

ANDRE THE
PROPHET

By
Cleo House-Keller

ANDRE THE PROPHET

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To the teachers, friends and mentors who have profoundly shaped my journey in theatre:

Cindy Ramage, my high school drama coach, for igniting my passion. David Crawford, for affirming that a 14-year-old me that I had something to offer in the world of theatre. Larry & Sue Wisdom, for their powerful inspiration. Anne Bomar, for always speaking the truth. Tasha Jayroe, for her boundless kindness. Damon Price, for his unwavering camaraderie. Angela Akers, for her motivating spirit. C.

Lee Turner, for showing me the realm of possibilities. Linda Donahue, for her invaluable mentorship. Radhica, Liz, & Nadia, for their artistry and friendship. Sandy Feinstein, for her mentorship, friendship and steadfast belief in me.

And to my husband, Schannon, for loving me more than I could ever deserve.

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CHARACTERS

ANDRE – early 20’s. Black man. Both handsome and intellectual.

JIMMY – mid 30’s. Black man. Full of bravado, energetic and dark. Andre’s brother.

ANGIE – 21 years old. Black woman. Joyful, perceptive and a caretaker. Andre’s sister.

DEAN – early 40’s. Black man. A handyman by trade that has known Andre since he was a teen. His past misconduct has left lasting scars on Andre and his family.

MAXINE – 30’s – 40’s. Black woman. We see her both in flashback and in the spirit world. In flashback she is world weary but loving; in the spirit world she is free. Andre’s mother.

GRANNY – 60’s+. Black woman. Enlightened, funny and no nonsense. Andre’s grandmother. (Can be played by the actor cast as Maxine.)

EQUIANO – 30’s+. Black man. Andre’s grandfather.

HERCULES – 30’s+. Black man. Equiano’s lover.

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SCENE 1

All present-day scenes take place in the home which should never be represented realistically. Lights up on ANDRE a handsome black man, twenty-something, with the body of an off-season football player is standing in the living room of his mother's house. After a moment JIMMY, Andre's brother, enters. He is thirty-five years old. Andre is startled at the sight of Jimmy, so much so that he seems to stand at attention. A beautifully decorated urn sits on a small table. The urn is omnipresent.

JIMMY. Guess who's back in the house?! What's going on college boy?

ANDRE. Hey.

JIMMY. My lil' bro a college graduate. That's what's good Dre!

ANDRE. Yeah. Thanks.

JIMMY. Sorry, I couldn't make it to your welcome home party yesterday. You know how it is. Them white folks working. (Imitating Michael Jackson) "Got me working, working day and night!" But hey, Black Lives Matter! Right? (*He cracks himself up. Laughing at his own joke.*) For real though Dre', my bad.

ANDRE. Don't worry about it. So, I hear you're working now?

JIMMY. Don't act so surprised. I'm not a bum man.

ANDRE. I'm just asking.

JIMMY. And I'm just saying.

ANDRE. I didn't mean nothing by it. I'm happy for you. (*Beat.*) You got benefits?

JIMMY. Nawl it's part-time. Where's momma? (*Calling out.*) Momma. Momma!

ANDRE. I guess she ain't here.

JIMMY. She ain't here? She ain't here? (*Jimmy laughing uncontrollably.*)

ANDRE. You drunk?

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JIMMY. (Mimicking Andre.) You drunk? Oh, so you talking black now, eh College?

ANDRE. What do you want Jimmy?

JIMMY. Janet Jackson face-down and ass up.

ANDRE. Man, that woman is probably seventy-five.

JIMMY. She got needs too. (*Sits and props his feet up.*)

ANDRE. Get your feet off that. You don't live here.

JIMMY. And neither do you.

ANDRE. Make yourself useful. Maybe do something around here to help out.

JIMMY. You think you know everything about every "thang." You don't know everything. I'm always doing stuff. She owes me fifty dollars for some work I did last week.

ANDRE. You charging your own momma?

JIMMY. What we got going on ain't none of your damn business.

ANDRE. You got that right.

JIMMY. I gotta go. I'm gone be late. (*Beat.*) Let me hold fifty dollars, then you can get it from momma.

ANDRE. I don't have nothing for you Jimmy.

JIMMY. Well, I guess I'll be waiting then. What's to eat in there?

ANDRE. I don't know. Probably not much.

JIMMY. You mean to tell me you ate up all the food from the party? Greedy niggas eat you out of house and home. That's why I don't mess with niggas like that!

ANDRE. There ain't no "niggas" living here.

JIMMY. What you mean ain't no niggas live here? Shut yo face fool. Over there talking like you Obama. It ain't like you went to Yale. Your cotton-pickin' ass down there at State. What you study up at that college anyway?

ANDRE. You know what my major was Jimmy.

JIMMY. Remind me. Go on, remind me Dre.

ANDRE. Art History.

JIMMY. (*Perplexed.*) For real?

ANDRE. Yeah.

JIMMY. I heard you got a job and was moving to Hot 'Lanta.

ANDRE. I start in a couple of days. I'm flying out in the morning.

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JIMMY. I'd thought you'd be studying something like religion, or something to do with ghosts and spirits.

ANDRE. Nope, art.

JIMMY. And you found a job with that?

ANDRE. I just told you.

JIMMY. Doing what?

ANDRE. I'm going to be an archivist's assistant.

JIMMY. That don't sound like much money. You ever see any more ghosts? When we were kids, you had them folks down there at that church all wrapped up in your stories.

ANDRE. People change.

JIMMY. You were supposed to go off and be a preacher or an evangelist.

ANDRE. Like I said, people change.

JIMMY. Man, don't they? Speaking of changing. Guess who I ran into other day. Kelly Daniels.

