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Carol and the Ugly Sisters: A Play in Three Acts

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CAROL AND THE UGLY SISTERS

A Play in Three Acts

by

Judith Jones

Cast of Characters

Catherine: A girl in her mid-teens.

Carol: A girl in her late teens.

Anita: A girl in her late teens.

Maggie Mae: A woman in her mid-30's.

James: A man in his late 40's;
Carol's father.

Eva: A woman in her 40's;
Carol's aunt.

Esther: A woman in her 40's;
Carol's aunt.

Martha: A woman in her 40's;
Carol's aunt;

Guy on the corner: A man in his 20's'

Mrs. Bowden: A woman in her 40's;

Anita's mother: A woman in her 40's;

Valerie: A woman in her 20's.

SCENES

Various, New York City

Time

1960's-1980's

ACT I

I-1-1

Scene 1

SETTING: Carol's family, and a small number of mourners are seated in the sanctuary of a church. A casket containing Carol's body is laid out in front of the altar.

AT RISE: Anita and Maggie Mae are seated in a pew of the church. Maggie Mae starts to cry and searches in her purse for a tissue she doesn't find.

ANITA

(Looking into the distance)

Saint John's Holiness Tabernacle!

MAGGIE MAE

(Maggie Mae is a little drunk and whimpering)

Whatcha say?

ANITA

(Still looking into the distance)

It's so ironic. Saint John's Holiness Tabernacle is the last place Carol ever wanted to be.

MAGGIE MAE

(Maggie Mae continues to whimper)

ANITA

(Anita ignores Maggie Mae)

She got through life without God, without morals and without much integrity!

MAGGIE MAE

(Maggie frowns)

Integra..., what? Integra-see? Whas intregrasee? Whachu mean by that?

ANITA

(Ignoring Maggie Mae)

Grew up any way she could.

MAGGIE MAE

But she hun, hun, hun, hun was happy Anita.

ANITA

She was never happy! Mary always drunk and James always gone!
Four kids before she was 21—she was not happy!

MAGGIE MAE

(Maggie Mae has now ripped the tissue to shreds)
The welfare give her a check to take care of them.

ANITA

She spent her life on welfare, and Mary spent most of her life
on welfare. Valerie's still on welfare!

MAGGIE MAE

(Stops crying. Looks up at Anita)
Well, Carol ain't had no husband like us, but she done all
right.

ANITA

I can see she did all right. Thirty-eight years old and dead of
Cirrhosis.

MAGGIE MAE

(Starts to cry again)
Ahhhhhhhaaaa, ahhhhhhhaaa, haa, haa. OH MY GOD, OH MY GOD, CAROL,
OH CAROL, OH NO, OH HO, HO HO!

ANITA

Maggie, would you please stop making all that noise?

MAGGIE MAE

(Ignores Anita and keeps crying)

ANITA

Maggie Mae? MAGGIE MAE!! You embarrassing me and I will have
to move to another pew if you don't stop.

MAGGIE MAE

Okay, okay, all right Anita. Umma stop. But why she have to
die?

ANITA

Maggie, you know the doctor been telling Carol to stop drinking
for years—and they told you the same thing.

MAGGIE MAE

I know, I know! I try Anita, really I do. Haaaahhh,
haaaaahhhhh. I don't wanna die, I swear to God I don't!

ANITA

(Anita rubs her face with her hand and stares off
again)

That doggone alcohol, she didn't even try to stop—always
laughing and saying *you gotta die from something*, like it was so
funny. Thirty-eight is too young to die; THAT ain't funny!

MAGGIE MAE

No.

ANITA

She never took it seriously—she knew it was gonna kill her. ...*If
it's good enough for my mother, it's good enough for me*—she
never missed an opportunity to take a drink.

MAGGIE MAE

We shoulda went to collesh like you.

ANITA

(Anita stares off)

Umhummm.

MAGGIE

I wonder what gone happen to her kids now?

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 2

SETTING: Catherine and Anita are seated on the hood of a car in front their apartment buildings.

AT RISE: The girls are talking about boys.

CATHERINE

Boo-Boo told me you got a crush on James Mason.

ANITA

Girl, he is too fine.

CATHERINE

You know he go with Sandra Stevenson, don't you?

ANITA

I know. But he always flirting with me.

CATHERINE

Yeah, but I betcha Saundra ain't around when he does it.

ANITA

No. She ain't, cause she gotta be home by eight and I don't.

CATHERINE

How old is Saundra?

ANITA

I think she gone be fifteen.

CATHERINE

(Catherine laughing changes the subject)

Boo-Boo said you was over her house on Friday.

ANITA

Yeah, we was spying on the taboo two.

CATHERINE

Those fine Allen brothers?

ANITA

Uh hun, who else?

CATHERINE

They live in that building across from her.

ANITA

How old is they anyway?

CATHERINE

I don't know how old they is, but they too old for y'all. They go to City College.

ANITA

You jiving?

CATHERINE

Square business! They least gotta be twenty.

ANITA

They that old? Dayum!

CATHERINE

Yep.

ANITA

(Laughs)

Oh well.

(Carol turns the corner and walks towards them)

CATHERINE

(Catherine mutters under her breath)

Here comes Carol Clark.

ANITA

Who's Carol Clark?

CATHERINE

She got three kids.

ANITA

THREE KIDS!! Square business?

CATHERINE

Keep your voice down—for real, she got three kids.

ANITA

(Anita lowers her voice)

She don't look like she got no three kids.

