday. Father stood at the top of those stairs in his very best suit, and his gold watch, and he said.... Oh, Father loved me so, I was his favourite. He said so to everyone. He said, "Tonight I am happy to announce the betrothal of my daughter Lillian Lascelles to Edmond Altamont Ambersley" ...on those stairs.

LETTIE

Which stairs?

KATIE

Those! Those right there. I remember it distinctly.

LETTIE

What a way yuh cyan memba and yuh cyaan even memba yuh own name. So weh Missa Ambers deh now? Him lock up inna di room too?

KATIE

Oh, no. We never married. So unfortunate. He suffered from the fits; Father absolutely forbade me to marry him. But I remember that night.... How we danced. We danced...

(KATIE begins to dance, singing.)

*If I married to a Nayga-man
An I lef im for a Chinee man
Nobody's business but mi own
Solomon Grandpa gone a Ecuador
Lef im wife an pickney outa door
Nobody's business but mi own
Nobody's business but mi own...*

LETTIE

Yuh tall heel boot a dig out mi floor. Jus keep yuhself quiet! Big old woman like you.

KATIE

Oh! Look! The lamp! The lamp Aunt Ida gave us. She brought that back from

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London for us. She went on a long long trip to America and on the way she stopped in London—

LETTIE

Is dat right, Miss Katie? Well, mek mi tell yuh someting. Dat lamp is di property of me and me alone: a mi find it, and a mi put it deh, and it belongs to me. Just like dis house, and everyting in it. Engagement party? Nuh try mi patience in yah today. What yuh tink dis is? What yuh tink?

(Produces wrapped and tied legal envelope from her waist.)

DOCUMENTS! DOCUMENTS, MISTRESS FALLEN ANGEL ...
dat say dat dis premises and di contents thereof is di property of me and me alone until death do we part. Ergo and ad hoc. Pursuant unto di same, no renting, leasing or tenanting of dis property shall take place at any time for whatsoever reason, quid pro quo. Yuh understand what mi a seh to yuh, Miss Katie? COME OUTA MI HOUSE!

(LETTIE mutters to herself while KATIE crosses to her room and searches among the papers: she takes out one piece of paper out with her and crosses to LETTIE.)

KATIE

So you can read? Well, since you can read, read this. Read this and tell me what it says....

(LETTIE takes the letter and reads slowly, squinting.)

LETTIE

(Reads.)

“Dear Lillian, I was absolutely delighted to receive your letter telling me that you had at last moved into Father’s house—”

KATIE

See? See what it say there? See? This is my house! My home.

LETTIE

(Continues to read.)

“I am very relieved to know that at last our old home is occupied by a member of our family. We hold such very fond memories of our days there.

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Do you remember when—”

KATIE

You see? This is Father’s house. My father’s house. He wanted me to have it. On his dying bed, he said to me, “Lillian, Lillian...” I was his favourite. He told everybody so... He said, “Lillian, I want you to live in this house...”

LETTIE

Yuh know who Missa Wilson be? Ee? Well, mek mi tell yuh before yuh start dance up, dance up and dig up, dig up mi floor again... Missa Wilson is the lawyer for Miss Iris Washington Delisser. Him been di lawyer fi di Delisser family fi sixty years. First was di father and den di son, and Missa Wilson know dat—

KATIE

Delisser... Delisser. That name is so familiar. Delisser. But the Delissers are from Westmoreland. Westmoreland. Not from Kingston...

LETTIE

Dat is Miss Delisser cousin. When Miss Delisser was alive, God rest her soul, we used to go and spend Easter wid dem a country... di whola fambily a dem... an dem would come a town at Christmas.

KATIE

Of course, she may have rented the house from Father... I was away a long time. Maybe while I was away...

LETTIE

Rent? Rent what? Miss Delisser never rent place inna her life. Facety! And Missa Wilson know dat mi is not supposed to have no tenant whatsoever inna di place... Yuh hear me, Katie? A him a hangle di business fi mi. A him a try fi find Miss Delisser son dat have to be locate before di will cyan settle. No tenant!

KATIE

You have a lawyer?

LETTIE

What? Yuh tink mi cyaan afford lawyer? Tru yuh see mi simple soh? Wah

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mek yuh nuh ask mi how mi cyan have dis house, too? Ee? Wah mek?

KATIE

I was just asking.

LETTIE

ONE DAY! Mi wi give yuh one day. Das all. Mi is not a cruel person, mi not going to tun yuh out jus soh cause yuh nuh look like yuh cyan mind yuhself. One day fi pack up yuh karouchiz, Katie. Mi nuh waan Missa Wilson come find yuh yah.

KATIE

If she had a son, how come she name MISS Delisser? She wasn't married?

LETTIE

Of course she did married.

KATIE

So where is the husband?

LETTIE

Dead.

(Laughs.)

Yuh a try yuh brain pon me, ee? Poor ting. Wipe yuh nose. Mi call her Miss Delisser cause mi used to her. Faithful companion and friend to her for forty-three years. Forty-three years.

KATIE

I must write to Lawrence about this. I must write to him and tell him about this terrible mistake....

LETTIE

And a yuh mek it. Yuh mussy have di wrong address, cause dis house belong to me and me alone. ONE DAY! Yuh hear me, Katie! One day and den mi nuh waan fi see yuh bout di place....

KATIE

I have never taken orders from servants, and I do not intend to start now.

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LETTIE

Servant? Mi look like mi do any servantring to you? Faithful companion and friend, companion and friend. Mind, Katie, mind... nuh get mi rile in yah today, else yuh mighta haffi leave right now.

(LETTIE goes into KATIE's room and starts to knock her things over.)

KATIE

Servant! Stop that, I said!...

(LETTIE nears the suitcase full of letters.)

Weh yuh tink yuh a do? Lef mi tings.... Mi seh fi lef mi tings alone!