ANDRE. Oh yea? I haven't seen her in years.

JIMMY. She was fine too. It's a shame you let that go.

ANDRE. Well, when I figured out, I enjoyed the company of men, it didn't feel fair to her. You need something?

JIMMY. Fetch me a beer.

ANDRE. I am not your maid.

JIMMY. You got a problem with me Dre? You need to stop smelling yourself before you mess around and get—

ANDRE. Take another step —

JIMMY. Sit your faggot ass down. You can't fight. (*They fight but it's more like wrestling.*)

ANDRE. I told you- (*Andre is getting the better of Jimmy.*)

JIMMY. Get off me man.

ANDRE. Call me a faggot again!

JIMMY. Get off me man. Nothing worse than a black faggot!

ANDRE. I'm not going to be called too many more faggots, you understand me?

JIMMY. Fuck you nigga.

ANDRE. No fuck you bitch!

JIMMY. I'm gone choke the livin' shit out of you! (*Jimmy turns the*

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tides and gets Andre into a hold.)

ANDRE. Let me go, you're drunk!

JIMMY. I know and you're an asshole! What's your problem? You done trying to fight? I'm gone let you up but if you come at me again I'm gone have to knock yo ass out. You understand? (*Andre nods. Jimmy releases him.*) We've got to be the shittiest brothers known to man.

ANDRE. I need to clean up this mess. (*Surveying the damage to room.*)

JIMMY. (*Pause.*) My bad man. I'm sorry.

ANDRE. What do you have to be sorry about?

JIMMY. I'm sorry...for being an asshole.

ANDRE. Jimmy...you are the worst.

JIMMY. What?

ANDRE. What kind of brother are you? I don't know what's worse...

JIMMY. You think you win the prize for brother of the year?

ANDRE. You never liked me. I've always known that.

JIMMY. What the fuck are you talking about? You ain't getting all pissy about some light skinned fag jokes? You don't see me walking around like a broke down slave just because folks used to jones on me for being the blackest mutha in the room. You and Angie used to call me a friggin' 'black skash' whatever the fuck that is.

ANDRE. That was kind of funny and still don't know where we got the word 'skash' from. (*Lightly chuckles.*)

JIMMY. Ain't nobody laughing over here.

ANDRE. God man, you used to tell me I was adopted. That momma found me on the side of the road with a bunch of trash.

JIMMY. Aww boy, come on now. What big brother doesn't give his kid brother the blues. That's just how it goes.

ANDRE. I guess.

JIMMY. You was always such a little girl about that shit.

ANDRE. See there you go. We can't have moment without you...

JIMMY. You need to stop being so sensitive. Learn to handle it. You been a crybaby since we were kids. Just man up and handle it.

ANDRE. I handled it alright...nine years old...You had all of my respect and then...you called me a sissy and a punk...a nine year

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old...that tore me up because...I knew you were right. I just thought that it was my secret. You made me feel dirty and awful about it. It was the one thing that...it was the one thing about me that I was okay with. Maybe I was even proud of it but when you said that...to that little boy. I thought all of me was bad, that there wasn't one part of me that was good or special. Not how I looked not, and definitely not who I was on the inside.

JIMMY. You getting way too deep. Why are you holding on to that?

ANDRE. Because you took something away from me. I could have...I don't know what...I'll never know how you changed me with those words.

JIMMY. Changed you? I couldn't change - I can't change myself, much less anybody else.

ANDRE. Don't play dumb, you know what I'm saying.

JIMMY. Who's playing? What did you expect me to do? You think you special? You were jumping up and down on the bed with a towel on your head acting like you had long hair, with Angie's Barbie doll in your hand. Every other week you had Angie's dolls stashed away in your room. When we found 'em, you done jacked 'em up with messed up make-overs. Raggedy haircuts, socks for dresses, and drew on some clown make-up. What was I supposed to do when I found you like that? Just leave you alone?

ANDRE. Yes!

JIMMY. If I thought for a minute that I was really hurting you, man -

ANDRE. I ran away for Christ's sake.

JIMMY. I was a kid too. I didn't know. But look at you now. Shoot, you doing better than *me*. Went to college. You got all big and jacked. Now you about to head to Hot-lanta.

ANDRE. Come on Jimmy.

JIMMY. I ain't mean to hurt you, but if that's what it took - I'm glad I did it. If I hadn't... You could've ended up a drag queen or something.

ANDRE. There are definitely worse things I could be.

JIMMY. Not in our family there ain't.

ANDRE. (*Pointedly.*) How about a liar, a cheat, and a thief?

JIMMY. (*Laughing.*) You should be careful.

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ANDRE. Careful with what?

JIMMY. Be careful not to get punched in your fat mouth.

ANDRE. You need to go. Momma going to be pissed she find you here while she's not here.

JIMMY. (*Getting up to leave.*) It's all you then. Tell her I came by?

ANDRE. (*Nod.*) Cool.

JIMMY. (*He starts to exit.*)

ANDRE. You shouldn't be driving in your condition.

JIMMY. And you really shouldn't be a sissy. (*Enter ANGIE. Their sister. A vivacious twenty-one-year-old.*)

ANGIE. Hey y'all!

ANDRE. What the...I thought you couldn't make it?

ANGIE. I found a sitter.

ANDRE. I'm so glad you made it! Where's that beautiful husband?

ANGIE. Who do you think is the sitter? Scott's fine. We played a game of rock, paper, scissors to see who could leave the house.

ANDRE. And I guess you won.

JIMMY. No shit Sherlock. So, you abandoning your baby?

ANGIE. Jimmy, the baby is with Scott. And actually I lost the game but I got my man wrapped around my fingers.