CATHERINE

Well, ya can't judge a book by its cover. She nice though.

CAROL

(Carol reaches the car and breaks out into a big,
warm and friendly smile)

Hi Catherine.

CATHERINE

(Catherine and Anita hop off the car)

Hi Carol. Carol, this Anita, Anita, Carol.

ANITA

Hello Carol.

CAROL

Hello. What's up y'all.

CATHERINE

Nothing, we just talking 'bout Ed Sullivan's show las' night.
(The three of them lean back on the car)

MRS. BOWDEN

(OFF STAGE)

Catherine, Catherine, CATHERINE!

CATHERINE

(Looks up toward the window)

Whatchu want ma?

MRS. BOWDEN

Could you come upstairs, please darling.

CATHERINE

COME UP FOR WHAT!?

MRS. BOWDEN

I need you to help me with dinner.

CATHERINE

Aw shit! She always bugging me—I gotta go.

ANITA AND CAROL

(In unison)

Okay, see ya.

ANITA

(Anita and Carol both hop back on the hood of the car)
Ms. Bowden is so nice.

CAROL

You know Ms. Bowden?

ANITA

I know everybody round here.

CAROL

You live round here too?

ANITA

(Anita points to the building next to Catherine's)
Uh huh. In that building.

CAROL

I didn't know that. I never saw you around here before.

ANITA

I never saw you around here either.

CAROL

(Carol laughs at Anita's comment)
I guess that was a stupid statement, huh?

ANITA

It's okay, I don't usually hang around here anyway. That's probably why you never saw me.

CAROL

Where you hang out?

ANITA

On a Hundred and Thirty-Seventh Street.

CAROL

A Hundred and Thirty-Seventh Street, and Seventh Avenue?

ANITA

Yeah.

CAROL

You mean in the Sugar Bowl?

ANITA

Yeah.

CAROL

Gee, I pass it sometime when I go to my friend Maggie's house—I seen all them cute boys hanging outside.

ANITA

They always out there. You oughta come with me next time.

CAROL

When the next time you going?

ANITA

I ain't sure but I'll let you know.

CAROL

Wanna go to the park?

ANITA

The park? What for?

CAROL

I dunno—just to take a walk and hang out. It's nice outside.

ANITA

It's almost time for me to go eat dinner. My mother's gonna be calling me any minute. You mean go right now?

CAROL

Yeah, the park is just around the corner on Morningside Avenue—just for a little while.

ANITA

I know where Morningside Park is. Remember, I live 'round here! Ummnnn, okay, let's go.

(Anita and Carol start to walk)

ANITA

What school you go to?

CAROL

I don' go to school no more.

ANITA

You graduated already?

CAROL

No, I had to quit.

ANITA

Why you do a dumb thing like that? Now you ain't gon' have no education.

CAROL

I got kids.

ANITA

Kids? You mean you got a baby—I mean babies?

CAROL

Yeahhh, three babies! No school for me no more.

ANITA

(In a melodious voice)

You don't finish high school, you can't go to college!

CAROL

College! Humph! I ain't thinking bout going to no college.

ANITA

How you gone git a decent job if you don't go to college?

CAROL

I don't have to go to college, and I don't need no job!

ANITA

Why you don't need no job?

CAROL

Um on welfare.

ANITA

(Anita ponders Carol's statement

Uhummm..., welfare?)

CAROL

They don't pay for no college.

ANITA

Well, you can get a scholarship. That's what my guidance counselor told me. She said she got applications for me to fill out in January. You want me to see if I can git you one?

CAROL

Naw, that's all right. And anyway, who you think is gon' watch my kids while um getting a scholarship?

ANITA

Whoever watching them now can watch em.

CAROL

(Carol rolls her eyes to herself)

Yeah right.

ANITA

Who watching them now anyway?

CAROL

Nobody.

ANITA

Well where they at?

CAROL

They home.

ANITA

How many kids you got?

CAROL

I told you I got three kids.

ANITA

Oh, thas right ya did. Ha, ha, ha.

CAROL

(Carol stares off)

I can't even read a magazine in peace, I know I couldn't study no books.

ANITA

Can't your parents watch them while you study?

CAROL

Nope.

ANITA

Why?

CAROL

Cause I don't live with them.

ANITA

Who you live with?

CAROL

I live by myself. And the kids.

ANITA

Wow! How long you been living by yourself.

CAROL

Since right after I had my first child—I was fourteen when I got pregnant.

ANITA

You left home when you was fourteen?

CAROL

No, I got pregnant when I was fourteen.

ANITA

Oh lord, my father woulda killed-me.

CAROL

My father did try to put me out.

ANITA

He didn't?

CAROL

Nope.

ANITA

Your mother wouldn't let him?

CAROL

Nope! But when he found out I was pregnant, he came stormin' in me and Valrie's room all drunk up tryin' ta grab me, and me and Valrie was punchin' him in the head, 'n kicking him in his balls, 'n trying to get him off me. We finally knocked him down,

CAROL (cont'd)

and soon as we did, Mary come flyin' in the room, 'n dragged him by his collar outta our room, straight to the front door. She kicked his drunk ass out instead.

(They both laugh)

But when I was fifteen, I got pregnant again. There wasn't enough room for all of us, so, then her and my sister moved into the place where he moved to.

ANITA

Valerie your sister?

CAROL

Oh yeah. She's younger than me by two years.

ANITA

Then who's Mary.