LETTIE

Weh yuh a hide in deh! Ee? Weh yuh nuh waan deestant people fi see?

KATIE

Servant! Servant!

LETTIE

Squatter! Squatter!

(They square off, LETTIE and the 2x4 piece of wood obviously with the upper hand. A missile thrown from offstage lands with a loud bang on a piece of zinc. Both women freeze. Another bang is heard.)

KATIE

The boys! Is di boys....

LETTIE

Last time dem tief off every sheet a zinc offa di verandah....

(Another missile drops.)

Me and dem tidday!

(She sets out after them, when KATIE's shouts bring her up short.)

KATIE

WEH YUH WANT? MOVE YUH RASS FROM MI YARD! MOVE YUH TINKING DUTTY RASS OUTA MI YARD AND GO BACK A DI CREVICE YUH CRAWL OUT FROM UNDER! CHINK! MI GO A MADDA SIMPSON

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FI YUH! MADDA SIMPSON BALM YARD: THREE DAY! YUH HAVE THREE DAY FI LIVE IF YUH NUH KIRROUT!

LETTIE

(Disturbed at the mention of Mother Simpson, she begins to finger one of her amulets.)

Madda Simpson? Katie? Katie, hush.

KATIE

(Continues to yell.)

YUH TINK MI FRAID A YUH? EE? YUH TINK MI FRAID A YUH? OLE JAGABAT! GO FEEL UP YUH MUMMA AND LEAVE OLE PEOPLE ALONE!

(The missiles stop. LETTIE stares at KATIE.)

LETTIE

Katie! Hi, man! Yuh nuh know seh white people nuh fi gwaan soh?

(BLACKOUT.)

ACT II: The Fantasies

LIGHTS UP on an empty stage. A few of KATIE's fancy clothes are strewn around the central area. LETTIE enters.

LETTIE

But see yah. Mi tun mi back and she start fi untidy di place again. Katie! Cyan bet not even firewood she get, but she a go waan eat.

(LETTIE enters KATIE's room. Finds a dress and puts it in front of her. Tries on a hat with a piece of net hanging down, tries to look up into the net to see how it looks, likes it. Sits. Tries on a pair of shoes. They don't fit. Tries to force her feet into shoes. Succeeds. Slowly she tries to stand balancing on the high heels while trying to prevent the hat from falling off. When she is fully upright, she strikes a pose and slips off the shoes almost falling, Kicks them

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away. Puts hat in bosom.)

Good.

(She goes into her room and puts down the bags she has been carrying: she fans the fire and adds something to the pot. Looking around to make sure that KATIE is not anywhere in sight, she goes to the table in the centre area, pulls out her sheaf of documents, which has become thicker. Opens them.)

Good God, whole morning mi deh a street and look weh mi come home to. All right, mek she come talk to me now. Di law is on di side a di just dis time. Di law a go see mi right dis time. Affidavid. Writ. Injunction and one, two, tree habeas corpus. Mek she gwaan talk bout Lawrence. Dis time mi a go keep weh rightfully belong to me; weh mi earn from di sweat a mi brow. Mi know di law and di law know me. Sotto voce, vickey versey. Mek a go look firewood yaw...

(LETTIE goes offstage left. KATIE enters through door at centre pushing a battered pram full of old clothes and a variety of other discarded, tattered household items.)

KATIE

*If I married to a Nayga-man
And I lef im for a Chinee man
Nobody's business but mi own
Solomon Grandpa gone a Ecuador
Lef im wife an pickney outa door
Nobody's business but mi own...
Nobody's business business,
Nobody's business business
Nobody's business but mi own.*

(KATIE parks the pram below her room. She sorts through the things, admiring some, discarding others, she hangs a shiny short jacket near the door and beside it a dress with sequins and lace. She wipes her face, goes into her 'superior' pose and, moving towards LETTIE's room, calls.)

KATIE

Servant!

(There is no response and satisfied that LETTIE is out, she enters the room. She finds a store of crackers and eats them all. Still hungry, she tackles the pot. Just

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as she is about to open it, LETTIE arrives.)

LETTIE

What di backside yuh doing in my room? Oh, is food yuh a look. What yuh do today? Not even di front room sweep out? Suppose Missa Wilson come and find di place stay so?

KATIE

(Crossing to the lower level.)

Oh, is Mr. Wilson coming tonight? I'll set an extra place for dinner.

(She sets the table with plastic bags, plastic flowers and implements representing knives and forks and plates that she takes from the pram.)

LETTIE

Yuh could set four thousand different table. When Missa Wilson come, is he and me alone a go eat. Gwaan go eat di dirty dry crackers yuh have hide-up hide-up in yuh room. Who don't put pot on fire, cyaan expect to eat.

KATIE

Ahh! I hear Bishop's carriage coming up the drive. We must stop this squabbling and put on a good show. Oh my! Oh dear! And I am not even dressed. Oh dear! What will they think....

(She picks up the jacket and dress, goes to the door then turns, posing with each garment hanging from her arm.)

Absolutely delighted that you could make it, Bishop. It is such a pleasure to welcome you to my humble abode. You have no idea what this dinner means to me, really you don't. You wouldn't know how absolutely starved I am... for good company.

(LETTIE is watching.)

LETTIE

Yuh a play dolly house again, Katie? But what a way di Lady and di Bishop a visit regular dem last few months, ee? Dem mussy deh!

(KATIE places the jacket at the table opposite the dress. LETTIE goes to her room.)

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KATIE

(As the BISHOP.)

Ah, I see you've got my favourite bourgeois – lay wine to have with dinner tonight.

(As KATIE.)

Oh yes, Bishop. My brother, dear Lawrence, sent it for me, and I thought it would be just right with dinner tonight. Such a wonderful menu, my dears: a little pâté to start, with beef strogonox and cauliflower in gratin, and a little fruit salad and jello for afters. What was that, Bishop?