JIMMY. That nigga gay.

ANGIE. Watch your mouth. That's my husband you're talking about.

ANDRE. Ignore him. How is my little nephew?

ANGIE. Getting bigger every day. You know I brought tons of pictures for you. It's so good to see you Mr. College graduate. A reporter too. I'm so proud of you!

JIMMY. He ain't a reporter. He only got an art degree. He's gonna be archivist.

ANGIE. Have a nice day.

JIMMY. Y'all gonna double team me? Just like old times.

ANGIE. Have you been drinking?

JIMMY. Were you a teen mom?

ANDRE. Shut up, Jimmy.

JIMMY. How old is my nephew?

ANGIE. He's three.

JIMMY. Wait. You're twenty-one?

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ANGIE. And?

JIMMY. Like I said, teen mom.

ANDRE. See ya later Jimmy.

JIMMY. I'm leaving. Hell, I'm already gone. You know I didn't mean no harm Angie. Listen, y'all make sure you leave that door open. I might have to come back later.

ANDRE. We ain't leaving no doors open for you.

JIMMY. Hey-*Andrea*-take it down a notch.

ANGIE. What is going on?

ANDRE. You don't want to know.

JIMMY. We're just catching up.

ANGIE. Sorry I missed your party but you should get yourself together so we can head over to the Pancake House, I'm starving.

ANDRE. Sounds good to me.

JIMMY. (*To Angie.*) Hey sis, let me hold fifty dollars.

ANGIE. I need you help me get some stuff out of the car that I brought over for mom.

JIMMY. Let me help.

ANDRE. I can get it.

JIMMY. Hey...Angie. You ignoring me?

ANGIE. Fine, Jimmy you can help.

JIMMY. I'll meet you there and we're going to talk more about this fifty dollars. (*Jimmy exits.*)

ANGIE. Really good to see you. (*Looking in Jimmy's direction.*) He's kind of sad, right?

ANDRE. Yeah, it's going around. (*Angie exits. End of scene.*)

SCENE 2

Andre alone. The lights shift and we are now in a flashback. Andre is twelve years old. His mother, MAXINE enters. She is a tall curvy black woman i.e. a Queen Latifah type. Her hair is wrapped and she is wearing a long robe or house coat. A young Andre is singing.)

ANDRE. Today is my birthday. Thank you, Jesus! Hallelujah! Today

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is my birthday.

MAXINE. Good morning, Dre.

ANDRE. (*Startled.*) Morning momma.

MAXINE. Happy birthday. Thirteen years old that's big birthday.

ANDRE. It's good.

MAXINE. You fix you something to eat yet?

ANDRE. No ma'am. (*Andre crosses to center and sits on the floor. He mimes turning on a television. The sounds of a cartoon can be heard. His face is illuminated by light from the television.*)

MAXINE. You want some cereal? Dre? (*Maxine crosses and turns down the volume.*) Dre.

ANDRE. Ma'am?

MAXINE. Do you want some cereal?

ANDRE. Yes, ma'am. (*Beat.*) Momma, where you been?

MAXINE. What are you talking about?

ANDRE. Why did we have to stay over to Ms. Mabel's for so long?

MAXINE. For so long? It was only three days. And don't you worry about what I'm doing. You stay out of grown folks' business. Ya here me?

ANDRE. Yes ma'am.

MAXINE. I saw your daddy.

ANDRE. Y'all getting back together?

MAXINE. No, we are not.

ANDRE. Jimmy still at daddy's house?

MAXINE. Yes, he is.

ANDRE. Him and daddy coming over here?

MAXINE. Boy, you are worse than the FBI. You got any more questions?

ANDRE. No ma'am.

MAXINE. Here's your cereal. (*Sitting alongside Andre.*) You alright Dre?

ANDRE. Ma'am?

MAXINE. Are you alright?

ANDRE. Yes ma'am.

MAXINE. What happened last night?

ANDRE. Ma'am?

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MAXINE. You heard me.

ANDRE. Oh. You talking about at church?

MAXINE. Yes, I am.

ANDRE. At the youth revival?

MAXINE. Did you go to more than one church last night?

ANDRE. No ma'am.

MAXINE. Alright then.

ANDRE. Nuthin' happened.

MAXINE. Nothing, hunh?

ANDRE. Yeah.

MAXINE. Excuse me?

ANDRE. Yes ma'am.

MAXINE. I heard you caught the Holy Ghost.

ANDRE. (*Defensive.*) I didn't catch the Holy Ghost.

MAXINE. I figured it must have been the Holy Ghost since Mabel told me that you were in the back of the church shouting and dancing with a bunch of kids. Up in the church acting a plum fool!

ANDRE. She said that? We wasn't really doing nothing.

MAXINE. Oh? Now it's all coming back to you?

ANDRE. We didn't mean nothing by it.

MAXINE. I want you to have a good time in church. I'm glad that you're having fun but don't be making a mockery of the Holy Ghost.

ANDRE. I wasn't making a mock.

MAXINE. What did I say?

ANDRE. I won't be making a mock.

MAXINE. Alright then. So everything's okay?

ANDRE. Yes ma'am.

MAXINE. Hmm. Mabel said you were the last one to leave the altar after prayer service. She said you were up there just a crying your eyes out. You weren't up there playing, were you?

ANDRE. (*Emphatically.*) I wasn't playing.

MAXINE. Then what you got to be so sad about?

ANDRE. I wasn't sad...I was just praying.

MAXINE. Your sister told me that you were crying too. She didn't know what was wrong with you. It must have been the Lord working through you, manifesting your gift, hunh?

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ANDRE. It wasn't nothing momma.