CAROL

Oh, she's my mother. We don't call her ma. But for some reason, we call our father daddy instead of his name, which is James.

ANITA

So y'all got to keep the apartment all by yourself? I mean you and your chile got to live there and everything.

CAROL

(Carol and Anita arrive at the park and sit on a bench. Carol pulls a pint bottle of "Thunderbird" wine from her purse, looks all around before she turns it up, takes a swig, and wipes her mouth daintily with her index finger, caps the bottle and puts it back in her purse)

That was the plan.

ANITA

Oooooh. So, that's why you wanted to come to the park—to drink some wine! Why didn't you just say so? I don't care.

CAROL

Anyway! I was getting welfare and they wouldn't pay that rent for just me and Lisette. It was all a big waste. We coulda all just stayed there anyway and the welfare woulda paid the rent.

ANITA

(Anita breaks out into the popular "Thunderbird" song)
"Have you heard, 'Thunderbird!' What's the price, forty twice"?

(Anita and Carol, burst out laughing and Carol almost chokes on the wine)

So, who's Lisette?

CAROL

Oh, Lisette? She's my oldest girl. The old lady of the bunch. She keeps them other kids in line.

(Carol offers the bottle to Anita)

You want some?

ANITA

Girl, no. If my father smelled liquor on my breath... Anyhow, I don't drink. So, who you get to watch your kids when you go out?

CAROL

I don't stay out long, maybe ten or twenty minutes.

ANITA

You been with me for longer than that.

CAROL

Well, they kinda watch they self.

ANITA

Ain't you scared to leave them by themselves? You ain't scared they gon' turn on the stove or something?

CAROL

Uh. They just play on the floor when they get outta the bed.

ANITA

Do you have a boyfriend?

CAROL

Uh.

ANITA

How come?

CAROL

I just don't, thas all.

ANITA

Then where all them kids come from?

CAROL

They got different fathers.

ANITA

Oh, wow. How come?

CAROL

HOW COME WHAT?

ANITA

How come they got different fathers?

CAROL

(Laughing)

CAUSE I GOT PREGNANT WITH DIFFERENT BOYS! Come on, let's go.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Act I

I-3-15

Scene 3

SETTING: A bar is situated on the corner of the block where Anita's building stands. "On the Boardwalk" can be heard blaring from its juke box.

AT RISE: Carol and Anita return from the park. A drunk guy leans on the building outside of the bar.

GUY ON THE CORNER

Hey baby? Why doncha come over here wit your fine self? Y'all sure is stacked! Come on, ovah here and lemme buy you a drink.

(Anita gives him the finger and they keep walking)

GUY ON THE CORNER

Dat ain't what you said last night. Aww baby, don' be like dat.

(Anita and Carol hop up on the same car again)

MRS. GARDNER

(OFF STAGE)

Anita, come on up here baby and help me get dinner on the table!

ANITA

(Anita shouts back up to her mother)

Okay ma, I'm coming.

CAROL

(Sadly)

You have to go now?

ANITA

Yeah, but you can come up?

CAROL

For real? I can come up for real?

ANITA

Sure! You wanna eat dinner?

CAROL

Your mother don't care?

ANITA

Naw, it ain't no sweat, it's okay.

CAROL

You sure it's gonna be enough to eat?

ANITA

(Frowning, Anita looks at Carol)

We always got enough to eat.

CAROL

Y'all on welfare?

ANITA

No, we ain't on no welfare!

CAROL

She married?

ANITA

Course, she married! Where you think I came from?

CAROL

Your father work?

ANITA

Girl, what's wrong with you? Course my father work. DANG! You retarded or something?

CAROL

Gee, Anita, you lucky your mother always home—you got your own room?

ANITA

(Anita sighs loudly)

Yes, Carol.

CAROL

You got brothers and sisters?

ANITA

I got a brother Carol.

CAROL

Oh.

ANITA

He's gonna love you for real.

CAROL

Really. What makes you think so?

ANITA

Cuz—you pretty, and he like all my pretty friends.

(OFF STAGE)

YOU KIDS GET THE HELL OFFA THAT CAR! Anita and Carol jump off the car and run laughing into the building.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 1

SETTING: The apartment kitchen of Carol's two aunts, Esther and Martha.

AT RISE: It's early evening, as the aunts are preparing dinner and having a conversation about Carol's alcoholic mother, Mary.

ESTHER

Mary ain't nevuh been happy less she was lookin' down the neck of some bottle.

MARTHA

Humph! Didn't do mama no good ta keep her locked in her room.

ESTHER

Soon as daddy cut out, she went buck wile—started acting like trash.

MARTHA

Das right sister. Her and daddy both, cut outta the same cloth.

ESTHER

And when Mary found dat heathen James in some Hell hole, dat was all she wrote.

MARTHA

Thas right sister.

ESTHER

After all them beatings ma give her, she still found a way to sneak outta the house and run off wit dat bum. Nothing we did made her wanna go to church.

MARTHA

Too late now, she reprobate.

ESTHER

In and outta da drunk tank every time you look 'roun.

MARTHA

Yeah, this time she ain' been home from Harlem Hospital but a minute.

ESTHER

And what she doing? Right back in that doggone bottle. And, Eva said she went to her house to see her, and guess what? Dat triflin' Carol was there—James was too.

MARTHA

WHAT! James?

ESTHER

And Carol—one big happy drunken family. I can see 'em all now. Toastin' to how bad off dey is.