(KATIE listens to her guests smiling politely from one to the other. LETTIE kisses her teeth.)

KATIE

Oh yes, Lady Strudwick. That ladies workroom sounds like an excellent idea. Excellent. There are so many that would benefit from it. I mean, take poor Lettie there. It just may help to civilize her.

LETTIE

(Shouting from her room.)

Mi a hear yuh, Katie, and mi nuh name no Lettie.

KATIE

Such a faithful soul: but she just has no refinement. No polish. You must wonder why I tolerate her with those ways, but, alas, she depends entirely upon her earnings here to survive. I am at my wits end to know what to do with her...

(She listens, head on one side, nodding as she listens to the Bishop.)

Quite right, my dear Bishop, but what am I to do? I cannot turn her out. I cannot bring myself to be so heartless. It is a terrible situation.

(Calls.)

Lettie! Lettie dear, would you serve the soup now. The Bishop is quite famished and so, I'm sure, is dear Lady Strudwick.

(LETTIE kisses her teeth.)

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KATIE

Lettie! Lettie! You will pardon me, but I must go and see what is holding things up in the kitchen... I gave express orders that dinner was to be ready exactly on time. Good help is so hard to find.

(KATIE goes to LETTIE's room.)

KATIE

Really, Lettie. You have embarrassed me dreadfully in front of my guests. I really must insist that you—

LETTIE

Who tell yuh seh yuh cyan come inna mi room? Mi ever tell yuh seh yuh cyan come in yah? Come out.

KATIE

Really, Lettie, I must insist—

LETTIE

Insist? Insist mi backside! Nuh try mi patience inside yah soh today, Katie. Missa Wilson say him a come yah dis evening. Dis very evening, to see fi himself what a gwaan here.

KATIE

(KATIE crosses to the table.)

There will be a short delay, I'm afraid. Oh, how I long for the good old days. Life was so much simpler then and people knew their place.

Bishop, my dear, dear Bishop, please do not think that I am meddling in any way, but I just have to tell how terribly terribly sorry I am about that business in Clarendon: so good of you to allow that coloured fellow to enter the cemetery... I mean the seminary, and he shows his gratitude by running off with the Governor's wife... Such shame and disgrace! And I hear they have produced a little blackamoor pickaninny.

Quite right, Lady Strudwick. There is no room in society for women like that. So different with you and the Bishop of course, he being a man of the cloth and you almost a widow... God will show her the error of her ways. She will feel his disapproval. And I hear, you know, that the sister is not at all pleased to have her ladyship around. I hear that she insists that she cooks, and

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cleans, and even washes her own clothes. I feel so sorry for her—

LETTIE

Your Eminence, tell Katie seh a soh people fi live. Slavery days done now.

KATIE

Lettie! Lettie! We can wait no longer. Please serve the dinner at once!
Bishop, would you be so kind as to say grace for us?

(KATIE begins to talk in the BISHOP's voice.)

Dear Lord, we give you thanks for the company of good friends, and loved ones. We give you thanks that you have provided food for us this day, no matter how humble it is...

(While praying KATIE crosses to LETTIE's room, circling the pot. KATIE knocks one of LETTIE's objects out of place. LETTIE anxiously goes to replace it.)

LETTIE

Come out a mi room!

KATIE

For you taught us, dear Lord, that it is more blessed to give than to receive....

(KATIE snatches the pot and tries to run with it to the table but LETTIE blocks her path with the 2x4 piece of wood. KATIE manages to get around her and heads for the table LETTIE cuts her off and strikes the table with the 2x4. KATIE reluctantly puts the pot on the table.)

LETTIE

Dolly house mash up, Katie! Mi try fi nice to yuh,
cause mi know yuh not so righted, but mi nuh got di world a patience.

(LETTIE throws the BISHOP and LADY STRUDWICK to the ground. KATIE picks them up.)

LETTIE

A soh yuh tink life go, Katie? Mi feed yuh and clothes yuh and stop people from laugh after yuh when yuh head tek yuh and yuh tek off yuh clothes inna di big big daylight...

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KATIE

I do no such thing! I have never...

LETTIE

In di miggles road in di miggles day! Tek off yuh clothes and walk tru di street like any old harlot—

KATIE

Liar!

LETTIE

Weh yuh really good fah, ee Katie? Yuh cyaan cook, yuh cyaan wash, yuh cyaan do nutten more dan play dolly house... and talk bout weh yuh nuh know bout.

KATIE

I beg your pardon!

LETTIE

Das right. An a try fi talk like yuh a smaddy. Well, mek mi tell yuh someting, Katie, mi nuh fraid a white people. White people nuh come like nutten to me.

KATIE

My dear Bishop, I am so terribly sorry... No, no, please don't leave... Lady Strudwick, I really don't know what came over her...

LETTIE

Tell her yuh see, Bishop, that I have wined and dined in high places. Cyaan even set table good!

(LETTIE throws the contents of the table to the ground and crosses to her room.)

KATIE

My silver. My china. My Worcester china....

(Tries to pick up odd bits and pieces.)

LETTIE

(Salvaging meal.)

Forty-three years as faithful companion and friend to Miss Iris Washington Delisser, a woman of quality, Katie, and she and me travel di four corner

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a di globe togedda. Go a white people country regular.

KATIE

Lady Strudwick will tell everyone.

LETTIE

Di four corners of di globe. I remembers di day dat we first put we foot pon di soil of Italy. From we step off di ship in Rome... Lord, dat was a glorious day... glorious day...

KATIE

(Crosses to LETTIE's room.)

Yuh went to Italy? Italy-Italy?

LETTIE

Yuh know any odder Italy? Dat was where I learned to appreciate art and sculpture – art and sculpture, Katie. Everywhere yuh look, art and sculpture. Di painting dem look so real dat yuh could almost smell them...

KATIE

Mi nuh believe yuh.

