

Untitled Braiding Play
by
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To my Auntie Vette.

CHARACTERS:

INDIA (18): A fiercely talented braider, brownskin, and is still plagued by an adolescent shyness. She runs a braiding salon out of her living room. Cancer.

MARY (18): Average braider, lightskin, boisterous and well dressed. India's childhood friend and business partner. Virgo.

JO (18): An old classmate of India & Mary. She's a masculine -of-center identifying lesbian. Taurus.

AUNTIE VETTE (50s): India's deceased aunt and master braider. Gemini. She also appears as ALIVE AUNTIE VETTE.

THE MUSES -

Loni: 50s, classy auntie Mary J Blige type.

Cora: 30s, young mom, real estate agent.

Keysha: 20s, nail technician.

Majandra: 60s, an ex-Panther, OG hotep.

Vanessa: 20s, on her spiritual shit.

AMIR (26): Went to the same highschool as India and Mary. Handsome, cocky, and probably a little gay. Mentioned but never seen. Never seen but his presence is heavy. Scorpio.

TIME:

The present.

SETTING:

West Philadelphia. A cluttered Livingroom. The block.

NOTE ON SYNTAX:

Punctuation is very weird in this play. Sometimes it's where it should be, most of the time it's not, and sometimes it's not there at all. More than indicating the end of a thought I'm experimenting with the rhythm in which I want something to be read.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

It's the grand opening of the salon.

Everyone one is there. India, Mary, The Muses.

These are the only characters that will be shown, but there is a sense that more are coming, and more were there earlier. It's like this living room is a stop during a block party. The door is open.

There is a small table that's been put up in the middle of the room. It's covered in an orange table cloth and has sample sizes of different body butters, leave in conditioner, essential oil mists, etc.

There is a banner strewn along the wall behind the sofa that reads: Kreative Kontemporary Braidz Grand Opening!

Everyone is chatting away.

Mary is working the room while India enters from the dining room carrying a plate of cheese & crackers.

INDIA

Cheese plate! Cheese plate!

Mary gets up and starts to chant with her.

MARY

Cheese plate!! Cheese plate!! Cheese plate!

INDIA

Cheese plate cheese plate cheese plate!

She places it on the table.

LONI

Thank you girls.

MARY

Anytime.

INDIA

How's everyone doing out here?

THE MUSES

Oh good / Yeah we good / Just talking you know chillin / My feet hurt / Is anybody getting their hair done today or we just talking?

INDIA

Yes! Right. Uhh, yeah. I mean anyone wanna, like if you wanna just come on-

MARY

Yes. What she means is yes.

She clears her throat and walks over to the salon chair.
She rests on it.

MARY

We only have room today for two more walk-ins, but please feel free to stay and chat!
We wanted to curate an event that showed the community our core values.

KEYSHIA

Okay Little Miss Professional.

LONI

Little Miss Entrepreneur.

MAJANDRA

Little Miss Bright Light.

CORA

Little Miss Jack & Jill.

MARY

Stopppp.....Thank y'all really. I always wanted to be in business.

CORA

Well it suits you.

MAJANDRA

It suits *both* of you.

CORA

Right. Yes.

INDIA

Thank you. Would anyone like to go first?

Vanessa shoots her hand up.

VANESSA

I got a job interview tomorrow and my mom told me I can't come in looking like Nefertiti. Can you do a press & curl?

INDIA

Uh, yeah, well-

MARY

(snickering)

Ok civil rights-

The muses crack up too. India lightly hits Mary.

MAJANDRA

Come on y'all, come on! Not funny!!!!!!

VANESSA

Listen I gotta play the game. How else are they gonna want me at a Talbots?

INDIA

Daaaaammnnnn that's the white grandma outlet.

VANESSA

Believe me it was my last option. All the crystal shops are Irish family owned.

INDIA

I hear that.

Vanessa gets comfortable in the chair.

VANESSA

Do I get a discount if I'm gonna wash this out tomorrow?

INDIA

What?? You better take care of my work.

VANESSA

I'm talking hypothetically.

MAJANDRA

Mary you think you can take me?

MARY

Sure what you need?

MAJANDRA

Just a retwist.

MARY

Sure. Retwist what?

CORA

Oh she's funny!!!

MAJANDRA

Uh no not to me.

MARY

No hahahaha no see I am kidding. Retwist your dreads yes right.

MAJANDRA

Well they're anything *but* Dreadful. They're locs. But yes.

Mary goes to the second chair. Majandra s l o w l y walks over. There should be improvised chatter as she does this, but it should take a comically long time.

She finally sits down. Mary gets to work.

First she wets her locs TOO MUCH.

She gets a bottle of oil, pours too much of it into her hands, and goes to work. Majandra looks uncomfortable the entire time.

MAJANDRA

Ouch ouch ouch!

MARY

Whoops sorry!!

MAJANDRA

You're good child just be careful be easy.

MARY

Will do.

India starts to section Vanessa's hair. She's getting frustrated.

INDIA

I don't have enough time to do a press & curl and besides this is a braiding salon.

VANESSA

How about some dutch braids?

INDIA

I mean. Alright.

VANESSA

I just need to look approachable.

India begins to braid Vanessa's hair.

MAJANDRA

Ouch ouch ouch youch-

INDIA

You good over there Mary?

MARY

Yeah I'm good.

INDIA

Alright. Just let me know-

I'm. Good.

MARY

India nods.

The following conversation between India and Vanessa should always be louder than the conversation between Mary and Majandra.

[AN: I'm going to attempt having two conversations at once. This may not work. Lines should be read vertically as two columns. Each column is its own conversation. The lines should ping-pong between characters, and not said at the exact same time, but staggered.]

VANESSA

India I did a reading for you the other day.
You were on my mind.

MARY

Miss Majandra, can you tell me a story
from when you were younger?

INDIA

Oh yeah?

MAJANDRA

What, to distract me from the pain?

VANESSA

You popped into my head like that! And I
thought damn I better send ole girl some
energy.

MARY

No because I'm curious. I want to learn
from my elders. You are living history.

INDIA

Well what did it say?

MAJANDRA

Right. Nowwww you wanna respect me.
Uh-huh. Well. I used to be on some crazy
shit back in the day. Oooo. The 70s.

VANESSA

The star came up. You're tapping into
your truest potential.

MARY

You ever meet Andy Warhol?

INDIA

And what is my potential.

MAJANDRA

Who the hell is that?

VANESSA

You want out. You want something bigger.

MARY

Nevermind.

INDIA

Well duh.

MAJANDRA

You can't ask me a question ask me bout myself then say nevermind you kids are so ruuddeeeeee what about some follow through huh? Since you asked I'm GOOD.

VANESSA

No but it's bigger than that, it's like a cosmic calling. Like you're too big for Philly. You're a giant India.

MARY

Good like God.

INDIA

Well I feel tiny.

MAJANDRA

I know that's right.

VANESSA

And you're an empath. You really feel the feels of the people around you.

MARY

So you don't have any stories for me?

INDIA

You really believe in all this stuff?

MAJANDRA

You all really kept all of Vette's stuff, huh?

VANESSA

I was called to it mamas.

MARY

Yeah. India couldn't get rid of it, you know. Couldn't stand to.

INDIA

I do feel everything. I'm a sponge.

MAJANDRA

Well that's good. Keep her alive. She was more alive than anyone I've ever met.

Their conversations dwindle to an improvised murmur.

There is a windchime sound cue. Through the door enters JO, an old classmate of India and Mary. She's wearing a bucket hat, an oversized t-shirt, and bermuda shorts.

Mary sees her first. Jo motions for her to "sshhhh" and walks up behind India.

JO

Hey!

INDIA

OH. HI.

JO

It's been a minute.

MARY

Yeah like literally-

INDIA

It has yeah hahahaha it has.

She's startled. She drops whatever comb, gel, rag, was in her hands and dries her palms on her pants leg.

INDIA

What are you doing here?

VANESSA

So we're stopping now?

INDIA

What? Oh! Right.

She goes back to work on Vanessa's hair. Jo laughs.

JO

I had to pop out for y'all's opening.

She flips the brim of her hat up and takes in her surroundings.

JO

Woouooooooooowww. The place looks great. Has it always looked like this?

INDIA

It used to be so unorganized. Hair here a foot spa there. Just random shit.

JO

Right well. It looks good.

Mary takes a comb and pricks Jo in the back.

JO

Um. Ow.

MARY

I'm here too.

JO

Hi Mary.

MAJANDRA

Uh I'm here too you don't hear me bitchin and moanin and carrying on. How's that retwist going?

MARY

Good. You'll see when it's done.

MAJANDRA

Well be careful cause I've had these for 30 years. 30 years and I usually do this my damn self but I wanna support the babies.

JO

Y'all do starter locs here too?

MARY

No-

INDIA

I mean. I can. Just not officially.

JO

Ooooooooohhhhh she's a loctician too. So talented.

INDIA

Hahahahaha stoppp nooooo.

MARY

Well Jo. You can take a seat and we can help you when we're done.

JO

SURVIVING R. KELLY SCENE

Months later.

Surviving R. Kelly is paused and projected onto a screen above the stage.