MARTHA

Humph! That heathen! No wonder poor Mary drinkin' agin.

ESTHER

They probably took it ovah to her.

MARTHA

Yeah, bet all dem was sittin' round drinkin'.

ESTHER

I just said that Martha! Doggone heathens gone worry my sister ta death.

MARTHA

I declare, I don't know what gone become of Mary.

ESTHER

Yes, ya do! She gone drink herself to death, das whas gone become aher.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 2

SETTING:

Dorm room at Columbia University, and the apartment of Carol's kitchen. Each holds her phone to her ear by hunching a shoulder, while multi-tasking.

AT RISE:

It's early Evening, and in college now, Anita reclines on her bed, book opened, on the phone with Carol. Carol stands at the stove cooking in the kitchen of her apartment.

Hey girl.

CAROL

Hey.

ANITA

What's up?

CAROL

Ummhmm

ANITA

I said what's up?

CAROL

Nothing, what's up with you?

ANITA

Um cooking.

CAROL

Ummhmm.

ANITA

You studying?

CAROL

ANITA

Tryin' to.

CAROL

(Carol breaks out singing Sam Cooke's "Another Saturday Night")

Another Saddy night and you ain't got nobody...

ANITA

(Anita sings the rest)

Yeah, but at some point, umma have some money cause I just got paid, all I need is...

CAROL

(Carol cuts her off)

Yeah right. Uhh Anita?

ANITA

Unmm?

CAROL

You wanna hang out tonight?

ANITA

Nope.

CAROL

How come?

ANITA

(Anita taps the headpiece on her phone three times)

Something wrong with this connection?

CAROL

Don't be so damn funny!

ANITA

I gotta study! Anyway, ain't the kids got school tomorrow?

CAROL

The kids at Valerie's. She takin' em ta school tomorrow.

ANITA

And Miss Piper?

CAROL

She at Mary's.

ANITA
Wow, I'm surprised!

CAROL
Why?

ANITA
Because, you never let nobody watch her.

CAROL
Dat ain't true.

ANITA
Nobody 'cept Harvey that is.

CAROL
It ain't cuz I don't wanna.

ANITA
I know thas right.

CAROL
You know how he is, *nobody good enough to watch Miss Piper!*

ANITA
Well she is his first baby.

CAROL
And his las'. But she ain' no baby no more, she's gonna be four on her birthday.

ANITA
Yeeese, already.

CAROL
See what you miss if you don't keep up?

ANITA
Tell me about...

CAROL
(Carol cuts her off)
Anyway, you can eat dinner over here and spend the night if you wanna.

ANITA
No, I can't...

CAROL

(Carol cuts her off)

Damn Anita, I don't hardly never see you no more.

ANITA

Yeah but...

CAROL

(She cuts her off again)

Yeah but my ass! When you do come over here, your head is always stuck in some damn book.

ANITA

For real Carol, this economics kickin' my..

CAROL

(Carol cuts her off)

You ain't the first person ever took economics ya know!

ANITA

I know I ain't, but um the one taking it now and I need it to graduate. Economics ain't no joke.

CAROL

(Carol cuts her off again)

Aw dam it Anita! Okay, I git it. We ain't gotta go out, but you can still come over.

ANITA

You relentless Carol! Don't you ever give up?

CAROL

(Carol's voice gets sweet and melodius)

I made some ribs; with *make-your-man-nevuh-wanna-leave-you* sauce—and you know how you love my ribs.

ANITA

Carol don't try ta temp me. I can control myself—I'm not led by my stomach.

CAROL

I made some Collards wit ham hocks.

ANITA

Nope!

CAROL

I made some dirty rice, and black eye peas.

ANITA

Nope.

CAROL

You bein' strong ain't cha?

ANITA

It's just that I got finals coming up—I gotta study.

CAROL

Oh yeah, I forgot about that phyba thing you told me about.

ANITA

What the heck are you talking about Carol?

CAROL

You know, that phyba thing you was telling me about!

ANITA

What phy..., oh, you mean the Phi Beta Kappa Key.

CAROL

Phyba, Betta, Delta, Sigma, what the hell difference do it make?

ANITA

Phi Beta Kappa is an honor society and..

CAROL

(She cuts her off)

So?

ANITA

AND..., Delta's a sorority, and Sigma's a fraternity.

CAROL

So! So! And, so!

ANITA

So, I just gotta work my ass off to get it, thas all.

CAROL

That key gonna unlock somethin' for you?

ANITA

You can bet your life on it!

CAROL

Is it gonna git you a big-time job at IBM when you graduate?

ANITA

I don't want no...

CAROL

How many colored people git that key?

ANITA

I don't know Carol.

CAROL

Why's it so important then?

ANITA

Because it's a high honor Carol.

CAROL

Oh lord Anita! A high honor is gittin' some money! They gonna give you some?

ANITA

Nothing like that but...

CAROL

Dagggg. Then why you bustin' your butt?

ANITA

Well, in the future...

CAROL

(Carol cuts Anita off)

The future, the future? Girl, the future is now!

ANITA

Ha, ha, you funny Ca...

CAROL

(Carol cuts her off again)

Yeah, I know. Anyway, I made scratch cobbler with fresh peaches— you know peaches is in season doncha?

ANITA

Nope!

CAROL
I got rum punch!

ANITA
Nope!

CAROL
Ja-ma-kin-rum-mon.

ANITA
You finally used the rum you got from Neville?