LETTIE

God believe me. Thunder roll an bruk mi neck. Yuh wouldn know what it is like to walk inna di Vatican and talk to di Pope himself, di Pope himself. And is not any and anybody cyan talk to him, yuh know, cause dem nuh like black people fi talk to him.

KATIE

So how you manage talk to him then?

LETTIE

Miss Delisser... she just look pon di guard and she say to dem, "Sirs, you mus let dis woman talk to di Pope for I is Iris Washington Delisser and dis is my faithful companion and friend, Christina Christie nee Williams. She is not Black. She is Spanish." And swoops! Dem jus step aside...

KATIE

So what him look like?

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LETTIE

Tall and dark and... holy. Miss Delisser she say to me, "Christie," she say, "you has been a good and faithful companion to me, and I wants you to be by my side as I travels di world." One time we did go pon one long trip to Merica. Months and months we was dere. We spend time a London, a New York. All over Merica. We go a some show deh yuh see... Miss Delisser she just love go a show... Mi see some people sing till dem neck string look like it a go pop, and everybody stand up and shout after dem "Bravo, Bravo!" Dat mean dat dem sing good.

KATIE

So yuh really travel and see tings?

LETTIE

If? Miss Delisser see some a dem fancy house over deh and she decide seh she nah rest until she mek her house as fine as di one weh she see. Dat was a work. Hundreds upon hundreds a workman just round di place everyday... Every week we down a di wharf fi collect materials... Miss Delisser she couldn tek di confusion and she go a country fi rest off, lef mi fi see to di work. Mi know every nook and cranny of dis house, every stone and piece a wood weh build it.

KATIE

So is tru Miss Delisser and di travels mek yuh cook so good?

LETTIE

When mi go a Italy, is pure restaurant food mi eat. Dis soup name Italian Gungo pepperpot. Miss Delisser nuh believe inna nutten else but restaurant food when she travel.

KATIE

Wah else yuh eat a Italy, Lettie?

LETTIE

Everyting, everyting... I eat a curry goat deh yuh see, all the bone dem shine when mi done. Miss Delisser say she never eat green banana sof so yet. Tablecloth pon di table and bout tree knife and two fork round di plate... Here, tek dem yah.

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(She hands her two plates.)

Mi a go show you how di place deh really run.

(She seats herself at the table.)

Now, first of all, dem bring yuh likkle soup fi sekkle off yuh stomach. So serve di soup nuh.... No man, das not how!

(KATIE mimes the serving of the soup.)

Yuh bring di bowl from di left hand side and slide it in so dat it nuh bounce dem inna dem face... Das right.... Alright now. When dem done di soup, den dem brings in di meal. But it nuh jus come soh yuh know, dem haffi serve it likkle-likkle.... First di meat, and den di rice and den di vegetable.... No, not like dat!

(LETTIE begins to get angry: her dealings with KATIE take on a suppressed violence that make KATIE unwillingly keep on with the pretence, looking for a way to defuse it.)

Yuh don't have no sense. Clumsy girl! NO, take dat away. I cyaan eat dat again. Go and get me someting else! I said, I wanted someting else! You're late, too. Stupid girl... STUPID AND IGNORANT!

KATIE

How yuh hangle mi soh an mi a try mi bes?

LETTIE

Your best is not good enough.

(Pause.)

Mi nuh fraid a white people. A-ho! Mi daughter faada is white man. She a study a foreign an a him a pay fi it. Mi could a marry to him too but is ongle tru Miss Delisser did poorly an mi couldn lef her.

KATIE

Is that the thanks I get for letting you live in my house? Is this how you treat me because I am a little out of pocket at the moment? You should be ashamed, Lettie. You know that as soon as the will is probated I will gladly pay you all that is owed to you, although I must say that I am hardly satisfied with the quality of service you offer.

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LETTIE

Offer? Since when mi offer yuh anyting? A yuh bring yuhself inna mi house and tru mi foolish kind heart mi give yuh likkle comfort and food. Now yuh feel seh smaddy owe yuh sinting. Go look food, if yuh hungry. Go find di likkle dry crackers yuh love fi hide inna yuh room and eat. Yuh tink mi nuh know dat yuh hide inna yuh room like any old mus-mus and nyam dry biscuit a day time?

KATIE

I have a delicate constitution. I cannot eat too much rich food.

LETTIE

Yuh mean, yuh nuh even know how fi ketch up likkle fire, much less boil water.

KATIE

You are a cruel, cruel woman—

LETTIE

And yuh is a old tief. Mi gawn go eat mi dinner, and mi nuh waan fi see yuh round mi door.

(LETTIE goes into her room and begins to eat her soup. KATIE waits outside her door.)

LETTIE

Wipe yuh nose, Katie.

(KATIE suddenly turns and goes to her room, returning with pen and paper. She sits down at the table to write.)

KATIE

“Dear Lawrence, I write to you today in the deepest distress. A terrible situation has arisen here at Father’s house.”

(LETTIE ignores her and continues eating for a while.)

KATIE

“The house has fallen into the most terrible disrepair and a vagrant woman – an out and out virago – has taken it up. Although I have tried as a true

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Christian to find a solution to the situation, I cannot bear it any longer. Oh, Lawrence, how are the mighty fallen when I must take the abuse of this common woman.

(LETTIE responds by pulling out her bundle of documents, finding the will and beginning to read it.)

KATIE

“She plagues my life day and night, and I cannot live like this any longer. Lawrence, if you love your sister, I beg you to have the will probated post haste so that I may remove this dreadful creature from our home.”

LETTIE

“I, Iris Washington Delisser, being of sound mind do hereby will and bequeath the premises located at number seven Princess Street to my faithful friend and companion of forty-three years, Christine Christie nee Williams, the same to be the sole property of said person hereafter to be referred to as the Inheritor, sine die.