MARY lays sprawled out on the floor. She's in a tank top and boxers, and is lazily scrolling through her phone. Her hair is sectioned off in all sorts of crazy ways: some of it's in buns, some of it is already braided, etc. She's lounging, but still, there is a stiffness to her posture. Maybe she suspects she's being watched.

INDIA enters from stage right. She's wearing a satin scarf, and some random pajamas. Big shirt, even bigger pants. A towel is strewn over her shoulder.

She drops a bag of hair supplies on the couch and sits down. Mary jolts up.

MARY

Oh thank god.

She takes two floor pillows and stacks them between India's feet. She sits down and starts cracking her back.

MARY

I wasn't sure if we'd ever finish.

India starts to lay out her styling tools in a row.

INDIA

You know my hands get tired-

MARY

Awright grandma-

INDIA

And this is off the clock- an off the clock favor. I'm gonna take my sweet time and you can't rush me just cause you're tired, just cause-

Mary GROOOAAANS, throws her phone on the couch, and shoves India's knee.

MARY

Yeah yeah yeah yeah will you put the show back on.

Mary settles onto the pillows. India hits play on the remote.

Surviving R. Kelly Part I Episode 3 plays above them. The sound is off, but the audience can clearly read the subtitles at the bottom of the screen.

India braids Mary's hair throughout the scene.

INDIA

I just can't believe that all these people knew and he still got away with it.

MARY

How can you pull off a whole sex trafficking scheme and you can't even read?

INDIA

The boys could read. The boys got his back.

MARY

The boys don't give a FUCK about statutory rape.

INDIA

Not my penis not my problem.

MARY

But also, like lowkey, these girls are pretty fucking stupid.

INDIA

Mary!

She pops the back of her neck with a comb.

MARY

Ow! Shit.

She pinches India's shin.

INDIA

Ow! Fuck.

MARY

I guess back then all you needed were diamonds in your ear and some vocal riffs.

INDIA

That's not nice.

MARY

But am I wrong?

INDIA

They were young-

MARY

But am I wrong?

INDIA

If I were 14 and if it were 2001 and I was at the mall with my middle school friends and R. Kelly comes up to us in the Claire's and asks if we wanted to be video girls for his next song I'd probably be like hell yeah.

MARY

Well then I guess you're a stupid too.

Mary LAUGHS, and goes on her phone. India stays quiet.

India braids in silence for a brief moment. She struggles to comb to an extra tangled section of Mary's hair, who keeps tugging her head.

India grabs her head, Mary shifts again. Grab, shift, grab, shift.

INDIA

Hold still.

MARY

Are you tryna rip all my shit out?

INDIA

If you hold still it'll hurt less.

MARY

You're so heavy handed. Really rough with those paws.

Her phone screen LIGHTS on and off, a stream of texts pop up on the screen.

MARY

Ahahahahahaoohhhmy godd

She scrolls through several photos on her phone. She shakes her head, and shoves it in India's face.

MARY

Can you do these?

INDIA

Yeah, probably.

MARY

Amir says he's been wanting some Nelly braids but I think they're corny as fuck.

INDIA

They are corny as fuck.

MARY

Like nobody wants waves no more?

INDIA

Waves really used to be the move like they used to be cute but the second Drake popped out on his fake ass patoi boom-bat bullshit things were never the same.

MARY

Well I still think they're sexy. Clean.

INDIA

Now he's got that lacefront.

MARY

No give him some credit I think it's been growing.

INDIA

I don't even know why you're bothering with Amir.

MARY

He looks nice next to me.

INDIA

You just like having candy.

MARY

Yeah I do and so what cause he's kind and he dresses well and he can make my mom laugh which is hard cause she's a bitch and only I can make her laugh.

INDIA

Why can't I meet him?

Mary gently shoves India's knee.

MARY

You wanna meet him sooooooooo bad.

INDIA

It's been too long.

MARY

It's been eight months.

INDIA

That's not forever to you?

MARY

It's a blink I don't know! Things go so fast what's eight months when you're pushing 21 that's a couple months out of dozens hundreds maybe. I just haven't found the time.

INDIA

When's the last time anything has happened to us? I'm bored, I want to be in on it. I'm glad that you're happy.

They share a brief silence.

MARY

Maybe you should meet him. I think I want you to. But maybe not while I'm around. I'm afraid you'll both really lay it on.

INDIA

So what you want us to catch a movie?

MARY

Could you braid his hair?

INDIA

I don't know.....

MARY

He just wants some straight backs nothing serious.

INDIA

You should be there. I'd want you to be there.

MARY

Ok. I mean it's not that big of a deal. Ok.

The part of *Surviving R. Kelly* where they discuss his relationship with Aaliyah starts to play.

MARY

We really failed her. Damn. Look at those abs.

She looks down her own shirt.

INDIA

If she were alive today we would worship her like the God she was crawling on our hands and knees.

MARY

It's getting warmer and it's just hitting me but I think I like my nipples best in the winter. That's when your areolas are perky and cute.

INDIA

My areolas are never perky and cute.

MARY

Well not really perky but more like taut.

INDIA

Ohh yeah. Oh yeah. I get that.

India continues to work on Mary's hair. They don't continue the conversation. Mary turns up the volume on the TV.

FADE TO BLUE.

GRAD SCENE

An orange couch sits centerstage under a WARM LIGHT. Beneath it is a loud, messy area rug; the kind that appears at every estate sale, every thrift store. Large, colorful, floor pillows sit in stacks of three at each end of the sofa.

There are bras, socks, and makeup strewn about. An open laptop sits on the couch, a makeup tutorial by a black beauty guru is projected above the stage. We hear a minute or two of the video as the lights begin to come up. Eventually.....

...INDIA (18) and MARY (18) enter from stage right. They come in HOLLERING out of joy. They're wearing a cap & gown, and carry their heels in their hands.

Mary is playing a song off of her phone. It's a throwback song, something in the vein of Soulja Boy, Keri Hilson, or old Meek Mill.

The girls are effortlessly dancing around: a mashup of different dance crazes started by black kids on the block. Ass shaking, cat daddy, jerking, etc.

MARY

AYE AYE AYE

India twerks on Mary.

MARY

FUCK IT UP FUCK IT UP

The girls fall to the floor. Still holding each other, still screaming, still singing.

INDIA

Yooooo.....

MARY

Like what?

INDIA

You believe this shit?

MARY

Not for a second. Not for a single fucking second.

INDIA

Let's spark?

Mary grabs India by the cheeks and gazes into her eyes.

MARY

Yes. I do. I do I do I do.

India pulls a pencil case from under her graduation gown. It has a stoned Lisa Simpson on it, or some other corny marijuana reference.

MARY

Where did that come from?

INDIA

I got a whole set up under here.

India empties the case one item at a time: three mini fireball bottles, a bowl, a grinder, a baggy of weed, and a handful of lighters.

India packs a bowl and hands it to Mary.

MARY

I get the first hit?

INDIA

Yes ma'am.

India leans over to light the bowl for Mary.

INDIA

To the class of '21.

MARY

Fuck those kids forreal.

Mary hits the bowl. COUGH COUGH WHEEZE. She passes it to India.

MARY

You got your yearbook around here?

INDIA

(mid hit)

Uhummonesechere-

She puts her entire arm under the couch. She searches for a minute, then pulls out a big book. They continue smoking throughout the scene.

INDIA

I was gonna go burn it maybe.

MARY

Alright- well that's alot.

INDIA

Just, fuck these kids, you know?

Mary starts flipping through the yearbook.

MARY

I can't believe we're actually done. It felt like forever.

INDIA

Forever's right. When I walked I really had to grip my shit from Bieber.

MARY

Can we talk shit?

INDIA

I stay talking shit.

MARY

Shall we go...alphabetical?

They lock eyes, and turn the first page together.

INDIA

Audrey Alighieri: dumbass bitch.

MARY

Now she liked *Roots* a little too much...

INDIA

And she always had a black boy friend too.

MARY

And she'd put on a voice too, tryna talk like Da Brat like bitch what year is it?

INDIA

I still can't believe they let her dumbass into AP Lit. Struggling stuttering carrying on trying to comprehend Beowulf.

MARY

Man that shit was embaaaaarrsingggggggg-

INDIA

And she'd volunteer to read too. Wasting everybody's time.

MARY

Remember when she got up during class threw up a little in the trashcan and then left school for the whole day?

INDIA

Yeah that shit was funny as fuck.

MARY

Well not so funny I think she had to get an abortion.

India covers her mouth. She starts to laugh a little bit.

INDIA

Oh shit. Damn. Tea. That's tea. I'm sorry. I'm not laughing. It's not funny. Just. Fuck. Wow.

MARY

I know. I heard her mom found out that she had a black boyfriend and flipped her shit.

INDIA

Yeah those South Philly Italians don't play. Half of them are still Jim Crow racist.

MARY

And they're all definitely still Reagan racist.

INDIA

I didn't mean to laugh. Please don't tell anyone I laughed.

MARY

Who am I gonna tell?

INDIA

Yeah. Damn.

India packs another bowl. Mary is flipping through the pages.

MARY

You remember Ben?

INDIA

No.

MARY

He was the one always poppin n lockin every free period. Like he'd come up to you in the hall poppin his hips doing that Jabberwocky shit with his hands.

INDIA

Ohhh yeaaaaahhh. The DollarBoy.