MAXINE. (*Silent.*)

ANDRE. (*Crunching or slurping on the cereal.*)

MAXINE. Alright. We're just going to sit right here until you tell me what's going on with you. (*An extended silence.*)

ANDRE. I don't know...

MAXINE. Just spit it out boy. It can't be all that bad.

ANDRE. Yes ma'am.

MAXINE. (*Waiting.*)

ANDRE. (*Avoiding.*)

MAXINE. (*Impatient.*) What? What are you so scared of?

ANDRE. It's not that momma.

MAXINE. What is it then?

ANDRE. (*Hoping she'll give up.*)

MAXINE. (*Tired of waiting.*)

ANDRE. (*Blurting it out.*) I don't want to go to hell.

MAXINE. You're just a child. You ain't had time to do nothing worth going to hell over.

ANDRE. Yes ma'am.

MAXINE. I don't know what you're worried about.

ANDRE. The pastor...

MAXINE. What about her?

ANDRE. She preached that God can do anything for us.

MAXINE. Amen, that's right.

ANDRE. That no matter what problems we have, no problem is too big for God to solve.

MAXINE. That's the gospel.

ANDRE. I don't know. It just made me cry.

MAXINE. Why? Dre, why did *that* make you cry?

ANDRE. Because I think...nevermind.

MAXINE. What?

ANDRE. I don't want to say it. I can't say it.

MAXINE. You can tell me.

ANDRE. I can't.

MAXINE. (*Maxine gets up and goes to get paper and a pen.*) Here. Write it down. (*Andre takes the paper and scribbles the words. He*

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gives the paper back to his mother. She reads aloud.) “I think I’m gay.” *(Pause.)* Why do you think this?

ANDRE. Because...I don’t know. I dream about...being with boys from my classes. I dream about being with boys the way boys at school talk about being with girls in our class. I’m scared cause last week the pastor preached about that city in the Bible where all those people burnt up because there were so many gay folks living there. I don’t want to be burned up.

MAXINE. Listen to me. Most folks go through a time or phase in their life when they’re curious about...stuff. That don’t make you any one way. Just makes you a teenager. Now put those thoughts out of your head. You are fine. Ain’t nothing wrong with you and you are definitely not... *(Rips up the paper.)* this. Okay? Okay? You hear me?

ANDRE. Yes ma’am.

MAXINE. I have to go get ready for work. You make sure your sister wakes up before ten. If she sleeps any later she won’t want to go to bed tonight. You hear me?

ANDRE. I will. Momma I-

MAXINE. Stop dwelling on that. You are fine. It’s been prophesized that you will be a great minister. The Lord knows... He ain’t going to let that nothing happen to ruin that.

ANDRE. Yes ma’am.

MAXINE. Come here. *(Andre crosses to his mother. She hugs him and squeezes him tight. She kisses his face. Maxine exits. The lights shift back to present day as Angie enters.)*

ANGIE. *(Carrying her bag.)* Hey big head.

ANDRE. What?

ANGIE. You lost in it ain’t ya?

ANDRE. What are you talking about?

ANGIE. You’re all in your head. I understand. Coming home can dredge up all kinds of mess you thought was buried.

ANDRE. I’ve missed you.

ANGIE. I’ve missed you too. But you went off to college. Left us all here and got grown up.

ANDRE. Earlier...Why did you say it was kind of sad?

ANGIE. I guess cause it makes you think about the good times and

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the bad times too. Seeing you like this. But make no mistake I am so happy to see you.

ANDRE. You are the best.

ANGIE. Thank you kind sir.

ANDRE. How's married life?

ANGIE. It's going great.

ANDRE. And?

ANGIE. I need your help.

ANDRE. What are you talking about?

ANGIE. When I introduced you to Scott, you never got a...gay vibe?

ANDRE. Your husband isn't gay.

ANGIE. But Jimmy, you heard him-

ANDRE. Jimmy thinks any man without toxic masculinity is gay.

ANGIE. You're right.

ANDRE. Yeah, girl. Y'all are fine.

ANGIE. (*Beat.*) I think Scott might be cheating.

ANDRE. What makes you say that?

ANGIE. He comes home late from work. He jumps right into the shower. We get hang up calls all the time at the house.

ANDRE. Y'all still have a landline?

ANGIE. Would you focus?

ANDRE. Sorry.

ANGIE. There are just things. I shake the doubt and I need to know. I need you to find out. You can do that for me?

ANDRE. You want me to spy on him?

ANGIE. I want you to see him. Dream about him. Have a vision...Something.

ANDRE. I'm not a witch. I don't have any powers. What are you thinking.

ANGIE. (*Thrusting a watch towards him.*) Here. Take it. We didn't call you Andre the prophet for nothing.

ANDRE. Why are you giving me a watch?

ANGIE. It's his watch.

ANDRE. (*Giving it back.*) Here. Girl you are crazy.

ANGIE. No. Use it to connect to him.

ANDRE. What do you want me to do with this?

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ANGIE. Sleep with it under your pillow. I don't friggin' know. I saw on the Discovery Channel that you need a personal item from the person in order to make contact.

ANDRE. Angie. I'm not a fortune teller or a medium. I never knew where those visions came from and I'm not 100% they were real.

ANGIE. You were very certain then.

ANDRE. I was a kid.

ANGIE. Fine. I'm just so stressed and tired. Keep the watch. Maybe something will come of it. I'm going to lie down.

ANDRE. You just got here. What happened to pancakes.

ANGIE. Oh yeah. Sorry. Later? (*Angie exits.*)

SCENE 3

Dean enters. He is an awkward looking black man, forty-years old. He has a look that is part academic and part handy-man. He looks strong.