CAROL
Yah, mon.

ANITA
Umhummmm. You put chicken livers in that rice?

CAROL
Yah, mon.

ANITA
For real Carol? Unnnnn, what about gizzards?

CAROL
Yah, mon. Meagie Meaa's dirr-ty rice recipe doncha know?

ANITA
Oh lawdy, miss Claudie...

CAROL
The lord ain' had nuttin' ta do wit this meal! Don't you ever get it twisted.

ANITA
Okay, okay. I'm sorry. Dang, Carol. You know you ain't right doncha?

CAROL
I ain't tryna be right, um tryna get your happy black ass fat and drunk.

ANITA
Girl if I fail economics! Okay, I'm coming over—just to eat though, cause I ain't staying long.

(BLACK OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT II

II-3-27

Scene 3

SETTING:

Carol's mother has died and her wake is taking place in the living room of Carol's apartment. Several partially-filled glasses, liquor and beer bottles, as well as food, cover the coffee table. The Ugly Sisters are clustered together.

At RISE:

James is noticeably drunk, and so is Maggie Mae. They dance, but not with each other. James stops dancing and begins to cry.

JAMES

(James stumbles into a chair. Continues shaking his head back and forth, he covers his face with his hand)
Oh Mary, God knows I loved you. I nevuh wanted to leave! Ah know ah messed up, and ah drank too much. I didn't nevvuh wanna go.

MAGGIE MAE

(Maggie Mae pats James' shoulder with one hand and empties her glass in one swallow with the other)
Ish alright James, ish alright. Don't cry, pleesh don' cry James. She better off. She in heaven now. You want another drink James? Where your drink at James?

VALERIE

(OFF STAGE)

No, Maggie, he's already drunk. He don't need no more...

JAMES

(James gets indignant)
Whachu mean um drunk? Aaann, aaann, I ain't, unnn I ain't drunk. You drunk Valrie! All ya'll drunk. Um sad cuz Mary's dead! Mary my wise, uh, uh, I mean my uh, my wife.

MAGGIE MAE

(Starts to cry)
Mary was so good James. Wasn't she good James? Mary was my friend too. Oh Mary, Mary, Maryaaahaaa, aaahaaa, aaahaaa.

JAMES

Uh huh, das right Valrie, I been drinkin, but I ain't drunk. I jus' been drinkin'. She dead now, and I ain't gon' see my Mary noooo more.

(Suddenly, James starts plucking his fingers, swaying to the music and singing to himself)

Eaarth angel, earth angel, will you be my-hine, um jus a foo-hoo-ool, a fool in love with you whooo, oo, oo, oo.

VALERIE

(OFF STAGE)

DADDY WOULD YOU SHUT-UP ALL THAT NOISE?! And Maggie Mae, you shut-up too!

JAMES

(Louder now)

WHO DA HELL! DON' TELL ME TO SHUT UP! WHERE MY GLASS AT. HEY CAROL, WHERESMA DRINK AT!?

(James grins at CAROL)

CAROL

(With a drink in her hand)

It's over there on the table daddy.

(James stumbles over to the table crying loudly, grabs his drink. Carol, drink in hand, goes in her bedroom and shuts the door shut. She phones Anita. Sounds of the Ojays' "Love Train" can be heard on Carol's stereo in the background)

Girl, you ain't left yet? What's takin' you so long?

ANITA

Carol! Hey. No, not yet. What's up? Sounds like y'all partying over there.

CAROL

Oh yeah, ha, ha. Hold on for a minute, let me turn that damn music down. Somebody, turn that doggone music down, um on the phone! So, when you gettin' here with that chicken?

ANITA

I made some potato salad too!

CAROL

RIGHT ON! I ain't had your potato salad for a while.

ANITA

And it's good too. I made it with a ton of sweet pickles, sweet onions, some Hellman's mayonnaise, plenty eggs and celery—just the way you like it. My mother taught me how to...

CAROL

(Carol cuts her off)

Girl, I know what you put in it—I only been eating it for years. Now could you please hurry up Anita?

ANITA

Okay. I'm leaving now—walking those few blocks won't take any time.

CAROL

Whatchu mean walkin'? You ain't taking no cab?

ANITA

No, I'm gonna walk. It's not that far. Now if it was gonna be at Eva's church...

CAROL

(Carol cuts her off)

Now you knew I wasn't gonna have it at no church—that's for damn sure.

ANITA

I figured as much.

CAROL

The only way um going into any damn church is when um laid out dead!

ANITA

Church ain't that bad Anita.

CAROL

From who's perspective? You know my hypocrite grandmother turned Mary against church. And them damn ugly sisters helped her too.

ANITA

You mean your aunts?

CAROL

That's right, those evil twins. Mary ran off and married James, and to them, that was like crucifying Christ all over again.

ANITA

I really don't get it, Carol. Mary was so sweet, and she was always nice to everyone. I don't see how anyone could've treated her badly.

CAROL

Well they did treat her bad! And after she had me and Valrie, and she still wouldn't go to church, that was it for my grandmother—that bitch!

ANITA

But, I don't see why you blame all church people because of your grandmother, and Esther and Martha. All people who go to church aren't as bad as you make them sound Carol.

CAROL

Can't prove it by me! Far as I'm concerned, they all bad-'cept maybe you, of course.

ANITA

Gee, thanks for the vote of confidence. Did your sister get there yet?

CAROL

Yes, she did. As a matter of fact, her and her kids spent the night here.