MARY

The last DollarBoy on the face of the planet.

INDIA

I kinda miss them. Philly used to be so fun.

MARY

When was Philly fun?

INDIA

All we had to worry about was who had the best sexy walk in the neighborhood. You know what happened to them?

MARY

Their leader's a molester.

INDIA

Stop.

MARY

I'm deadass.

INDIA

Damn that's kinda sad cause you know originally they were to-

MARY

To keep the boys off the street.

INDIA

Keep the boys off the street.

MARY

Give them something to do between 8th period and dinner.

INDIA

Idle hands bring trouble.

Mary snaps in India's face.

MARY

Anyway! I saw him the other day. Drumming on the curb with some zombies, I couldn't believe it.

INDIA

Damn. Forreal?

MARY

Yeah.

INDIA

Maybe that's why he didn't walk.

MARY

A loottttttttttt of people didn't walk.

INDIA

It was almost a miracle I did.

MARY

Hey. Come on now. At the end of the day you did.

INDIA

I just wished I could have handled it better.

MARY

Nobody knew she was gonna pass when she did.

INDIA

Sometimes I get a feeling she did. Like on some Black Star shit some Bowie shit.

MARY

She didn't know. Come on now.

Beat. India packs another bowl. Mary continues to flip through the book.

INDIA

Still. I would have thought about college if I could. I wish I could've.

MARY

Well college is.....not for everyone. I could have gone. But I didn't. I'm here. And you're here so really that's good with me. Is that good with you?

INDIA

Yeah. Yeah I'm good. We got a plan.

MARY

And you know I would never let you end up on some curb spinning on your head with some crackheads.

India CACKLES.

INDIA

You think he's using?

MARY

Probably.

INDIA

I don't know. He is a lover of music.

India takes the yearbook and flips all the way to the end.

INDIA

I haven't read any of my signatures yet.

MARY

Jo signed your book?

INDIA

Yeah, we've been in the same homeroom all four years.

MARY

She drew you as an anime character. With some big ass tittes.

INDIA

Yeah, well, it's like a joke, like you know.

MARY

Weaboo ass bitch.

INDIA

That's the one.

MARY

I don't get it.

INDIA

Well we like to draw each other as anime girls with the biggest titties we can imagine. Ironically. Like see she gave me fox ears this time hahahahhahahahaahha you get it.

MARY

No.

INDIA

Well yeah I don't know how else / to explain.

MARY

Such a dyke.

INDIA

Yeah.

MARY

Ewwww you got one from Spiderman?

INDIA

Stoppp Andre was always nice to me.

MARY

“Dear India. Congradulations! I wish we could have gotten closer. It’s going to be crazy not seeing you in History next year. Goodluck with your salon! The best braider I know. Let’s keep in touch! -Spidey Dre”

India hides her face in her hands.

INDIA

God.

MARY

I don’t know you could have given him a chance.

INDIA

What?

MARY

He *really* liked you.

INDIA

And I *really* like bean pies.

MARY

I’m just saying you’re just so pretty but you’re starting to give spinsters.

INDIA

Well damn.

MARY

I’m just saying you could open your mind.

If you can’t get with anyone then where’s the hope for the rest of us.

INDIA

I guess you’re right.

MARY

Bitch. Shutthefuckup.

INDIA

I’m jokin I’m joshin.

MARY

Who's Josh? Sometimes
you sound like my grandma.

INDIA

Well I think it's funny. Ever seen that shit M.A.S.H Or whatever the fuck. It's funny to be like, "Well jolly good Sally my girl! Read the yellow pages today? I'm going to enjoy my iced latte down by the baarrbeeee."

MARY

I doubt they had lattes in 1892.

INDIA

Well it's in the spirit.

MARY

The holy spirit?

INDIA

Nah the white one.

MARY

Hahahahahahahaha.

INDIA

Hahahahahahahahahahahah
ahahahahahaaaaahahahahhaa.

MARY

Ok Ok Ok but.
And don't hate me.

INDIA

What what.

MARY

You gotttttttaaaaaa get fucked down one of these days.

INDIA

Ew Mary.
Ew.

MARY

I'm telling you. It's the *best*.

INDIA

I think I'm ok.

MARY

And it's not ew it's never ew. I actually kinda like pleasing my man.

INDIA

What man? You don't have a man.

MARY

Well whoever my man is in that very moment.

INDIA

Yeah
yeah
yeah.

MARY

We're women now. And women fuck.

INDIA

I don't like that word. Just say sex sex is *fine*.

MARY

But I'm not talking about sex.

INDIA

Maaan you don't even know what you're talking about.

MARY

There's no reason a big booty Judy like you couldn't have a boy if you wanted. If you really tried. You're so pretty, India. Like-

She gestures to India's entirety.

MARY

And you got titties too.

INDIA

When I was a kid I wanted a double mastectomy. I was so sad when I learned you usually need cancer for that.

MARY

Yeah, you usually do.

And besides

why would you wanna throw those pudding bags away?

India shrugs. She avoids Mary's gaze.

INDIA

My shirts don't button right.

MARY

Well maybe you should get into *blouses*. Some titty tops.

India laughs, she's a little uncomfortable.

INDIA

Yeah. Maybe.

India packs another bowl. Mary looks around the room.
She gets up, fluffs some pillows, fixes the rug.

MARY

Your aunt really left this place dusty and musty.
Hahahahaa! Sorry.

INDIA

It's not nice to speak ill of the dead.

MARY

What's that, Whitman?

INDIA

You ain't never heard nobody say that?

Mary shrugs.

MARY

Which room do I get?

INDIA

Which room do you want?

MARY

Your aunt's or your mom's.

INDIA

Right.

So you're getting my old room.

MARY

Ruudeee.

INDIA

You're family but not like that.

MARY

Fine fine fine.

I'll take your room. I always thought it was nice.

INDIA

Thank you.

MARY

And the living room. I mean. It's a nice space. I don't see why we can't use the dining room for the salon like your aunt. But it's nice.

INDIA

I'm keeping it empty in case she ever wants to haunt me.

MARY

She's already haunting you.

INDIA

Yeah but in a bad way. I'm hoping she'll start coming around when things are good.

MARY

That's the spirit.

...

hahaha.

INDIA

Whateverrrrrr.

A beat.

They're smoking some more, puff puff pass. They flip through the yearbook for another beat or two, laughing joking carrying on. This last exchange should be improvised.

GAY SCENE #1

The salon. India is humming to herself and sweeping.

INDIA

(repeats some variation of this)

Shawty wanna.....rock! Shawty wanna.....roll!

A knock on the door.

India sets down her broom. She starts toward the door, pauses, looks around, fixes her hair. She thinks about it, and ties her t-shirt into a knot. Sexy?

Enters JO (18,). She is wearing a bucket hat, a muscle tee, and some middle school boy shorts.

INDIA

Heyyyyyyy.

JO

Hi!

They stand at the door. India is grinning. A couple beats pass.

JO

I- could I- is it okay if I-

INDIA

Oh. Yes!

I am so sorry.

Come in. Do you want anything? I have snacks. I gotta lotta shit actually hahahahaha
and I'm down the block from the papi store so actually actually

I could get you anything too. Come in come in.

JO

I'm good.

INDIA

Oh like good good?

JO

Yeah like real good.

INDIA

Ok.

Cool.

She paces for another beat. She covers her face with her hands.

INDIA

Sorry. I'm still not very good at this.

JO

Yeah I was like aaaaaaaah. Awkward.

INDIA

Yeah. Hella awkward.

...

Can I give you the speech?

Jo lowers herself into the salon chair. She motions for India to speak.

JO

Sure.

INDIA

WELCOME! To Kreative Kontemporary Braidz-

Jo starts cracking up. India pouts.

INDIA

You're laughing already.

JO

No- I'm sorry-

INDIA

No it's stupid I'm dumb and it's stupid.

JO

You're not stupid but you are a lil corny. Keep going.

INDIA

That's kinda all I have.

JO

Really?

INDIA

Well the rest is too rough. Like what I wanna get across.

JO

Oh so you got a whole mission here.

INDIA

Shut upppp.

JO

Nah you're like Miss Nonprofit. Bringing the truth to the people.

INDIA

Eventually that's what I'm hoping for yea.

JO

What are you trying to get across?

INDIA

I don't really know how to explain it. A lot of stuff. Hair is energy. It's abstract.

They say the body doesn't forget but really not only does your hair remember but it shows. You can tell when hair is happy. I'm just tryna show the girls the truth you know. Like show them their full weight not like weight weight but presence. I don't know. Ya know?

JO

No.

INDIA

Right.

JO

That sounds like some hippie hotep voodoo hoodoo shit. You rasta?

INDIA

Nah.

But I was raised Muslim.

There's a fine line.

JO

A very fine line indeed.

INDIA

Called the intersection at 52nd and Market.

JO

And the Hebrew Israelites pass through too, a trifecta.

INDIA

Soho, Tribeca-

JO

Three hoes, trifecta!

INDIA

Now that song's a modern classic.

JO

Man come on that song is ass. Catchy though.

They laugh a little.

INDIA

What are you tryna get today?

JO

Can you fade?

INDIA

Girl. No.

JO

Maybe I'll get just straight backs then.