DEAN. You're looking really good Dre.

ANDRE. What are you doing here?

DEAN. I've missed you.

ANDRE. Oh, okay.

DEAN. Can I get a hug?

ANDRE. I don't think that is a great idea.

DEAN. Why you standing all the way over there?

ANDRE. I'm just fine all the way over here.

DEAN. You do look fine.

ANDRE. Dean, why are you here?

DEAN. For you.

ANDRE. How long will this take?

DEAN. What do you mean?

ANDRE. How long are you going play this game of cat and mouse with me?

DEAN. Not long.

ANDRE. This is my mother's house.

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DEAN. Rules? We can bend all the rules we want now that you're back with me. You used to be a really good assistant.

ANDRE. I've lost my touch.

DEAN. I'd bet you haven't.

ANDRE. You'd lose.

DEAN. You expecting somebody?

ANDRE. Soon.

DEAN. How soon?

ANDRE. Soon.

DEAN. (*Crossing toward Andre.*) You look good. Real...nice. What brings you here?

ANDRE. (*Flattered, nervous, and attracted.*) I'm not here for long. Just came to say goodbye.

DEAN. You sure about that?

ANDRE. I'm just here to say my goodbyes.

DEAN. I was never good at goodbyes.

ANDRE. I'm leaving.

DEAN. Okay. I'll play. When are you leaving?

ANDRE. Tonight. Tomorrow. My flight leaves tomorrow.

DEAN. That's plenty of time for us to play catch up. Come here. Sit on big daddy's lap.

ANDRE. (*Crossing away.*) I better not, my sister is...

DEAN. I've missed you. I didn't know just how bad until I saw you.

ANDRE. Dean don't-

DEAN. I know you missed me too. I can see it.

ANDRE. Dean, just back up a minute.

DEAN. You know you want me. You miss my smooth and shiny.

ANDRE. (*Pause. Beginning to laugh, giggle almost.*) Seriously? Are you for real? You almost had me for minute, but that brought me right back reality.

DEAN. You used to like that.

ANDRE. When I was fifteen. You haven't improved your game since then?

DEAN. I'll show you what's improved. Let's go somewhere a little more-

ANDRE. No.

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DEAN. Ain't nothing but a thang. We can make it happen right here.

ANDRE. (*Stern.*) This is not going to happen.

DEAN. You sure?

ANDRE. Yes.

DEAN. Alright. If you don't want to be got, I'll quit trying to get. I see you're still wearing my chain.

ANDRE. (*Tugging at the gold chain on his neck.*) Yeah.

DEAN. I wish I could've gotten you something for finishing college but you know how it is.

ANDRE. You didn't have to do that.

DEAN. I know.

ANDRE. Alright.

DEAN. I know you.

ANDRE. You shouldn't be here.

DEAN. Shoot me, I still care.

ANDRE. (*Annoyed.*) I don't care. I'm sorry but you really should leave.

DEAN. What's wrong with you?

ANDRE. You really want to do this?

DEAN. I've always been all about you.

ANDRE. What does that even mean?

DEAN. It means...I am all about you.

ANDRE. (*Beat.*) Why did you pick me?

DEAN. Pick you for what?

ANDRE. There were a lot of boys hanging out that day.

DEAN. That was a long, long time ago.

ANDRE. Why me?

DEAN. Don't make it sound like that.

ANDRE. I don't know how else to make it sound.

DEAN. You want to do this now?

ANDRE. I've just always wondered – why me?

DEAN. I thought you were beautiful.

ANDRE. You were twenty-eight.

DEAN. So?

ANDRE. I was thirteen. I was a kid.

DEAN. You still wear my necklace.

ANDRE THE PROPHET

ANDRE. Don't change the subject. Why me?

DEAN. Why you when? Which "why you" are you referring to?

ANDRE. What in the hell are you talking about?

DEAN. Alright you win, I'll go.

ANDRE. What? No, stay. Tell me. Why me?

DEAN. Because I knew you would come when I called. I saw who you were...and I knew that you saw me too.

ANDRE. It was wrong.

DEAN. Did it feel wrong?

ANDRE. That's not the point.

DEAN. I loved you. I still love you. (*Pause.*) You loved me back. I remember the first time we kissed.

ANDRE. It wasn't right. I remember the first time you...

DEAN. You wanted me as much as I wanted you.

ANDRE. You really don't get it.

DEAN. What is there to get? You not trying to say I...messed you up or something? I didn't ask you to come back the next day or the day after. You called me again and again. You knocked on my door.

ANDRE. I was a kid.

DEAN. Your first suit, first car - I did that -

ANDRE. I was a baby!

DEAN. You grew up! And you still chose me. At 15, 16, 17 you chose me! Don't make it dirty.

ANDRE. I didn't understand it myself. You made me feel good. I wanted to feel good...but what we did. What you allowed to happen wasn't right.

DEAN. I'll tell you this though, you ain't gonna to turn this around into somethin' ugly. I loved you. I did for you when nobody else could or would.

ANDRE. I made you love me because I didn't want to be a victim. I made believe that I loved you because if I loved you...somehow I wasn't being hurt.

DEAN. That's not true. What do you think I am? (*Reaching for him.*) I ain't the boogie man.

ANDRE. Don't touch me.

DEAN. We were good together. (*Reaching for him.*) Remember?

ANDRE THE PROPHET

ANDRE. (*Pulling away.*) If this is what you came here for-

DEAN. Don't you want me to hold you again? Have you forgotten how much you loved me?

ANDRE. Yeah. I remember.

DEAN. You do?

ANDRE. Of course.

DEAN. Remember how good I was to you?

ANDRE. I know, Dean.

DEAN. You don't want me to leave do you?