LETTIE

“ERGO I HERETOFORE
AND FORTHWITH DECLARE
THAT SHE AND SHE ALONE
SHALL BE RESIDENT AT SAID
PREMISES AND THAT SHE
SHALL NEVER RENT LEASE
NOR IN ANY WAY TENANT
OUT THE PROPERTY TO
ANYONE.”

KATIE

“YOU ARE THE ONLY HOPE I
HAVE TO MAKING SURE THAT
OUR HOME IS NOT TOTALLY
DESTROYED BY THIS VIRAGO.
I WISH TO BRING THE FULL
WEIGHT OF THE LAW TO
BEAR AGAINST HER, AND I
MUST DO SO PROMPTLY FOR
THE SAKE OF MY HEALTH.”

(A barrage of missiles interrupts the contest between the two. As one they come together to face the direction from which the missiles have come.)

KATIE

Those damn boys!

LETTIE

Weh mi piece of wood deh? Katie, weh it deh?!

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(KATIE goes for the 2x4 piece of wood.)

LETTIE

Mi and dem in yah tidday!

(LETTIE exits and can be heard off stage battling the boys: KATIE enters LETTIE'S room, uncovers the pot of food, and is about to swallow her first mouthful when LETTIE re-enters.)

LETTIE

Coo pon yuh face! Like a mongoose. Who teach yuh fi tief? Lawrence?

(She puts out her hand to demand the pot. KATIE, after a small defiance, hands it to her badly, so it drops.)

Bitch!

ACT III: The Truth

LIGHTS up. KATIE awakens coughing. She crosses to LETTIE'S room, discovers LETTIE is not there. She enters and takes the lid off the pot. It is empty. She spits in the pot and covers it. She searches LETTIE'S room, finds a small box and opens it. She takes out a piece of paper rolled up like a small scroll and tied with a red ribbon. She opens it and reads it to herself.

KATIE

A-hah! Ah ketch yuh now!

(She puts the paper in her bosom. She crosses to her room, finds a piece of paper and a pencil. She sits at the table in the central area and writes. She puts the letter in an envelope.)

“To: Miss Leticia, number seven Princess Street, Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies. By Hand.”

(Enters LETTIE'S room. Places letter in a prominent place. Dismantles LETTIE'S room and stacks LETTIE'S things in the middle of her room. Satisfied she crosses to her room, takes out some of her finery. Humming, she decorates the central area as if for a party.)

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LETTIE

(Off.)

Katie! Mi seh, Katie! Come yah! Mi seh, come yah, man! Look weh dem bwoy do now.... Katie? Mi know yuh a hear me....

(KATIE crosses to her room. LETTIE enters.)

But Jesus Christ, if yuh ever see mi trials! A weh dis madwoman really tink she a do? Katie, a who-fa sinting dem yuh tief? How much time mi fi tell yuh dat yuh cyaan jus tek up people tings like dat? Dem will beat yuh kill yuh! And yuh nuh even tek anyting sensible neither.

Katie! Katie!!

All day mi deh a look bout mi business. From supreme court to Missa Wilson office back to court: hours upon hours ah sitting inna di court a hear case a try, ah listen to weh di judge a say, and now mi come back to dis. Is not any and anybody dem let go inna supreme court.

KATIE

Smaddy bring letter fi yuh.

LETTIE

Letter?

KATIE

A man.

LETTIE

Missa Wilson?

KATIE

Him nuh tell mi him name. Him just ask if dis is where Miss Leticia live and mi say yes and show him di room and him go in deh and dat is all mi know.

(LETTIE goes to her room. Pulls up short at the sight of her things packed up in the middle of the room.)

LETTIE

Who trouble mi tings? Katie....

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KATIE

I don't know. Ongle di man go in there.

LETTIE

Mi nuh see no letter.

KATIE

It in deh, man. Look good.

(She comes over and shows it to LETTIE.)

See it deh!

(LETTIE is totally distressed at the sight of the letter. She begins to sing a hymn, holding her cross to herself. She walks around it, and finally uses the cross to pick it up and carry it out to the central area where KATIE is sitting pretending to read a letter from Lawrence. She drops it in front of KATIE.)

KATIE

This is nothing to do with me.

LETTIE

Smaddy write mi.

KATIE

You want me to read it to you?

(LETTIE nods.)

KATIE

“Dear Leticia, This serves to warn you that you are at present illegally occupying premises at number seven Princess Street. You are herewith notified that you must vacate the premises immediately. Failure to comply will mean that I shall have to place the matter in the hands of the police. Lawrence Lascelles...” Lawrence! Lawrence write at last. I told you, I told you he would help me. My brother loves me. I knew it, I knew when I saw that man coming into the yard on the horse. I knew that it was....

LETTIE

Horse, Katie? A police or a soldier?

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KATIE

The bearer.

LETTIE

But, Katie, bearer nuh ride horse.

KATIE

It wasn't really a horse.... It.... it was a mule.

LETTIE

Mule?

KATIE

Yes, a fair man... not as fair as me, but fair... on a white mule.

LETTIE

A who yuh tek fi idiot, Katie? A you write di letter an put it in deh. But affidavid inna yuh carahu. See it yah! Affidavid an writ!

KATIE

Remember I have papers, too, you know... Real papers, not like that rubbish... The bearer brought the title to the place for me today. He left it when he brought your letter...

LETTIE

Is dat a fact? Mek I see it.

(LETTIE enters KATIE's room.)

KATIE

I don't have to show it to yuh. Is none of yuh business.

(LETTIE searches KATIE's suitcase, room, box, etc. She picks up a handful papers and reads them one by one.)

LETTIE

"Dear Lawrence. Dear Lawrence."

(She throws them away and takes up another set.)

"Dear Lawrence, Dear Lawrence, Dear Lawrence." Old liard. Is inna di old grip deh yuh post all a yuh letter dem?

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(She continues searching.)

KATIE

No! No! Stop it.