INDIA

Oh. CoOoOooOoOlll.

JO

What?

INDIA

Nothing.

JO

You think it'll look bad? I haven't gotten them in a while.

INDIA

No.

I
think it'll look
really good
actually.

JO

Oh.

Thanks.

INDIA

Yeah.

A silence. India starts to prep Jo's hair. This should include pre-parting, oiling the scalp, etc.

INDIA

So.

How have you beeeeeen
siinnnce graduationnnnn?

JO

Oh! Good. I've been good. How about you?

INDIA

I've been alright. I've been doing this.

JO

Right. Yeah you were always on your shit.

INDIA

I don't know about that.

JO

No no I remember like I'd always find you doing somebody's hair in the stairwell or the main hall or in homeroom or in A-PUSH Mr. McDonnell never liked that one but you stayed on your shit and I respect that.

INDIA

Thanks. That's really nice to hear.

JO

Yeah. Well.

...

...

...

how long you been doing hair?

INDIA

Ohhh. Forever. You ever meet my aunt?

JO

No.

INDIA

Well, she was a braider. This was her house, actually. She taught me some stuff before I even knew how to read.

Now you wanna talk about rasta shit, she was on some rasta shit. She was so serious real mean in a way but she was real you know. This was her whole life.

JO

I'm sorry, by the way. I heard.

INDIA

It's fine. We've all gotta go.

JO

Yeah but. That's tough. Losing her.

INDIA

Yeah.

Aaaaaaaaa I miss her
somuch.

A beat.

INDIA

So. How is...like....what are you up to?

JO

I'm in trade school. I want to be a carpenter.

This is sexy. By now India has started braiding Jo's hair.

INDIA

Oh. Woow. Coooooooooolll.

JO

Not that cool but it pays well. And I like to make things.

INDIA

But it's not your dream.

JO

I don't even want to bother with a dream. I just need to support myself. That's my dream.

INDIA

That's real.

JO

And Mary, she lives here? Y'all work together right?

INDIA

I mean. Sometimes.

JO

Where is she?

INDIA

God knows.

JO

I thought y'all were close.

INDIA

We are. We're just going through a rough patch.

JO

You make it sound like you're married.

INDIA

I am *very much* not.

JO

Can I be honest?

INDIA

Uh, sure.

JO

I never really understood how you and Mary were friends. Best friends at that.

INDIA

Really?

JO

Yeah. I mean. You were a film kid, right? A stoner.

INDIA

Mary smokes.

JO

Yeaaaaaaahhhh but I'd never catch her copping at the playground. I'd never catch her getting searched at the security desk.

INDIA

Okay that stopped happening Sophomore year.

JO

Suuuuureeee.

INDIA

You know how I finally got through the metal detector?

JO

How?

INDIA

I would hollow out highlighters and put all my shit in there.

JO

Oh. So you scheme.

INDIA

Yeah I plot.

JO

I like that.

INDIA

How's carpenter life?

JO

It's good. It always feels like I'm doing arts and crafts.

INDIA

You were always so good at that.

JO

Uh thanks?

INDIA

I mean at art. Like in art class.

JO

Oh. Thanks! Yeah. No it's good. I get misgendered all the time.

INDIA

Oh. That sucks.

JO

Eehhhh sometimes it's for the best. Sometimes it's safer.

A brief awkward pause. She smiles.

JO

I had a field trip the other day.

INDIA

Cool!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Where????

JO

We went to the Noguchi Museum up in New York. My mentor is a real hippie dippie old dyke-excuse my language- but really I think she wanted to be an architect. She wanted us to see the possibilities of a home.

Jo tries to look around the living room, but India holds her head in place.

JO

I think you clearly know the possibilities of a home. It's like the African American museum in here.

INDIA

That's all my aunt. She was everything. I only know what half of this stuff means.

JO

Nah but you got some classics in here. I spy
Black Jesus.
Black Joseph.
Black Mary.

INDIA

Yeah she couldn't start without them.

JO

Damn it's crazy that the Real Mary isn't here though. I thought y'all were business partners.

INDIA

We are.

JO

But you're the one who braids?

INDIA

We both braid. Mary is still learning. She's getting better.

JO

I see she's hard at work.

India laughs a little. The front door starts to rattle, and it startles India. Mary slinks in, drops her stuff down, and doesn't acknowledge either of them.

She undoes some of her clothes, and heads into the dining room. She returns, all without saying a word, or looking at them. She reenters and sits on the couch. She starts to flip through the TV.

INDIA

Uh. Hi.

MARY

Hey.

JO

Hey.

MARY

Oh hey Jo.

INDIA

How was your day?

MARY

Was fine.

INDIA

Nice nice.

Jo cranes her neck to look at India, she motions like,
“what the hell was that?”

India shrugs and communicates with her hands and
mouths: “I don’t know. This is how it’s been. I’m not
sure why.”

JO

Uh but yeah. Trade school is going. I almost sawed off my finger the other day.

INDIA

Whaaaaaaaaaattttttt, noooooooooooooooooo-

JO

Uh huh, but like, I wasn’t scared.

Mary starts laughing to herself, she’s on her phone.

INDIA

Really?

Mary takes a call on the couch. She talks over, around,

MARY

Hey baabyyyyyy-

JO

Yeah I was working on a lamp and uh-

MARY

Hehehehehehehechstoopppppppppppp that’s nastyyy-

JO

My finger was jammed, almost cut the whole thing off.

INDIA

Do you like the danger?

JO

It. Really scares me actually. I'm very nervous. Generally.

SCENE X

The salon. It's busy.

Like every woman in the neighborhood is here.

India is working on somebody's grandma. A row of happy customers sit on the couch. They are THE MUSES. Funny, and *very* loud.

Majandra is in the chair.

MAJANDRA

Now peep this move : I was talking to my good sis the one that's all on her genealogy shit you know you know Connie anyway she was telling me how her great great great great great great great grandfather was almost a *Founding Father*. Now that's no news I mean this is Philly we're drowning silllllyyyyyyyy in blood money. Back in the day they were really freaky I mean really just nasty and such a shame cause when you think about it. We SHOULD own half this damn city divi it up be real fair real communal about it.

LONI

BITCH! Get to the point daaaAAMN.

MAJANDRA

Alright alright you can chill alright. I'm just saying they wanna corner us by making us think we're "black" when really "bul-lack" is a collection of everything else and so are we the stars muhthafukin Neptune we are everything we create everything. If you wanna get real choosey about it we're the real Natives. We're The Real Indigenous.

INDIA & CORA & KEYSHA & LONI

Whooaaaaaaa hold up / Girl you're trippppppiiiiinnnnnnnnnnngggggggggg / Don't bring that mess in here.

MAJANDRA

What what I say?

VANESSA

Nah but I think you got a point.

MAJANDRA

Thank you.

VANESSA

They make us so small. Whenever I'm in an all white room / feel like the ghost.

INDIA

Y'all act like being Black's not enough.

MAJANDRA

And that better be with a capital B.

INDIA

Ok bell hooks first and foremost it is but I'm just tryna say. I like that there's so much inside me, I feel like I have roots that go straight down to the center.

MAJANDRA

Well it's what they say same folks different strokes?

INDIA

Yeah naaaahhhh you on that old school shit that Hebrew Israelite shit.

MAJANDRA

Only in the way I believe in them all because they're all right because there's one god. Those who think we can't pray together really take me out. I was talking to this Muslim brother right around Ramadan last year I like to hit up the Masjids mostly out in West because damn when they finally eat that food be BUSSIN-

LONI

Y'all are taking so damn long.

INDIA

I know I'm sorry I'm the only one here.

CORA

Where's Mary?

INDIA

I don't know.

LONI

Well tell her to get her ass over here I have a parent teacher meeting with *Dr. Diallooo*.

KEYSHIA

Not you joining the nation of Islam for some DICK.

VANESSA

I'd just seen her ass too.

LONI

Who?

VANESSA

Mary.

INDIA

Where?

VANESSA

Down at Community.

INDIA

.

INDIA

What.

VANESSA

Yeah she was with some boy, lightskin, dreads, on that crystal shit. He was pretty too and like hairless I mean really so smooth.

INDIA

I didn't know she was taking classes.

VANESSA

Oh word?

INDIA

Yeah.

VANESSA

My bad.

INDIA

You're good. Did you talk to her?

VANESSA

Just hi and bye nothing too long.

INDIA

Did she say anything about me?

India pats Majandra on the shoulder. Majandra gets up, and briefly stretches.

VANESSA

Well I told her tell India I said hello and she said okay I will and made her way up the wheelchair ramp stumbled a little on 'er way up it was actually kinda funny.

INDIA

I see.

VANESSA

You know who she was with?

INDIA

Her boyfriend. Amir.

KEYSHIA

Amir? Wait, kinda lanky lightskin? Would post up on 17th and Rittenhouse?

VANESSA

Yeah thaaaaaat's how I know him. He'd be giving out free yoga books and shit.

KEYSHIA

We went to high school together.

INDIA

Where?

KEYSHIA

Bodine.

VANESSA

Ohh. Y'all get bedbugs like every year.

KEYSHIA

Who's y'all?

VANESSA

No like I'm saying-

LONI

But y'all good, right?

INDIA

What? Yes. Yeah we're fine.