ANDRE. (*Shakes his head "No".*) This isn't how this was supposed to go at all.

DEAN. All this...is who we are. (*Dean sits. He motions for Andre to sit next to him. Andre sits but as far away as possible. Dean moves closer to Andre. Andre starts to stand up, Dean grabs him and pulls Andre onto his lap.*)

ANDRE. (*Weakly.*) No. (*Dean kisses Andre. Andre kisses him back with familiarity and welcoming.*)

DEAN. You taste so good baby. I want you to show daddy how much you've missed him.

ANDRE. Dean.

DEAN. Show me you love me.

ANDRE. Dean, I -

DEAN. Tell me. Say it.

ANDRE. No.

DEAN. Come back to me.

ANDRE. Damnit. I said stop. I don't love you.

DEAN. You're grown. No one has the right judge you.

ANDRE. You should have been mentoring me. Not fucking me!

DEAN. I don't know what you need me to say. But I'm not going to let you turn me into some monster.

ANDRE. Please. Go.

DEAN. I'm only still here because of you.

ANDRE. Goodbye Dean.

DEAN. If you need me. Call me. (*Dean exits. End of scene.*)

SCENE 4

ANDRE THE PROPHET

Andre alone. We are transported to a gay and colorful Ozian type place. GRANNY appears on a swing overhead wearing fantastically sequined African dress. She is an African version of Glenda the Good Witch. She is flanked by two men EQUIANO and HERCULES. They are the manifestation of enslaved Africans in America.

ANDRE. Grandma?

GRANNY. Hey baby.

ANDRE. Where...what...I don't--

GRANNY. Cat got your tongue?

ANDRE. What is this?

GRANNY. We just came down from Heaven.

ANDRE. What?

GRANNY. Heaven. You ain't gonna believe who's in heaven. Go on guess.

ANDRE. What?

GRANNY. Not what, who.

ANDRE. Uh, who?

GRANNY. No child, you gotta guess.

ANDRE. I wouldn't know where to start.

GRANNY. Guess!

ANDRE. Uncle Charles?

GRANNY. Nope.

ANDRE. Grand daddy?

GRANNY. Sadly no.

ANDRE. Who?

GRANNY. You giving up?

ANDRE. Granny please!

GRANNY. The gays!!!

ANDRE. The gays?

MAXINE. Can you believe it?! I almost died...again.

ANDRE. I don't understand.

GRANNY. Lesbians too! Although I'm not sure of the difference between the two. Apparently, all gays go to heaven! Well not all gays, they get shut out for pretty much all the same reasons us breeders do.

ANDRE THE PROPHET

ANDRE. Granny...?

GRANNY. I know. Who knew, right?

ANDRE. Is this for real?

GRANNY. It's in the blood. Look here! This is your great, great, great, great, great granddaddy Equiano. He was a slave! And he was a gay too!

ANDRE. Hunh?

GRANNY. This is his lover Hercules.

ANDRE. How can he be my gran-?

GRANNY. Don't be naive boy. Go on Equiano, you and Hercules explain it to him. (*Equiano and Hercules descend and approach Andre.*)

EQUIANO. You seem tired. Doesn't he seem tired my love?

HERCULES. Yes, he does. How are you?

ANDRE. (Silent.)

HERCULES. Has he been struck dumb?

EQUIANO. Speak son.

ANDRE. How...I don't...This isn't possible.

EQUIANO. It's possible. You called us forth.

ANDRE. This is possible.?

HERCULES. Hardly.

GRANNY. (*To Hercules.*) Shhh.

EQUIANO. There was a time - that your ancestors were slaves.

HERCULES. Here we go. Your grandfather loves to tell this story.

EQUIANO. May I continue?

HERCULES. Go on baby.

EQUIANO. For centuries. Millions died just coming to this country. Our lives were not our own to choose. Though you can believe we tried. Some fought or ran. Others were driven mad and drowned in the oceans, so desperate to return home. Captured and bred, as you would do livestock.

HERCULES. Not everyone bred. He did. I just couldn't. I had a cousin on the same plantation and them white folks couldn't half-way tell us apart. I would send him in my place. (*Shudders.*) Can you imagine? I couldn't stick my pole in nothing but a hot bath.

ANDRE. I'm speechless.

ANDRE THE PROPHET

HERCULES. *(To Equiano.)* You're sure he's your kin?

GRANNY. *(To Hercules.)* Ssshhh!

EQUIANO. It is much to take in. But I am here because there is strength in knowing who you truly are. There is power in knowing that you are not alone on this journey, that many have come before you. We have loved you, although we knew not of you. We were kings and queens, yes. But Hercules was a merchant in his time and I a farmer. My mother a medicine woman.

ANDRE. But you are gone! You aren't here. Not really. This is a dream! If I told momma that I was celebrating my anniversary with my...man, the only thing she'd say to me would be, "What are you having for dinner?" Nothing. She couldn't keep a man but hates on the fact I might have some love in my life simply because he has a dick?

GRANNY. Well, a girl can change, baby. And not too much on your momma, she is my daughter.

ANDRE. This is just wishful thinking. Foolishly hoping for things that are never going to change.

HERCULES. Don't be such a downer Donna. *(To Equiano.)* I think we should take him. We should prove it to him.

EQUIANO. I'm not sure.

GRANNY. Go on and do it Equiano. The boy needs it. He's ready.

EQUIANO. Will you come with us?

ANDRE. It's a dream. It's not real.

GRANNY. Then what do you have to lose?

EQUIANO. Hold out your hand. *(Andre holds out his hand. Equiano takes it.)*

ANDRE. What are you doing?

EQUIANO. You called us. We are here. Will you come?