ANITA

Did you guys have any luck finding James?

CAROL

Oh, he's here. Spent the night, too. Bought all the liquor for the wake, too. Ha, ha, ha, ha.

ANITA

Ummmhum! Why ain't I surprised?

CAROL

Yeah girl, he in rare form.

ANITA

Already?

CAROL

He came here yesterday in rare form—nothin' ain't changed with James. Same shit different day.

ANITA

Well at least he's being consistent. That's something you can always count on.

CAROL

You right about that. He even woke up this morning drunk, and been drinking ever since.

ANITA

Oh lord. By the way, Carol, is Eva coming?

CAROL

She already here. All my aunts is here.

ANITA

Say what! The ugly sisters are there? Uh oh.

CAROL

Uh oh is right. Even Maggie Mae's drunk ass is here. Everybody here 'cept your late ass.

ANITA

If Maggie is there, I know she fried plenty chicken. Why you need my chicken—nobody can fry chicken like Maggie Mae's country ass?

CAROL

Ya-got-dat-right! But everybody done ate all her chicken up. Anyway, they all drunk, so they ain' gonna know the difference. Hurry your ass up Anita.

ANITA

Y'all over there drinking too?

CAROL

Yeah, we drinking! What the hell you think James bought liquor for?

ANITA

You drinking in front of Esther and Martha?

CAROL

That's one of the things people do at a wake Anita—drink!

ANITA

I know that! But in front of your aunts?

CAROL

Anita! I'm grown, this is my house and I pay the rent. I do what I want, when I want, in my house. If I wanna drink, I'll drink. If I wanna cuss, I'll cuss. If I wanna piss on the floor, I'll piss on the floor. I don't give a damn who likes it and who don't.

ANITA

I know all that Carol, but...

CAROL

(Carol cuts her off)

But nothing. If the ugly sisters don't like it, THEY CAN GET THE HELL OUT!! This is my house! Not theirs and not my grandmother's. IT'S, MINE, MINE, MINE!!

ANITA

Good grief Carol, I can hear you. You ain't gotta yell!

CAROL

(Starts laughing)

Ha, ha, um sorry Anita, but they bring the worst out in me—all the time.

ANITA

Lord knows that's the truth. You need me to bring anything else, napkins, plates, anything?

CAROL

No, we got everything else—WE JUST NEED THE CHICKEN! And that potato salad, so get the hell off the phone and hurry your ass up!

(BLACK OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 4

SETTING: The wake continues in Carol's living room. Half-empty liquor bottles, more empty beer bottles, and glasses are visible on the coffee table. Family and friends are seated. Some are drinking and smoking, all are remembering Mary.

AT RISE: The Ugly Sisters are sitting together, fanning the smoke away and whispering low to each other.

ESTHER

Would you look at that table! The blood of Jesus! Tsk, tsk, tsk.

MARTHA

And that heathen James, over there drunk, and acting like he twenty-five. Humph!

ESTHER

And look at poor Valerie. Looks all doped up if you ask me.

MARTHA

Umhmm, she is doped up.

ESTHER

(Hunches Martha)

Look at her, look, look, hurry up. She noddin!

MARTHA

If she lean over anymore she gone fall outta that chair.

ESTHER

Umhmm. And, there go Carol agin. Thas got to be her fourth or fifth drink. I been counting. You mark my words, she gon' be a akaholic just like Mary was.

MARTHA

Thas right sister. But she ain' gone be like Mary was, cause Mary was sweet.

ESTHER

Carol is a hateful heathen on her way to being a drunk. Anybody with eyes can see that much.

MARTHA

Praise God we ain't like her and Valerie, sister.

ESTHER

Or James either, for that matter—married my sister and turned her into a akaholic! Humph!

ESTHER

Thereee she go again. Another drink. How many is that now?

MARTHA

Five, I think. I don't see how she still walking straight.

ESTHER

Me neither. But I guess she use to it. Anyhow, leas' her eyes is open, and she can see where she going.

MARTHA

I guess drinking is better than being a dope fiend like Valerie is, and her kid's daddy is.

ESTHER

At least Valerie's poor kids know who their daddy is. Carol's don'-know-who-they-daddy-is kids is just plain pitiful.

MARTHA

It's just too bad cause Valerie is sweet just like Mary was.

ESTHER

Yeah, she just a junkie. But using all that dope done made her more skinnier than she ever was.

MARTHA

She was always skinny, but lord have mercy, she skinny now.

ESTHER

You got that right. She skinny 'nuff to dodge raindrops, he, he, he.

EVA

How ya'll gone talk about somebody's size? Ya just a sandwich away from bussin' down Jack LaLanne's doors.

MARTHA

Well leas' I ain't no skinny junkie on welfare.

EVA

No, you ain' no junky on welfare, but you judgmental as you can be.

MARTHA

HOW UM JUDGEMENTAL!?

Eva

Calm yourself down Martha. Y'all always coming down on...

MARTHA

(Cuts her off)

Um not judging nobody!

ESTHER

You always sticking up for them Eva! Always saying we got to love them more, pray for them, and be kinder.

EVA

Somebody got to. We can't leave them on the street like yesterday's trash.

ESTHER AND MARTHA

Why come! What more can we do than what we already done?

(Eva stares hard at her sisters for a moment, then gets up and heads for the door of the apartment)

ESTHER

Where you going Eva?

EVA

I'll be right back, I gotta go get something.