LONI

You sure baby?

MAJANDRA

It's always okay to ask for some help. Running a salon is no joke I saw your auntie through the whole thing.

INDIA

Yes. We're fine.

GHOST SCENE #1

A month or two after the first scene.

India is alone. We can hear Mary giggling and squealing off stage. We hear hints of a man's voice as well. It sounds like love, and it's insufferable.

India is trying to watch something terrible. Something in the vein of *The Queen of the Damned* (2002).

India turns up the volume and covers one ear with a pillow.

Mary enters from off stage. She's wearing a frilly nightgown and matching robe. She looks elated.

MARY

Sorryyyyyyyyyyy just passing through hehehehehehehehe.

She rounds the couch and knocks into the corners.

MARY

Whoa whoa ouch.

She rubs her hip where the couch got her. Fixes her lingerie, and disappears into the dining room.

India is miming being disgusted. She pretend vomits. Pretend strangles herself.

She gets down on her knees, and raises a pretend rifle to her throat.

Mary reenters from the dining room carrying a bowl of strawberries.

MARY

Hehehehehe lalalala hehehehe.

India pretend shoots herself. She falls to the floor.

Mary scurries off stage. She does not notice India in the slightest.

India writhes around the floor. She starts making zombie noises. She's making herself laugh.

Uggggggggghhhhhh. Hmmm.

INDIA

She pulls the blankets from the couch and burritos herself. She continues watching TV.

Psshh. Hah. What? Stupid.

INDIA

She continues to mumble to herself for another beat. These should be improvised jabs at whatever is on the screen.

She stares off at the couch for a beat or two. Her attention should shift between the tv and beneath the couch.

Yeah fuck it.

INDIA

She shrugs off the blanket and reaches her entire arm under the couch. She pulls out a tarot deck & a guidebook.

She holds the cards in her hands and closes her eyes. She sits criss-cross-applesauce.

Please clear these cards of any past energy, any past intentions-

INDIA

She starts shuffling the cards. She's not very good, and a bunch of cards start jumping out.

Whoa OK we got some jumpers. Damn, tell me what you wannaaaa saaaayyyyyyy.

INDIA

[AN: It would be cool if for this portion the projection changed from the movie to those projectors they use in middle school science classes, so the audience could see the cards as well. Not sure if this can be pulled off. Or maybe it would be a pre-recorded projection of the specific cards?]

INDIA

(as she pulls the cards)

Ohhhhhh. Hmmmmm. Aaaaaahhhhhh.

She pulls as follows: the chariot reversed, eight of swords, the lovers, the fool, and the hermit. If you know, you know.

She grabs the guide from under the couch and starts to flip through.

As she's reading, the ghost of AUNTIE VETTE slowly enters from the dining room. Her head is shaved except for two long, thick braids stemming from the nape of her neck. She's wearing a long shapeless garb that is preferably black and gold, but could also be white or red. She wears 5-9 thick necklaces, most of which should have a distinct shape/silhouette.

She walks as though she's floating, head held high. She sits on the arm of the sofa, and waits for India to notice her.

INDIA

Okay so the chariot....the present or the issue at hand. "The Chariot represents overcoming obstacles through determination, focus and willpower. With this card in your tarot spread you will be feeling motivated, ambitious and in control. Now is a time to go for what you really want. The Chariot is not without its challenges, there may be many obstacles in your path but if you stay focused, keep your composure and are confident in your abilities-"

AUNTIE VETTE

No, it's reversed, so the meaning changes.

India JOLTS up.

INDIA

AAAAAAHHHHHHH!

AUNTIE VETTE

You not happy to see me?

India reaches between the couch cushions and pulls out a bowl.

INDIA

This shit must be laced.

AUNTIE VETTE

Now I taught you how to tell you should know better.

INDIA

Oh my godddd even when I'm hallucinating you still nag me.

AUNTIE VETTE

This is no hallucination sweetie I'm the real metaphysical deal.

INDIA

You mean?

AUNTIE VETTE

Uhhuh.

INDIA

I'm being haunted?

AUNTIE VETTE

Yep.

INDIA

So you pull up just to tell me what I'm doing wrong.

AUNTIE VETTE

And to say hi. Hiiiiiiii I miss youuuuu.

INDIA

I miss you too.

AUNTIE VETTE

How long have I been gone?

INDIA

A couple months. You missed my graduation.

AUNTIE VETTE

DAMN! Nooooooooooooo.....I was trying to hang on for that.

INDIA

I know you were.

AUNTIE VETTE

I was fighting so hard.

INDIA

I remember.

AUNTIE VETTE

Cancer has hands. Beat me the fuck up.

INDIA

But you put up a fight
like you pulled her hair
ripped her earrings out
had no time for Vaseline
she was screaming aaaahhhhh!
Ahhhhhh!
Vette please!!!
Have mercy!

AUNTIE VETTE

Yeah. I did, didn't I?

INDIA

I don't know how, but you did.

AUNTIE VETTE

I miss you. I think about you everyday. Or, at least what I imagine days to be. Time is no longer necessary I mean for me it never was you know that's a load of crap. But before it used to feel in my control, now I literally move with the wind, random and fast and I can only come when I'm called. I miss you.

INDIA

I miss you too. I've been up at night wailing aaaaaahhhhh aaaaaahhhhh I'm an orphan aaaaaahhhhh. I knew I was before but it's different when you feel it. I feel cut off, tapped out.

AUNTIE VETTE

You ain't no orphan. Oh you're soooooooooo dramatic.

INDIA

You died talk about dramatic that's dramatic as hell. Like you must be haunting me for attention likee

They burst into laughter like hyenas.

AUNTIE VETTE

Oh! Oh I wish I could just hug you. It's fine I'll hug just myself.

She hugs herself and rocks as if coddling a baby.

AUNTIE VETTE

Sweetie pie sweetie bop sweet sweet pumpkin pieeee

INDIA

Stopp PPP stoppppp I never liked it when you called me that.

AUNTIE VETTE

What I don't get a pass now?

INDIA

I-

AUNTIE VETTE

AAH-

INDIA

Um-

AUNTIE VETTE

See I got you now that was a trap AAAAAHAHAHAHAHahahahahahaha.

INDIA

I've been saying.

AUNTIE VETTE

Well a month is early. You'll meet him. Give it time.

INDIA

Yeah. That's what I'm tryna remind myself. But like, ok I'm a little embarrassed-

AUNTIE VETTE

Why?

INDIA

Well-so- when he first came in right I missed him. So I go upstairs I knock on the door and I'm like heyyy, I just wanted to say hi, but she cracks it open so I can only see her face and like for a moment behind her like I think I got a glimpse of his feet- which were TINY by the way like weirdly small. I'm sitting there wondering damn is he a women's eight? Seven and a half? So I'm like hello I'd like to say hey to your boyfriend and his teeny tiny doll feet. Only I didn't really mention the feet cause she would have slapped me upside my head for that but trust I was thinking it. Anyway she's gonna say that he's feeling tired, that he would like to say hi another time. This grown ass man talking through an 18 year old girl. Ain't that some shit?

AUNTIE VETTE

That's.....odd.

INDIA

Right.

AUNTIE VETTE

She's probably just afraid of your opinion of him.

INDIA

She should be. I'm the best friend.

AUNTIE VETTE

How old is he?

INDIA

24.

AUNTIE VETTE

Oh. Hell. No.

INDIA

That's what I said.

AUNTIE VETTE

Well, boys are slower to grow. Slower to mature.

INDIA

He graduated from our high school when we started middle school.

AUNTIE VETTE

Well anything will sound creepy if you put it like that.

INDIA

Well maybe it sounds creepy because it is creepy.

AUNTIE VETTE

What does he look like?

INDIA

She hasn't shown me a picture. She just describes him to me: lightskin, apparently he's jacked, and a dreadhead.

AUNTIE VETTE

Yeah, it's always those. I fell victim to a couple myself.

INDIA

Iiiiiiii don't wanna talk about that.

AUNTIE VETTE

Ok. Fine. Well then. Uhhhh I gotta keep talking I don't know how this haunting thing works or how long it lasts so I'm just gonna go on and on okay?

INDIA

Yeah. Okay. I'm pretty sure you can control it. But okay.

AUNTIE VETTE

Uh *I'm* dead, don't tell me the rules of the afterlife. What's your source Goosebumps?

INDIA

Hahahahahahha ok damn.

AUNTIE VETTE

How's the salon?

INDIA

It's good. It's alright. We've only been open a couple weeks.

AUNTIE VETTE

How's Mary taken to doing hair? I know you were a little worried.

INDIA

Um. You know. She's doing good. She's doing ok. She's not booking too many people. Like they usually ask for me. Which is cool cause we were talking and she's actually more interested in the business side anyways. So it's fine.

AUNTIE VETTE

Uh huh. OK.

INDIA

I know.

AUNTIE VETTE

So. But you're talking things out.

INDIA

Uh yeah. Like sometimes.

AUNTIE VETTE

Cause you know it's different to live and work with someone and stay friends. That's a lot of different things to juggle at once.

INDIA

I know, but we love each other. I think it'll bring us closer in a different way. A different context to see each other in.

AUNTIE VETTE

Just take care of yourself. Listen to how things make you feel.