ANDRE. I'm scared.

HERCULES. That's the first step. Come with us.

EQUIANO. It's your choice.

GRANNY. It's alright baby.

ANDRE. *(He nods.)*

EQUIANO. Close your eyes and step into the darkness. Step out, fly.

ANDRE. What? *(Lights shift. He is alone in the darkness. He closes*

ANDRE THE PROPHET

his eyes.)

EQUIANO. Fly.

ANDRE. I'm scared. What if I fall?

EQUIANO. You will not fall.

HERCULES. He might.

GRANNY. *(To Hercules.)* Ssh!

ANDRE. I'm scared.

EQUIANO. The spirit is here. Step out on faith. Believe. *(Andre pauses. He steps out into what looks to be thin air. He is floating, levitating, suspended in thin air.)*

HERCULES. Look at him go.

ANDRE. Great Grandaddy?

EQUIANO. I am here.

GRANNY. We are all here.

ANDRE. What's happening?

EQUIANO. You will see. I need you to sing.

ANDRE. I don't...

EQUIANO. You have misplaced your song but have not lost it. Sing for me...

ANDRE. Sing? What?

HERCULES. Listen. The spirits will tell you. Open up. Let them in.

ANDRE. I don't know how.

EQUIANO. Start at the beginning.

ANDRE. Alright. *(Breath.)* The beginning. *(Andre begins to hum. It is low. Almost inaudible. The humming builds and builds. It begins to sound as if it is amplified. The roar of drums, thunder, and an approaching storm can also be heard. The sounds mount and develop into a glorious crescendo...then silence.)*

EQUIANO. Sing, Andre. Sing now. *(Andre has been taken over by the spirits. He begins to speak-in-tongues. Angie appears; she is writing down what she is witnessing. Transcribing/interpreting the prophecy.)* Let the ancestors speak!

ANDRE. Shon-do-do-lo Mee-hy-hy Shon-do-do-lo Mee-hy-hy

Rah-ta-ta-ta-tay-yah Rah-ta-ta-ta-tay-yah

Hy-yo-yo-ro-ti-yo Hy-yo-yo-ro-ti-yo Hy-yo-yo-ro-ti-yo

Mashla-roh, Kai-vah-tee Mashla-roh, Kai-vah-tee

ANDRE THE PROPHET

Shon-do-do-lo Mee-hy-hy Shon-do-do-lo Mee-hy-hy (*Andre is filled with the Holy Ghost. He begins to shout and dance. There is something ritualistic, spontaneous, and dangerous about the experience. During the dance the sounds experienced at the top of the 'song' come back. At the climax the stillness returns and Andre is himself. Equiano, Hercules, and Granny are all gone. A door slams. Lights shift. Andre is alone and he is standing on the kitchen counter. End of scene.*)

SCENE 5

Jimmy is standing at the front door. Andre is standing on chair or a counter, unaware of how he got there.

JIMMY. What the fuck are you doing?

ANDRE. (*Silent.*)

JIMMY. You know, um, uh. I hear that...it get's better. Besides, you don't have nowhere near enough height to kill yourself. You ain't gone do nothing but sprang your ankle jumping off there.

ANDRE. (*Getting down.*) I'm not trying to...never mind.

JIMMY. Oh. You doing something...gay?

ANDRE. Shut up.

JIMMY. Don't get mad. I'm just asking.

ANDRE. Seriously? What do you want Jimmy?

JIMMY. Momma back yet?

ANDRE. Nope.

JIMMY. Well I'm gone wait for her. I need my money.

ANDRE. What happened to your eye?

JIMMY. Don't worry about me. What's wrong with you? What were you doing? Nothing.

JIMMY. You sure you ain't got fifty dollars?

ANDRE. You know how it is.

JIMMY. I guess. (*Pause.*) It's not the first time she's gone off.

ANDRE. What are you talking about?

JIMMY. Since you left, she don't hang around here much. Always

ANDRE THE PROPHET

talking about how she's needed...just keeping distracted if you ask me. What you doing?

ANDRE. I'm calling her.

JIMMY. She ain't gone pick up. Besides the cell reception around here is what you'd call non-existent.

ANDRE. Great. Just fabulous.

JIMMY. (*Teasingly.*) Fabulous?

ANDRE. What? Oh, I get it.

JIMMY. No you don't.

ANDRE. You still got a problem with me?

JIMMY. Man, I don't care if you suck dick. Just be good at it. Ain't nothing worse than a bad blow job. (*Beat.*) The only person that seems to care about you being gay around here is you. (*Angie enters.*)

ANDRE. Did we wake you?

ANGIE. I was waiting for you.

ANDRE. I'm going to try outside and see if I can get a signal. (*Andre exits.*)

JIMMY. What you got there?

ANGIE. Some notes for Dre.

JIMMY. About what?

ANGIE. It's personal. It's not really my place....

JIMMY. Let me see it.

ANGIE. He spoke in tongues.

JIMMY. There was a prophecy?

ANGIE. A message.

JIMMY. For who? About what?

ANGIE. Andre.

JIMMY. He made a prophecy about himself? That takes it to a whole other level. And y'all think I'm selfish.

ANGIE. Sometimes, when you open your mouth, you don't make a lick of sense.

JIMMY. Let me see it.

ANGIE. I told you it's for him.

JIMMY. It's for him? Ya'll always had a bond. I think I was just too old to ever fit in.

ANGIE. Jimmy, it's not like that.