(Eva leaves the apartment)

MARTHA

Wonder where she going sister?

ESTHER

Humph! Can't be too far, in this here neighborhood. They's robbin' they own mother 'round here.

MARTHA

You got that right!

ESTHER

Martha, would you look at that outfit Maggie Mae got on?

MARTHA

Sho is short.

ESTHER

And whatever look she going for, she missed it by a mile.

MARTHA

And she homely too.

ESTHER

You got dat right!

MARTHA

Yeah, but she do got a body on her though.

MARTHA/ESTHER

(In Unison)

Body by Fisher Price, and a mind by Mattel. Heh, heh, heh. And a face only a mother can love on Sunday!

(They crack up laughing)

EVA

(Eva returns to the apartment and hands something to both Esther and Martha)

Okay ladies, here. Two for you Esther and two for you Martha.

ESTHER

What's these for?

EVA

They's stones.

ESTHER

I can see they is stones! But what is they for?

EVA

For casting.

MARTHA

Castin'? Whatchu mean for castin'?

EVA

For castin' the first stones Martha. You know what Jesus said, *he who is without sin, let him cast the first stone*. You and Esther is obviously without sin. God know's y'all need these stones.

ESTHER

(Esther drops the stones on the floor)
Stop tryin to be funny Eva.

MARTHA

(Martha drops her stones also)
That's right Eva! You ain't funny.

ESTHER

Carol and Valerie never had no respect for Mama, or God, and you know it. I don't blame Mama for not wanting them to come 'round. All them living in one room like depression-era Jews. I'm glad they stayed to themselves. They's a barrassment.

EVA

I ain't trying to be funny. And how is they a embarrassment. They ya family and y'all always mistreatin' them. They ain't ast ta come here!

ESTHER

And I ain't ast for them to come here either.

EVA

Y'all was constantly reminding them that James and Mary was drunks, and that they was on welfare. Y'all ain' never showed them no love.

MARTHA

WHAT! Oh, Eva please!

EVA

Please nothing. That's the God's honest truth Martha; and y'all know it. They always preferred strangers to their own blood—just look at them, prefer strangers now.

MARTHA

(Sarcastic)
Yeah, you look at them!

EVA

Y'all forever passing judgment on somebody. Stead a talking 'bout how reprobate they is, ya ought to have compassion, n' pray for them.

ESTHER

Hereee we go! Pray for them? Pray fa what?! What we gonna waste our prayers for? Mama prayed for Mary for years, and ya see what good that did! Mary still drank herself to death!

EVA

And whose fault is that, Esther? Mary had a choice.

MARTHA

Eva, you know Mama always said Mary was never gonna be nothing.

EVA

Mary was ma's favrite Martha. You know that. She only said that because she was hurt and disappointed.

MARTHA

Yeah, she was ma's favrite.

ESTHER

She was sweet as peach pie—till she got wit' that James.

MARTHA

Yeah, she cooked her goose marrin' up wit' that demon.

MARTHA

You ain' nevuh lied sister.

ESTHER

And her kids is just like she was. Pray for them!? I don't think so!

EVA

Mary drank cause she wanted to—you saying that was James' fault? He held a gun on her and made her a drunk? Thas what y'all is tryin' to say?

ESTHER

We ain't tryna say nothin' Eva. We said what we said.

MARTHA

Eva, you know we prayed, AND fasted, for Mary. Mama said she was gonna pay, and pay she did!

ESTHER

Married to a good for nothing, no good drunk. Humph.

EVA

James wasn't always a drunk.

MARTHA

You can't prove it by me.

ESTHER

Yeah, and them two heathen daughters a his is just like their father.

MARTHA

Das right, one got two kids and no husband..

ESTHER

(Cuts her off)

And the other got four kids by four different men, and no husband. Kid's don' know who they's daddy is-'cept Piper.

MARTHA

And she don' nevuh see him no more!

ESTHER

Everybody got a choice, Eva. We just chose God. They didn't.

MARTHA

So, they get what they deserve.

ESTHER

I don't feel sorry for none a them. They need to get saved like we did. Humph!

MARTHA

That's right sister. They need Jesus in their heart, like we got.

ESTHER

They chose the world. Whatchu want us ta do?

MARTHA

Anyway, never mind all that.

ESTHER

We ain't came here for no argument.

MARTHA

We just came to pay respects to our poor, dead, sister, Mary.

ESTHER

Who died in sin, and gotta be in Hell right now, if Jesus is real.

EVA

(Eva shakes her head, rolls her eyes, and looks up to the ceiling)

Lord, lord, lord! Y'all really don't have no feeling's for them kids, or no remorse for how y'all always treated Mary, do you?

CAROL

(Carol saunters in from the kitchen, a fresh drink in her hand, sits down and addresses Anita)

Look at those old biddies. I know they talking 'bout me. They so high and mighty, you need to take a elevator up, in order to hold a conversation with them.

ANITA

Not Eva though! She never made it a secret that she loved Mary, and she's always been in your corner from the way I see it.

CAROL

No. Eva the only one of them that ever treated us right—visited with us when we was little. Now, here come them ugly sisters with all that Jesus crap. Jesus never did nothing for us, and neither did my phony-ass grandmother. Always talking about God with one breath and telling us we was going to Hell with the next.

ANITA

Oh Carol!

CAROL

Oh, Carol, WHAT? Um glad that evil old bitch is dead. Good riddance to bad rubbish.

ANITA

GOOD LORD CAROL!