(LETTIE sits and searches. Katie singing Blake's hymn "Jerusalem", crosses centre, grabs the BISHOP, climbs on a chair holding BISHOP in front of her. Her voice changes to that of the BISHOP.)

*And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?
And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic Mills?
Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!
I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.*

Dearly beloved, we are gathered together to settle a very grave matter. It is written in Isaiah 3, verse 13 that the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous but the way of the ungodly shall perish. We can forgive all, but not those who pretend to a station not rightfully theirs. And such a sinner is Leticia. Brothers, we might have forgiven her the sinful act which brought forth the bastard child MARIE.

(LETTIE immediately crosses to her room. Searches. Discovers empty box.)

She was not content with that, but spread false rumours and sullied the reputation of an upstanding member of the community.

(LETTIE crosses to KATIE and pulls her off chair.)

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LETTIE

Gimme mi things!

(LETTIE tries to search KATIE. They struggle.)

KATIE

(KATIE frees herself and picks up LADY STRUDWICK and speaks in her voice.)

After all, if one has a bastard pickaninny... one should own to one's own failings.

LETTIE

(Crossing to Katie's room and searches again.)

Tek har into mi house, feed har, clothes har an she tun pon mi like a viper, a serpent inna mi breast.

KATIE

(Follows Lettie taunting her.)

My dear Lady Strudwick, if the mother is nothing but a liar, it is surely not the child's fault.

LETTIE

Weh it deh? Weh it deh? Weh yuh put it?

(LETTIE finds a tin box carefully hidden under a floorboard. She opens it. She scans each piece of paper she finds and scatters them as she finishes.)

KATIE

Stop it! Gimme mi tings. Mi seh fi gimme dem.

(She tries frantically to pick them up.)

Mi letters! Mi letters from Lawrence!

LETTIE

Weh yuh write yuhself, yuh mean. Tief! Harlot! Whore! Weh mi tings deh!?

(They fight over the letters. KATIE retrieves one particular letter and tries to keep it from LETTIE. LETTIE takes it away from her, thinking it is the birth certificate. She sets off back to her room with it, with KATIE right behind her.)

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KATIE

Das mine! Mine!

(Tries to grab it but LETTIE holds her off.)

No. Yuh cyaan read it! Cyaan read it!

LETTIE

Watch me.

(LETTIE opens the letter and realizes it's not the birth certificate. Reads aloud.)

“Dear Lillian...”

KATIE

No. Do. I beg yuh. Nuh read it, Christie, I beg yuh. Do...

(Weeps.)

...do.

LETTIE

(Reads.)

“Dear Lillian. This will be my last letter to you. When you decided to run away with Altamont, that Negro, you knew that you were disgracing your family. You chose to run away and live on the beach with him. You chose to disgrace us and not to marry Mr. Smythe, as Papa had arranged. Why should we help you now? I wish I could say that I am sorry that your child is dead, but the reality is, Lillian, he was never too long for this world. God sent you that idiot child as punishment for what you did. You have always been selfish and headstrong, and now at last you are reaping the whirlwind. Please do not write to me again, as, as far as I am concerned, my sister Lillian is dead. She is dead to me. I suggest that you try and make your peace with God for what you have done. Your brother, Lawrence.”

(KATIE weeps. LETTIE pauses after she finishes reading the letter, stunned.)

LETTIE

It date nineteen fifty-four, Katie. More dan thirty year ago. Hush, Katie. Done di cow bawling now. Hush. Old woman nuh suppose fi bawl soh.

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KATIE

Mi did know. Mi did know dat dis woulda happen. Everyting bad happen to me.... Madda Simpson tell me so, and a true. Poor me.

LETTIE

(Backing off.)

You really know Madda Simpson, Katie?

KATIE

Das what di dream did mean, only mi never did understand. From mi come a dis old house, and start fi dream....

LETTIE

Yuh see a next vision?

(She goes and gets her cross, two pieces of wood tied together.)

KATIE

Mi was in di balm yard, Madda Simpson balm yard... Mi walk pass di flowers pot dem, and di big bowl a water she have inna di yard... and mi see one woman a tan up inna di corner, inna di shadow a watch me....

LETTIE

Nuh tell mi, Katie, mi nuh waan to hear bout no vision, Katie.

KATIE

Was you, Lettie. Was you a stand up deh a watch me... and mi look down and see seh mi a stand up side a one grave, one big old grave, with a little tiny baby inna di bottom... and di baby was dead.

LETTIE

Mi daughter. Mi likkle baby daughter—

KATIE

...And yuh tan up deh a watch me... same time mi just feel like sinting a crawl pon mi skin, a crawl and was worm, Lettie, worm and chink and lice just a crawl pon me as mi look dung inna mi own grave—

LETTIE

No. Katie, no. Do, mi a beg yuh. Do. Nuh talk bout no more vision. Nuh

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vision mi, Katie.

KATIE

Yuh want back di birth certificate?

(KATIE finds the birth certificate and offers it to LETTIE.)

LETTIE

Where you going? Nuh leave me, Katie.

(LETTIE follows her to her room, so close to her that they are practically falling over one another.)

KATIE

You nuh want it?

LETTIE

Nuh vision mi again, Katie. Nuh vision me.

KATIE

(Trying to soothe her.)

So where she is now, Lettie?

LETTIE

Mi nuh know. Mi nuh see her from likkle after she born. Yuh see mi did know Miss Delisser from mi a likkle pickney when she used to come dung a Manchester every August fi change of air. An she tek me as school girl fi learn domestic, but mi find miself haffi a mind goat, four goat, includin one Billy... Mi used to go out a pasture wid dem, watch dem mek sure dem nuh stray. One day... one day, mi find some shade and sit down and when mi look up... him did look so tall, Katie. And like him would clout me, kill me...

KATIE

Who?