INDIA

I'm trying.

AUNTIE VETTE

I just want you to prioritize yourself. I know you've always wanted a friend.....everybody wants a friend. But half the time you're all you've got.

INDIA

That's so sad.

AUNTIE VETTE

It's true.

INDIA

I don't know if it is. I think your generation didn't know how to be friends. Always fighting each other over who was pretty who wasn't who was ladylike who wasn't like none of that applies anymore.

AUNTIE VETTE

My generation what you know about my generation you don't know shit about my generation bottom line is you can't trust anyone especially not some girl as pretty as her. She's always wanted to be like you, know. You just can't see it.

INDIA

Why would anyone wanna be me. I never want to be me.

AUNTIE VETTE

It's not so much you as she wants it all. I've seen her. Everyone room has to be about her.

India takes in what she's saying. A beat.

INDIA

I already feel like I can't trust her anymore. She's cold now.

AUNTIE VETTE

You have to pry your way in. She's clenched. And that boy is dragging her down.

INDIA

I wanna fight that dude. Rip out his little locs one by one.

AUNTIE VETTE

In time my child. In time.

INDIA

She won't tell me anything. I barely know his name.

AUNTIE VETTE'S GHOST

This is your home. You have to take control. You have to talk to her.

INDIA

Literally anything but that puhLEASE. Haha.

AUNTIE VETTE'S GHOST

I'm serious.

INDIA

I don't know how to talk to her about him.

AUNTIE VETTE'S GHOST

Well figure it out.

Men are like roaches. Instead of droppings they leave their socks and every time they cum their jizz sends signals to the colony next thing you know you're infested with them, the boys are over here all the time watching playoffs playing FIFA. Disgusting.

INDIA

She told me he's actually not into video games. It's why she likes him.

AUNTIE VETTE'S GHOST

Well a man too proud to conform is worse than one who likes to follow the crowd.

INDIA

You just hate men.

AUNTIE VETTE'S GHOST

Don't you?

India shrugs.

INDIA

They don't exist enough in my world for me to feel anything.

AUNTIE VETTE'S GHOST

That's my girl.

India starts to clean up the tarot cards on the floor.

INDIA

I'm just worried it's already started.

AUNTIE VETTE'S GHOST

That what has already started?

INDIA

That he'll replace me....that what was ours will become theirs and she'll stop telling me things and things will start happening to them instead of us. I just always thought we'd be together.

AUNTIE VETTE'S GHOST

I always wondered if you two were too close, if I let her around too much.

PRACTICE

Mary is practicing cornrows on India's head.

They're sloppy, bumpy, crooked, and already look old (somehow).

It's right after graduation. Early days of summer, and Mary still lives with her mom.

INDIA

Ow. Ow. Ow.

MARY

Can you stop that's really distracting me.

INDIA

Sorry. Ow.

MARY

I don't know if I'm getting this.

INDIA

You wanna pass me the mirror?

MARY

No not really.

INDIA

OK.

MARY

If I let you see my main issue then all your gonna see are the little ones completely miss my point make me feel worse I just can't be kicked even more right now.

INDIA

Yeah. Whatever. Just
let me know if you need help.

MARY

Right.

INDIA

Just because, you know, we only have a few weeks left before we gotta open.

MARY

I know.

INDIA

I just want us to be ready.

MARY

We are. And we will.

A beat. India is going through a Roku, Firestick, etc,
jumping from streaming service to streaming service.

MARY

You know what I miss?

INDIA

What?

MARY

Ohhh what do you call it like it was this show and it was about two little girls it was a cartoon they weren't really friends but were always together one was really grumpy and maybe German but definitely a Capricorn and the other was so so sweet and really funny and always wore this cute little bow and was friends with everybody had this sweet sing song voice I think her name was Charlotte anyway the other girl the big mean like real busky one was always making monsterrrrsss and setting them loose on the town because she was so angry. She was so angry that it made her ugly I'm talking she was like 11 or something but her anger had her looking 40. Anyway she would always set these monsters on Charlotte but instead of ever thinking she was in danger she just thought they were playing a game. I always thought it was funny how, you can love someone so much and not understand that they like literally hate you hahahaha. But I think in the end they really became friends. Or maybe Charlotte became evil? I think that's more interesting.

INDIA

What channel was it on?

MARY

Oh, I can't remember.

INDIA

It doesn't ring a bell.

MARY

Right. Yeah, I didn't think it would.

INDIA

I never really watched TV.

MARY

Right.

INDIA

And TV is like your second language.

MARY

I have too much time.

INDIA

If I find it maybe I'll check it out.

MARY

Yeah, whatever.

INDIA

Did I tell you what happened to me the other day?

MARY

No what?

INDIA

Do you remember Jo, from APUSH?

MARY

The dyke?

INDIA

Well, I'm not sure she really identifies.

MARY

A dyke's a dyke.

INDIA

Right, well, I ran into her. The other day on the bus.

MARY

Ohhhhh okaaaaayyy

INDIA

Yeah, like I saw her but we didn't really speak to each other.

MARY

What does that mean?

INDIA

Well I was sitting up front and she was in the back like way in the back you know how she does and so I'm on Instagram and all of a sudden I get a DM from her but I don't see until I get off the bus so as I'm packing up I'm getting off and I read it and she says "I like your pants" and I look up and see her in the window and she just smiles at me. I wave but she just nods like what kinda shit is that?

MARY

Weird.

INDIA

Yeah- no yeah. But, I thought, I mean I don't know what I thought. I guess she had been watching me.

MARY

What pants were you wearing?

INDIA

The pinstripe ones.

MARY

Oh so she saw that faaaaaaaatttttttaasssssssssssss!!!

INDIA

Stoppphahahahahahaha.

MARY

Dykes are always looking.

INDIA

Can you stop saying that word.

MARY

It's not a word it's an identity.

INDIA

I don't think you really get to say.

MARY

Stud, Dyke, Butch, Lipstick, Stem. It's not that deep.

INDIA

But it's a slur and you know how you have to think of slurs you gotta think of them differently.

MARY

Don't tell me what a slur is the fuck.

INDIA

I'm sorry. That's not what I meant.

MARY

Since when do you give a fuck about some "slurs" anyway lest I remind you who let Monica Lopez say the n word until the 10th grade.

INDIA

.....That *was* me.

MARY

And who didn't say SHIT when Bethany pulled up to school in some cornrows with beads.

INDIA

Well. Her hair *was* already done.

MARY

I bet you'd let some white girl come up in here too. Like the type that wears hoops and lines their lips be too scared to say no to turn her away start getting scared about the law too going on about shit like clause number four-

INDIA

Get off of me.

MARY

I'm not done.

India SHOVES HER OFF.

INDIA

Get off.

She gets up from the chair and plops down onto the couch.

INDIA

You're so mean sometimes.

It's silent. India starts to flip through the channels. Mary cleans up any fallen hair.

INDIA

I hate it when you call me that.

MARY

But you're my baby India.

INDIA

I'm not cool and I'm not smart and I'm shy and you throw an innocence onto me that I don't even know how to identify or I feel like I'm not supposed to say anything but you want me on the ground you want me on my back and I feel myself I'm pushing you off like I'm pushing your foot off and I feel my chest caving in on me and I hate it when you look down on me I can't breathe when you look down on me I don't want you touching me -

A beat. Mary calmly starts to pack up her purse.

MARY

I didn't know that's how you felt.

INDIA

I never wanted to tell you.

MARY

I didn't mean to make you feel stupid.

INDIA

Well how do you expect me to feel?

MARY

I think you're just sensitive. I'm messing around.

INDIA

Yeah. Right.

MARY

I didn't think it'd bother you. Like, that's how we play.

INDIA

Yeah. But sometimes it would feel serious.
Like you were holding it in.

Mary finishes packing up her bag. She gathers her things and heads for the door. She puts on her shoes and lingers for a moment.

MARY

Are we there for each other? I'm not really sure.

INDIA

I try to be. I want to be.

MARY

Sometimes I think you look at me and see someone so evil. Sometimes I think you look at me and maybe see some things you wish you were. Because I look at you and I see things I want. And sometimes it makes me angry, like I wanna fight you sometimes.

INDIA

I get that. Sometimes I crave a fist fight.

MARY

You've never been in a fight in your life.

INDIA

Hence why it's a craving.

MARY

I keep having this dream that we're standing in your hair and it has me by the ankles and we're just throwing punching at each other, and I mean we're both getting some good hits in cause I think when it comes down to it we could both fuck up a bitch. Anyway I always wake up before it ends. I never know who wins.

INDIA

That's okay. I don't really wanna know.

MARY

Right?

A silence. Mary lingers.

INDIA

Well. So. You know, I'll see you soon.

MARY

Yeah I'll see you in what, a couple days?

INDIA

Yeah forsure forsure.

MARY

You mean that?

India shrugs and crosses her arms.

INDIA

Yeah. I mean that.

A silence.

Mary nods and exits.

India crosses the living room and tidies as she goes. She exits offstage.

FADE TO BLUE

SILENT SCENE #1

The Livingroom. Mary has clothes folded and placed neatly on the couch. India sits on the couch and watches TV. She is CRAMED in by Mary's things.