ANDRE THE PROPHET

JIMMY. Oh yes, it is. Being the oldest kid, you get a chance to see things that the younger kids don't get to see. Like walking in on your parents fucking. After that they learn to lock the door...unless they're freaks. Yeah, being the oldest muthafuka you get the chance to know what it feels like to be special, you know, the only one. Then you get to have that ripped away from you when they have some more lil' niggas. But at least you get to be the first, right? *(Pause.)* Momma. *(Pause.)* You get to hold on to the memory of your dad leaving you and your brother in the car when he went in to knock off a piece of ass or have that shit burned in your brain when your momma finally catches him breaking off the side piece. And you really remember when they finally call it quits. *(Pause.)* Momma. *(Pause.)* When I was a kid I used to wear my Super Man pajamas for under my clothes. You probably don't remember nothing about that. Momma didn't care about me wearing the pajamas, she was busy working two jobs to pay attention to me. I'd get up fix some cereal, watch cartoons and just blow the rest of day running around the neighborhood playing ninjas and shit. I went through a spell where I was stealing shit all the time. Nothing big. Like five or ten dollars here and there. Little stuff. I'd go through my momma's purse and get some change so I could down to the store and get some penny candy. You know, little shit. This lady from the church would come over some days and make us lunch. This one time she came over, and I figured I'd help myself to some of her food stamps. Probably like five dollars? Nothing big. Man I ate good that day. Went down to the penny candy store and ate up a bunch of shit. Hard candy, Now & Laters, Coke, a Snickers...I ate good. So momma comes home that night, from killing herself all day long and calls me into her room. I don't know what she wants. I'm like, 'Ma'am?' She goes, 'Did you steal from Sista today?' 'Ma'am?' 'You heard me. Did you steal from her?' 'I took somethin.' 'Was it yours?' Her jaw was all tight. She looked more tired than angry but I knew enough to be scared. 'Go in there and lay down on my bed and take off your pants.' 'But all I'm wearing is my pj's.' 'Fine! Go on in there. I'm gonna go find that extension cord.' I went her room and laid down and waited. The lights were off but it was still dusk out and I just remember seeing her standing there in door

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way like a giant or something. Whack! ‘How many times have I told you about stealing.’ Whack! ‘How many times James?’ Whack! ‘You worse than your no good daddy!’ Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack! ‘Get on out of here. Gone.’ I walked like I had a board down my back to the bathroom. Tears running down my face. Blood running down the back of my legs. Looking in the mirror I turned around and the pajamas had ripped clean through. I could see the gashes in my back clear down to the white meat. I didn’t want to lay down again and when I tried sit it hurt too much. I had to put the toilet seat down and sit with feet on my tip toes. My legs shook and shook with these tremors. I couldn’t make ‘em stop. And I just cried. Because somebody who was supposed to love me had wrecked me. A knock on the door. ‘Can I come in?’ My mommas voice was different. She wasn’t angry. ‘Let me see, turn around. Let me look at you.’ I didn’t know what she would say or what she was thinking and then, ‘If you want the number to child protective services, I’ll give it to you. You can call them. This was...I went too far. I’m sorry.’ Her voice sounded small. Almost sounded like somebody had hurt her. ‘No ma’am’ I’m fine. I wasn’t fine but I didn’t want to send my momma to jail. I still have scars on my back from that beating. All these years later and you’d think I was a-a-a slave or something with these fuckin’ marks on my back. Sometimes...man...I think I should have called child protective services. (*Pause.*) Not really. But I guess it all sounds a cliché, at least it does to me. (*Dean enters with flowers.*)

DEAN. Is Andre here?

ANGIE. What are you doing here?

JIMMY. That fool looks like Mr. Goodwrench.

DEAN. Sorry, I didn’t know he had company.

JIMMY. Company? We family. Flowers? These niggas is really gay.

ANGIE. Dre’s not here.

DEAN. (*To Jimmy.*) You look familiar.

JIMMY. You wouldn’t know me buddy.

DEAN. Maybe I’ve seen you at church?

JIMMY. Do I look like the kind of guy that gets to church?

DEAN. I guess you just have one of those faces.

ANDRE THE PROPHET

JIMMY. I guess. (*To Angie.*) I'm gonna grab a beer and head to the can. That way y'all girls can do what girls do. (*Jimmy exits.*)

DEAN. That's interesting.

ANGIE. You shouldn't be here.

DEAN. Am I breaking a law?

ANGIE. I don't think that's how you want to play it.

DEAN. I don't like the way I left things with Dre.

ANGIE. It is what it is.

DEAN. (*Silent.*)

ANGIE. (*Shrugs. Andre enters.*)

ANDRE. What are you doing here?

ANGIE. I was asking the same thing.

DEAN. I want to start over. I want you to go away with me. You're free. It could be...our time.

ANDRE. I really don't have time for this. I'm trying to reach my mother.

DEAN. Let me help you.

ANGIE. I don't know about that.

DEAN. I'm not leaving. Let me help.

ANDRE. I guess-

ANGIE. No.

DEAN. What do you need me to do?

ANDRE. I'm trying to reach my mother.

DEAN. Okay.

ANGIE. Dre, no.

ANDRE. It'll be fine. You need to read this.

ANGIE. (*Trying to hand him the note.*)

DEAN. I've seen her.

ANGIE. What?

DEAN. Your mother. I saw her today. Over at the gas station. Said something about being on her way to a revival.

ANGIE. Why didn't you say something?

ANDRE. You never gave him the chance. (*To Dean.*) Come on let's go.

ANGIE. Read this. Dre you need to read this.

ANDRE. Dean, go, I'll be right there. (*Dean nods and exits.*)

ANDRE THE PROPHET

ANGIE. (*Handing him the note.*) Here.

ANDRE. What is it? It's a blank piece of paper. I don't have time for this. (*Andre exits. A moment then Angie looks at the paper. End of scene.*)

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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