LETTIE

Missa Gordon... Missa Gordon, Miss Delisser headman pon di property. Him tan up deh in front a me. Tell me howdie, ask how mi is... and look pon me, look pon me like him never see me before. When mi step off fi go look pon di goat, him hold onto mi hand, Katie. Him hand dem was hot and sweaty-

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

sweaty. Him hold me, and when mi try fi mek him let me go, him grab me... him grab me... and... him say him would kill mi if mi talk.

When Miss Delisser find out, she beat me, use whip and beat me, tell me dat mi disgrace her. She lef me dung a country an a Mama haffi go beg fi me mek she tek mi back. When mi come a town mi decide fi see if mi coulda set up miself an send fi mi daughter but Miss Delisser get sick and every year she nigh unto death. Every year she promise mi di house an from she sick is twenty-three years she linger an wouldn't dead, di wicked ole bitch. Mi was going to send fi her yuh know, but not even weekend Miss Delisser woulda gi mi fi go a country, an when mi do get fi go, Mama done gi weh Marie an mi couldn't find har.

(KATIE moves back to the clothes she has stolen and picks them up, folding them. LETTIE follows her.)

Yuh go live a beach wid man, Katie?

KATIE

(Silent.)

LETTIE

Altamont. Don't dat was him name? An yuh have one likkle idiot pickney, too. Him head did pointed or it did swell? Mi see a pickney like dat one time, dem seh im have water pon him brains and—

KATIE

Idiot can be loving.

LETTIE

Yuh did love him, Katie? Ee? Even though him was a baffan?

KATIE

He was not a baffan... He was just simple. Simple. Das wah mi did try fi tell her, but she wouldn't listen....

LETTIE

Who?

KATIE

Altamont sister. She did hate me.

Fallen Angel & the Devil Concubine

LETTIE

Weh dem deh now, Katie?

KATIE

Dead. All a dem. Dead.

LETTIE

Den yuh did love him, Katie? Yuh did love Altamont?

KATIE

From mi born mi did know Altamont. More dan mi owna fambily. When di bwoy dem gone a school, wi used to play pon di beach... All moonlight night, when di crab dem a run... Was a moonlight night, dat night. Moonlight when mi climb out di window and run go meet Altamont a riverside. Him did look so fine inna di moonlight, handsome, like a Prince. When him touch me, was like fire....

LETTIE

Den him did really black, Katie?

KATIE

Not to dat... more brown. Papa did want me to married to Missa Smythe... one ole man. Him stink a rum. Mek mi stomach sick when mi smell it, and him always a try fi touch-touch me, even when Papa looking...

One night... one night after mi did go live wid Altamont, Papa come fi me. Him and Lawrence and di man dem. A she tell him which part wi deh because she want mi fi lef Altamont. Mi did see di bottle torch come cross di beach, and mi hear dem a shout, "Altamont!" Dem was going kill him. Mi run out fi beg dem... and das when Papa see di belly... tell me dat mi gone too far inna sin and wickedness fi God ever forgive me. An das what mek mi son come soh. Cause Papa tell God fi curse me.

But mi try. God see and know dat mi try. But when Altamont go a sea an all tree weeks later him nuh come back, what mi could do? Mi never did know dat di fever woulda tek mi son. And she seh she never have no money fi carry him to no doctor. She did name Lettie too.

LETTIE

How much time mi fi tell yuh seh mi nuh name Lettie?

3 JAMAICAN PLAYS

KATIE

If mi did have a house, if mi did live somewhere, mi woulda show Lawrence seh mi a smaddy too, dat him cyaan treat me soh—

LETTIE

If mi did have house, mi woulda bring mi daughter come live wid me, di two a we togedda fi mi old age.

KATIE

Mi never tell nobody bout Altamont, Lettie. Yuh nuh fi tell nobody, not a soul.

LETTIE

Who yuh tink woulda waan know? Yuh was just anodder young gal weh mek pretty bwoy tun yuh inna idiot.

KATIE

Fallen angel an di devil concubine. Yuh tink God figot bout we, Christie?

LETTIE

At fi wi age, Lilly, we soon find out.

(The two of them sit back to back lost in their own thoughts. Noises off bring both up, LETTIE grabs her stick, she offers the other piece that made up her cross to KATIE who takes it. They set off, each crossing to one side of the stage. Noises off suggest battle in progress. LETTIE returns. Then KATIE. They meet in the middle of the stage.)

LETTIE

Cho! All dem did waan is somebody fi give dem two rass lick.

KATIE

Mek dem come. We an dem!

LETTIE

We an dem.

(They sit.)

THE END

Glossary

This glossary contains Jamaican words and English words with non-standard usages as they appear in the text. The spellings and interpretation owe a great deal to the *Dictionary of Jamaican English* edited by F.G. Cassidy and R.B. Le Page, to Mervyn Morris' work on the language in *Louise Bennett: Selected Poems*, and to Olive Senior's *Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage*.

A

a is, be, am, are, it is, there are, to, of, in, at

ah I

an and

anything anything

anyweh anywhere

B

baby-faada man with whom a woman has had a child, not necessarily a partner, opposite of **baby-madda**

baby-madda woman with whom a man has had a child, not necessarily a partner, opposite of **baby-faada**

baffan children who cannot walk or talk in their first 2–7 years; a clumsy, useless person

balm yard a headquarters and ritual site, where herbal and other remedies are administered.