****Throughout this scene I would want something in the same vein as *The Flavor of Love*, *For The Love of Ray J*, etc. playing in the background throughout. Rights pending.**

Mary paces back and forth across the living room. She repeats the same repetitive motion of picking up a stack of clothes and placing them in a box, suitcase, etc. India sits on the couch and is flipping through different channels.

Pick up cross pack. Pick up cross pack.

India slowly gets up from the couch. She is careful not to touch any of Mary's things. They round the couch at the same time, but do not acknowledge each other. India exits to the kitchen offstage.

Pick up cross pack. Pick up cross pack.

Mary's phone RINGS. She unfolds a towel, throws it over her shoulder, and answers. She wedges the phone between her shoulder and ear.

MARY

Yeah hello? Hey mom. Uh huh. Yeah no. Yeah I did that yesterday. Yeah.

She goes through the coffee table drawer. Magazines, mail, dust bunnies.

MARY

You think I don't know that that cost money real money like you think I didn't think of that? Yeah huh, uh uh, yeah huh...

India enters from off stage carrying a bowl of cut up fruit. They do not acknowledge each other.

Mary and India cross behind the sofa at the same time. They are hairs away from touching.

India plops onto the couch. A few folded sweaters fall.

MARY

You changed the day for the truck? Why would you change the day for the truck. I said the first I meant the first how do you forget April Fools day-

Mary notices the sweaters. She snatches them. She folds them behind the couch like a laundry service.

MARY

I told all my friends now I have to go back on what I said and I can't just do that when there's other people involved. A week's a long time.

Mary finds a reason to end the phone call. This should be improvised.

India is now cuddled under a blanket. Flipping through more channels.

The lights stay on until Mary finishes packing. She stacks her bags and boxes by the door, and exits.

END SCENE.

FADE TO BLUE

BATHROOM SCENE

In a small square centerstage sits a toilet and a sink. India is on the toilet picking at her nails. Mary is fixing her mascara above the sink.

INDIA

They think we don't know each other anymore.

MARY

That's funny.

INDIA

You didn't laugh at any of my jokes.

MARY

I couldn't hear you cause I was *vibing*.

She peels herself away from the sink and shoos at India.

MARY

Get up get up I gotta pee.

India stands. Mary sits on the toilet and pushes her skirt and panties down. We can hear the steady stream of Mary's piss. India can't look her in the eye.

Mary starts and stops her pee. She tries to make a beat.

INDIA

Eewwwwwwww Mary.

Mary guffaws. She pees normally.

INDIA

I think I got too high.

MARY

Yeah you've been quiet.

INDIA

Can we smoke some more?

Mary nods. India hikes up her skirt and pulls a baggy out of her underwear, and takes a bowl out of a fanny pack.

INDIA

I can't believe we're going to a baby shower before a reunion.

MARY

I can believe it. Bitches be in the 10th grade talking about baby fever.

INDIA

How are you gonna have baby fever but your mom just had to open a bank account for you.

MARY

How are you gonna have baby fever but you get carded going to the mall.

INDIA

How you gonna have baby fever but you still young enough to shoplift.

MARY

Aaahhahhahahaaaaahahahahahaaaaaaa-

INDIA

You only laugh when it's just us. You scared somebody's gonna hear?

MARY

Yeah I'm scared, cause you're soooooooo corny

INDIA

Mary. I'm trying to be serious. I feel like we haven't had a conversation in years.

MARY

And now's the time? You can't dump some emotional ass shit on me when I'm tryna shit.

INDIA

You're pooping right now?

MARY

No but I thought it sounded good back to back like that you know whatever my point is don't dump your shit on me.

INDIA

I'm not trying to dump anything on you I just want to talk.

MARY

You can't just decide you want you talk without even asking me. The truth is I don't even know what you're talking about. You always have a problem.

INDIA

Why can't I meet Amir?

MARY

I don't want to talk about this right now.

INDIA

It's not fair that everyone's met him but me. It's not fair that your mom loves him and I don't even know what he voice sounds like.

MARY

He's shy.

INDIA

He's a grown ass man he's too old to be shy.

MARY

He get's nervous. He has some stuff going on. Like I think he has social anxiety . And besides, he's sober.

INDIA

Like right now or always?

MARY

Both.

INDIA

You act like I'm gonna shove a needle in his arm.

MARY

He doesn't really get along with the stoner types, with the artsy types.

INDIA

The artsy types?

MARY

Yeah like the stick & poke types the leg warmer bitches the ukulele bitches ya know the kind that shaves their bangs and grows their armpit hair and listens to Mazzy Star.

INDIA

What's wrong with that?

MARY

He's just not with all that new shit.

INDIA

Armpit hair isn't new.

MARY

Showing it off like that is.

INDIA

He shouldn't give a fuck what someone does to their bodies-

MARY

See this is why I didn't want to tell you.

INDIA

No but that in itself isn't a good sign like if I had known you were gonna get with some hodunk podunk down south bigot that's your business but damn you couldn't even let me talk you out of it?

MARY

He's no hodunk podunk nothing. He's from South Philly.

INDIA

That's even worse.

MARY

Listen NOT EVERYBODY is as progressive as you not everybody is on that new wave shit like you and it's not necessarily bad it's just not his scene. He just doesn't mess with some of that gay granola stuff.

INDIA

Oh. So it's like that.

Mary flushes and pulls up her skirt. She goes to wash her hands, and India sits on the toilet.

MARY

No it's not like that it's not like nothing-

INDIA

I thought you liked girls?

A silence.

MARY

I don't right now.

INDIA

Yeah ok. Right cause you lovveeee dick.

MARY

Yeah! I do!!!!

INDIA

Whatever.

MARY

You' weren't always like this. Like we used to talk about boys.

INDIA

I've always liked girls Mary. You know that.

MARY

I know.

A silence. Mary tries to sit on the toilet with India. She squeezes her way on until they're both hanging off. They're facing opposite directions.

MARY

Did you ever like me?

Another silence.

INDIA

I think so. But for a while I was afraid that I hated you instead.

MARY

I think I liked you too.

INDIA

I think we got too close.

MARY

Disgustingly close nauseatingly close.

INDIA

We used to kiss to SZA.

MARY

Well it's hard not to.

INDIA

True.

MARY

I can't believe I let myself do that.

INDIA

Was it so bad?

MARY

It was just random. It wasn't like me.

INDIA

Does Amir know?

A long silence.

MARY

He knows I'm attracted to women, yes.

INDIA

But does he know about me?

MARY

That's your business.

INDIA

Do you talk about me at all?

MARY

I don't like to but I can't really help it.

A silence. India gets up from the toilet. She fixes her outfit in the mirror. She is getting ready to leave when-

MARY

We're moving in together.

INDIA

.....

Ew.

MARY

Don't be rude.

INDIA

How could you move in with him?

MARY

I love him.

INDIA

Sure. Right.

MARY

I'll be out by the end of the month.

INDIA

You already found a place?

MARY

We started looking in the winter.

INDIA

I don't know how I started to miss so much of our life.

MARY

You don't talk to me anymore. You never text me anymore and we used to only send voice memos. I never hear your voice and I used to hear your voice right after you woke up or when you were upset or when you saw something funny and now I feel like I'm starting to forget what you sound like. I don't know when I stopped being safe to you.

INDIA

You pulled away first. You snatched yourself away. I didn't even see it when it was happening but all of a sudden you were gone. You made up your mind and decided to hate me, and I could see myself growing disgusting in your eyes and do you know how it feels to be looked at with disgust? To be looked at and see a rage you've never known and what was once family became distant.

MARY

Sometimes I look at you and something inside of me boils over. I can't stand it.

INDIA

I know what you mean. I know that feeling.

MARY

I feel like I'm burning. And you're both putting it out and fanning me to nothing.

A brief pause.

INDIA

You're right, you know. Sometimes I look at you and I just wanna take shit from you. I wanna take your hair and your hips-

MARY

Well I want your ass, your titties-

INDIA

If I cut here will you start cutting there?

MARY

And we meet in the middle?

They laugh a little bit, which leads to another silence.

INDIA

I knew you were leaving. I didn't want to say anything. I saw a box in your room. I didn't want to believe it but I knew it was true and I knew he was taking you out too. I feel like he knocked me off the chair.

MARY

You always say I replaced you he replaced you and it pisses me off because he is so much more. I love him, I am in love with him. I trust him, and I was always trying to trust you. But he brings out a comfort in me, I know him, I know how he lives, and we're going to live together. I mean really live.

INDIA

It's like you lost your virginity and found a religion.

MARY

It is not my fault that I became sexually active before you.

INDIA

I'm not jealous.

MARY

I never said you were.

INDIA

I'm not jealous at all in fact I'm disgusted. I bet he washes his dick five times a day. I bet he shaves his ass crack. I bet you fuck a man who shaves his ass crack and can't admit that he's gay.

MARY

He's not gay.

INDIA

He's hairless like a mole rat and showers five times a day.

MARY

He's always in the gym. It's easier to take it all off.

INDIA

Whatever.

(pause)

Are you sleeping at the house tonight?

MARY

I'm going straight to Amir's.

INDIA

Right.

MARY

We're trying to take all the time we can you know to get used to it.

INDIA

Yeah.

MARY

But I'll see you.

INDIA

Yeah.