Worship takes place there, accompanied by drumming and dances of which possession/trances are an integral part.

batty backside, bottom

batty-man, batty-bwoy male homosexual

bloodclaat (see **claat**)

bodder bother

bredda brother

breed to make or be pregnant

bruck break

bruckins a lively vigorous dance; a specific dance form from eastern Jamaica associated with a ritual play commemorating Emancipation; also called bruckins party

buru African dance associated with Rastafari, masquerade and Jonkannu found mainly in the parishes of Clarendon and St. Catherine. Buru drums are called funde, bass and repeater. The repeater plays the variations while the Funde provides core rhythm.

buss burst

Busta see **Bustamante**

Bustamante Sir Alexander Bustamante, labour leader in the anticolonial struggle of the 1930s. Later Chief Minister and first Prime Minister of Jamaica, national hero, founder of the Jamaica Labour

Party and the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union

bwoy boy

C

check pass by, contact, indicate sexual interest in another

Chinee Chinese

cho interjection of anger, impatience, disappointment

chree three

claat cloth, in language of abuse usually refers to women's sanitary towel, also often coupled with reference to women's vagina (e.g. pussyclaat, bloodclaat)

coo look

couldn could not

crabbit cruel; rough; grasping; greedy

crash programme (Impact Programme) A special make-work programme which provided jobs for many unemployed people, the majority of whom were women, during the Democratic Socialist Government of the PNP in the 1970s.

crocus burlap, sacking,

Glossary

crocus bag, burlap bag
cuss quarrel, curse
cutlass machete
cyaan can't
cyan can

D

dan than
das that is, that's
dat that
days work part-time work, paid for by the day, often used to refer to paid domestic work or work in the household
deestant decent
deggae-deggae little bit of, small, only
deh pon to be on or about
deh there
deh wid to have a regular sexual relationship with another person, to be in a sexual partnership with another
deh-deh was there, was over there, were there, is there, are there
deh-soh there
dem them, also used to indicate plural (e.g. **di key dem** the keys)
den then
dere there
di the
dis this
dis-yah this one
drape arrest
dread see Rastafarian
ducks zero, no score
duppy ghost
dutty dirty

E

ee corresponds to English 'eh' asking for repetition of

statement, or agreement
everything everything

F

faada father
facety rude, impertinent
fah for
fassi-fassi sores on the skin
favour to resemble
fenky-fenky weak, puny, cowardly, effeminate
fi for, to
fi-him his
fi-mi mine
fi-wi ours
fi-yuh yours
fraid afraid
Funde a small drum used in Rasta and Buru ceremony and dance

G

gainst against
gal girl
ganja marijuana
GCE General Certificate of Education is a secondary-level academic qualification that examination boards in the United Kingdom and some of the commonwealth countries confer on students.
gi give
gimme give me
grip suitcase
gwan, gwaan go on
gweh go away
gwine going to

H

ha have
haffi have to
hangle handle
har her

higgler seller of small produce or goods, formerly itinerant but now also one who sells in a market or on the roadside
him his, her, he, she

I

inna in
I-and-I I, me, my, me and my

J

jagabat dirty, ragged, shabby, bad person
Jamaica Labour Party conservative political party founded by Alexander Bustamante in 1943
jinal trickster
jinalship trick
JLP see Jamaica Labour Party
John Crow local name for the common Jamaican vulture, or Turkey Vulture
Jonkonnu African-Jamaican masquerade celebration, normally during Christmas holidays
jook stab, stick, poke, prod
Jubilee Victoria Jubilee Hospital in Kingston – maternity hospital

K

karouchiz things of little value, rubbish
KC Kingston College, high school for boys
ketch catch
kirrout clear out

L

lamps fool up, deceive
lef leave, left
leggo let go

Glossary

liard liar

lick hit, beat, strike; to lick down, to hit to the ground

likkle little, small

low allow, let someone have their own way

M

machete cutlass

madda mother

Manley, Norman

Washington National Hero and founder of the People's National Party, leader of the anticolonial struggle, Queen's Counsel and Premier of Jamaica and advocate of socialism by reform.

massa mister, master

mawga meagre, thin

mek make

memba remember

mi I, me, my

miggle middle

missa mister

missis mistress

mongoose furry mammal with long tail, eats snakes, chickens etc

mongst amongst

MP Member of Parliament

mumma mother

mus must

mus-mus mouse

mussn must not

mussy must have, must be

N

nah not

nayga-man Black man

nuh not, an, is, are not, please, won't you

nutten nothing, anything

nyam eat

O

obeah the process by which spiritual energies are invoked through particular practices. It is usually involves intervention in evil and is to be distinguished from *myal* which is a curative or healing practice. Both draw on similar methods. Obeah is usually "worked" for personal protection or to produce an effect on another. Its origins are a mixture of African traditions but probably mainly Twi.

odder other

offa off of

ole old

ongle only

owna own

P

People's National Party

Nationalist political party founded in 1938 by N.W. Manley and others. From 1972-80 the party, led by Michael Manley, formed the government of Jamaica and pursued a policy called Democratic Socialism.

PNP *see* People's National Party

pon at, upon, on

puppa father

pure only, nothing but

R

rahtid a mild expletive

ranking man who achieves status in a working class community, through

community defence, gang leadership, hustling or violence

ranks *see* ranking

rass the buttocks, often used in a exclamatory way to show strong opposition, scorn, anger, impatience. It is considered very vulgar.

Rasta Rastafarian. A member of a religious group developed in the 1930s which takes Ras Tafari, Haile Selassie, the former Emperor of Ethiopia, as a deity. Herb smoking (smoking of marijuana) is a religious rite among Rastafari.

renk stink

run chase; to chase out

S

seh say, that

session party, dance

set *see* tek set

set up start up, get a start, organise

sinting something

slackness indiscipline, sexual wrongdoings

smaddy somebody

soh thus, emphasises

adverb of places, e.g. **deh-soh, yah-soh**

spar friend, sparring partner

T

tan stand

tek set to follow around, to irritate

tek take

tidday today

tief thief

tikya take care, mind

Glossary

tink think
togedda together
tree three
tru because, because of, since
trust to buy on credit
tun turn

U

unu you (plural)

W

waan want
wah what

weh which, what, whatever, where
wi we; will
wid with
wiself ourselves
wouldn would not

Y

yah here
yeye eye
yaw you hear
yuh you, yours
yuhself yourself

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