MARY

Like I'm still at the salon.

INDIA

Right.

MARY

But I'll see you.

INDIA

Yeah. I'll see you.

They give each other a nod. Mary takes a minute to compose herself, prepare herself to be social again, and exits the bathroom.

[AN: An outtake]

MARY

It's easier this way. Before it felt like all we had was to resent each other or lock in at every knuckle and be partners. But both always felt blinding, like both were true and real and sometimes I really hated you, because I think you felt a freedom I didn't. I think you found a freedom through being off it and sometimes I wish I had the chance. But now I see a third path, and I'm with Amir, and he's clearing the way.

INDIA

Sometimes I want to take everything from you. Sometimes I wish I were pretty in the way that you were and I had hips like you did and I were feminine like you and if I could talk to room like you I think I'd get a lot more of what I want. I'm hurt when you get things and I want to help when you don't.

FADE TO BLUE

THIS WAS HIGH SCHOOL

The Livingroom. Some reggae is blasting from the dining room. A LIVING AUNTIE VETTE interpretive dances throughout the space. It's supposed to be funny, like she's showing something to someone. It goes to the song. She should do this for a few beats before INDIA joins the stage.

India sits, and enters the scene like she's been there the entire time.

Some 90s reggae music video is being projected over the stage.

ALIVE AUNTI E VETTE

On da town da beast is loose-

She makes bird noises.

INDIA

That's not even the right song.

ALIVE AUNTI E VETTE

Well actually that song takes from this song which takes from Marley.

She starts to get tired.

INDIA

Figures.

ALIVE AUNTI E VETTE

(breathes between words)

Do you know this song.

It's something like Miguel or Seal.

INDIA

Uh yah.

ALIVE AUNTI E VETTE

Well it's good. Okok now I have a good one. Quick, who am I?

She starts to do her own lame interpretation of the Rhythm Nation choreography.

ALIVE AUNTI E VETTE

5, 4, 3, 2-

Someone bangs on the door.

INDIA

Shit.

ALIVE AUNTI E VETTE

Maybe don't answer. Look out the blinds first.

India peaks out the blinds. India opens the door. It's Mary, and she's wearing a...

MARY

Look at this hotep attire.

It's one of those Motherland type prom dresses.

ALIVE AUNTI E VETTE

I loovveeee it ohhhh so pretty

INDIA

What the hell?

MARY

This is what my mom wants me to wear to prom.

INDIA

Ahah. AhahahahahahaahhahahahAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA. You boutta be one of those.

MARY

This is not funny this is not funny.

INDIA

What happened to what you picked out?

Mary mermaid waddles to the couch and lays on a diagonal.

MARY

I showed her the silk one right the real Y2K one and she's gonna go and tell me silk is a Whore's Fabric and I'm too voluptuous for all that.

INDIA

Is it 1892.

MARY

That's what I said.

ALIVE AUNTI E VETTE

Well I think this is nice. These little fast girls got everybody thinking you can show up to your junior prom ready for the pole.

INDIA

Auntie Vette you can't say that!!

MARY

We don't slut shame anymore.

ALIVE AUNTI E VETTE

Maaan what are you talking about.

INDIA

We're nicer now. We don't point out peoples bodies or comment on their clothes or talk about their hair.

ALIVE AUNTI E VETTE

Uh. Ok. But if I can see it.....what am I gonna say about it?

INDIA

Just say nothing.

ALIVE AUNTI E VETTE

You mean to tell me if I saw someone with their gut all out titties jiggling hair atrocious I can't say NOTHING?

INDIA

Yeah.

ALIVE AUNTI E VETTE

Tuh. Okay.

INDIA

So what are you gonna do about this dress?

MARY

I have to wear it.

INDIA

It's giving Coming to America.

MARY

I know. It's bad.

INDIA

But you do look good. It fits you well.

MARY

It's flattening my ass.

INDIA

I don't know if that's possible.

MARY

Are you looking?

INDIA

Girl I'm aaaaaaalllllwaaaaayyysssss looking. Damn!

MARY

Hahahahahahahahahahahahahaahhahahhahahaha. Thanks.

INDIA

Anytime.

ALIVE AUNTI E VETTE

You girls are so strange.

INDIA

That's just how we joke.

Mary attempts to turn on her side.

The girls try to communicate silently. Auntie Vette feels left out.

ALIVE AUNTI E VETTE

I'm going to start working on dinner.

INDIA
Okay.

She slowly leaves. The girls continue to look at each other and communicate silently.

MARY
You believe this shit?

INDIA
Yeah. It's ridiculous.

MARY
She never listens to me.

INDIA
Mom's aren't supposed to.

MARY
She thinks I'm still practicing, that I care about the church.

INDIA
At this point she's only holding out hope.

MARY
What are you wearing?

INDIA
I think I was gonna wear one of my aunt's old suits.

MARY
Oh. Really?

INDIA
Yeah.

MARY
I thought we were both gonna go for it?

INDIA
Yes. Right. Well. I was thinking about that. I think I would be more comfortable in a suit.

MARY

That's what everyone would expect.

INDIA

Yeah but. Maybe they expect it because it's right, it's what's true.

MARY

I just feel like this is our last chance.

INDIA

Right.

MARY

And you could look sooooo pretty-

INDIA

Yeah. I know, I know-

MARY

What if you just wore black? Really simple, like a velvet.

INDIA

What year is this 2016?

MARY

Ew. You're right.

INDIA

I know I'm right.

MARY

Well we could match.

INDIA

Yeah right.

MARY

Your aunt would loovveee to see that.

INDIA

She'll just think we're dating.

MARY

I'm pretty sure she already does.

INDIA

Hahahahahahaha.

MARY

Yeah hahahahahahha.

INDIA

Damn.

MARY

What?

INDIA

It's all ending.

MARY

I'm ready.

INDIA

Cause you know what's next.

MARY

Who really knows what's next?

INDIA

You got into UPitt.

MARY

Yeah, but, I haven't accepted yet.

INDIA

You haven't?

MARY

Yeah I....I'm just not really sure.

INDIA

What's there to be sure about?

MARY

Money is real bro.

INDIA

Bro. I know. Like I didn't even know.

MARY

Yeah. I'm like???

INDIA

Right?

MARY

They didn't give me enough either.

INDIA

Damn. Really?

MARY

Yeah I guess...I didn't have enough to show for myself.

INDIA

You have plenty to show. You're the smartest person I know.

MARY

Yeah but it's not that hard to be smart here. People are dumb as fuck. But I'm not smart in the world.

INDIA

What does that mean anyway? What's so different about out there?

MARY

They know about money younger. They get to touch it.

INDIA

For us it's been a hypothetical. For us it's always been some pennies and nickels.

MARY

I don't even know what I want to do anyway. I just want to make money.

INDIA

I think that's a good goal.

MARY

You should have applied. I would have helped you.

INDIA

I don't know if school is for me.

DATE TONIGHT

The stage is cleared away of everything reminiscent of the Living Room. Finally India steps outside.

A small café table and two chairs sit center stage.

India and Jo sit at the table. They're sort of playing footsies this entire time. They have to touch each other in some way the entire scene.

INDIA

This coffee is making me sweat.

JO

Ewwwww.

INDIA

I'm sorrysorry I shouldn't have said that sorry.

JO

No I'm playing. That was funny. It's not even that hot.

INDIA

I think I'm just nervous.

Jo puffs up her chest.

JO

Nervous to see this beautiful face?

India whacks Jo repeatedly.

INDIA

Shut up shut up what are you a Leo?

JO

Leo rising, actually.

INDIA

Oh wooooow.

JO

What about you?

INDIA

I'm a Scorpio rising. What's your sun?

JO

Taurus. I'm hard headed.

INDIA

Oh. So we go together.

JO

Oh yeah?

INDIA

Yeah I'm uh, I'm a Cancer.

JO

Really? How come I never knew that about you?

INDIA

Never had the chance.

JO

Right. You were always with....

INDIA

Yeah.....always I guess hahahaha.

JO

Sorry. I didn't mean to bring her up.

INDIA

It's fine it's fine she comes up I gotta deal.

JO

Right.

INDIA

But she haunts me. Like she's stuck to me.

JO

I wish I were stuck you to.

INDIA

Grossssssss-

JO

Yeah hahahaha I know I know.

INDIA

You know I didn't really expect.....like I never thought we'd be here.

JO

I always hoped we would.

INDIA

Yeah?

JO

Yeah. I always thought you were cute.

INDIA

I always thought you were cute too.

JO

Even when I'd only wear anime t-shirts?

INDIA

Well okay actually not then that was cringe.

Jo wacks at India's hands. India pretends to be hurt.

JO

I'm sorry I'm sorry god I'm really sorry-

INDIA

It's okay. I'm kidding.

JO

India that's not funny.

INDIA

Ok. Sorry.

JO

Do you even know how big of an issue domestic violence among lesbian couples is?

INDIA

Well good thing we're not a lesbian couple.

JO

First you guilt me and now my heart too.

They laugh a little. They go back to playing with each others fingers.

INDIA

Philly is so gay.

JO

I agree.

INDIA

I feel like I'm just noticing now.

JO

I feel like that's the way it goes. When you're first coming out.

INDIA

It's like....it used to feel like it was just me.