CAROL

Oh! Clutch my pearls and forgive me! You right—you right. If you can't say nothin' good about the dead, don't say nothin' at all. Well, she's dead. Good! Happy now?

ANITA

No, I'm not happy. You know how it hurts me to see you estranged from your family, and you know I wish you guys had a better relationship. I tell you that all the time. By the way, how long has your grandmother been dead now?

CAROL

(Carol stares into her glass and shakes it)

Not long enough—the bitch. Didn't want me and Valrie to sit on her precious furniture, didn't want us to touch her precious nic nacs, wouldn't come to our house, wouldn't even call Mary on the phone. She was just a mean, evil, nasty old woman hiding behind God and looking down her nose at my mother.

(Turns her attention back to Anita)

Watch me Anita, I'll fix em!

(Carol calls loudly across the room to her friend Maggie Mae)

Hey Maggie, you want another drink? And put "Sexual Healing" on the record player.

(Maggie Mae puts the record on and Marvin Gaye can be heard in the background. James starts singing. Carol gets up, turns up the volume on the record player, and starts dancing and plucking her fingers, while she takes a long swallow from her glass)

Come on ya'll, Mary wouldn't want us sitting around like this, crying the blues and looking sad, LIKE WE WAS IN CHURCH! Sing it, James, sing it.

(The music comes up. ...cause, sexual healing is good for me, and when I get that feeling, I want sexual healing...)

Come on Maggie Mae, get yourself another drink!

(BLACK OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 1

SETTING: Anita waits at a bus stop.

AT RISE: Eva walks by.

ANITA

Eva, hey Eva?

EVA

(Eva spots Anita)

Good lord, Anita! Hi! What in the world you doing on Lenox Avenue?

ANITA

I get my hair done down the block—I been going there for years.

EVA

No wonder it be lookin' so good every time I see you!

ANITA

Why thank you Eva. How you been?

EVA

God is good sweetheart. I'm doing just fine. Whas hap'nen in your life?

ANITA

Oh, not a whole heck of a lot, same old, same old—just working, stuff like that.

EVA

I know whatcha mean, same here.

ANITA

Spoke to your niece lately?

EVA

Oh, lord have mercy. I haven't seen Carol since I don't know when. But my daughter told me she ain't been doing too well. Have you seen her?

ANITA

Not recently. But she's all right though. There's nothing wrong that I know about.

EVA

Glad to hear it. Why you ain't seen her though? I thought y'all was ace-boon-coons?

ANITA

Were still tight. It's just cause I'm working so much. Now Carol is married, I'm married, ya know, everyday mess. But we live on the phone! You know she my girl.

EVA

Yeah. I heard she got married to some young boy. Elvin or Egbert or som'n like that. I heard he treat her real good too.

ANITA

Yes, Evan, he does treat her well. She tells me that he makes her really happy.

EVA

Really? What kinda work he do?

ANITA

He works for Ma Bell. Got a good job too, makes good money. How's the family Eva?

EVA

Oh, they still praising the Lord. Why don't ya come by St. John's Tabernacle one Sunday?

ANITA

I go to Salem, ya know, on Seventh Avenue?

EVA

Uhhmm, yeah. Is you got the Holy Ghost yet Anita?

ANITA

The Holy Ghost?

EVA

Uh huh.

ANITA

Uhhh, you mean the Holy Spirit? Where do you get it? Ha, ha.

EVA

Yeah, the Holy Ghost! And it comes from a relationship with God.

ANITA

To tell you the truth Eva, I don't understand what it means to get the Holy Ghost.

EVA

What I mean is, IS YA SAVED YET?

ANITA

Saved, you talking about all that spooky acting out? Speaking unknow languages, and screaming, and hollering, and jumping up and down and falling out? You mean all that stuff that goes on in the holiness church?

EVA

Well, thas kinda what I mean. But it's real Anita. It ain't no acting out. The Spirit a God be coming over them, n' some gits a revelation when they be doin' that. Thas all that is. Nuttin' spooky about it.

ANITA

A revelation from who? You don't mean like tellin' the future, do you?

EVA

No, not that kinda revelation, the kind that...

ANITA

(Anita cuts her off)

Hummmmn. I just don't think it's necessary to be speaking in tongues and staying in church all day long. Y'all be in church from Sunday school in the morning, till when evening service lets out. Even eat dinner in church. Carol told me all about it.

EVA

We don't be in...

ANITA

(Frowns and cuts her off again)

Nahhhhh Eva. I'm in Salem at 11:00a.m. and out by 12:30p.m. Ha, that's my kind of church.

EVA

Baby, how old you now?

ANITA

Thirty-three.

EVA

I know you been going to Salem since you was a little girl, but you mean to tell me your life ain't changed yet?

ANITA

What do you mean Eva? I beg to differ with you. My life has changed significantly since the old days, and it gets better all the time. What kind of change are you speaking of? What change do you think my life should have made?

EVA

I'm talkin' 'bout your soul Anita. If you died tomorrow, can you be sure you goin' to heaven?

ANITA

Ahhh, gee Eva, uh, uh, gee, um—oh I'm so sorry, I see my bus coming, I gotta go.

(Anita starts moving towards the bus and vigorously waving it down)

EVA

Wait a minute Anita, ANITA...

ANITA

(Anita starts boarding the bus half turning around)
Gotta go Eva, see ya.

(BLACK OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene II

SETTING: Anita is at home, sitting on the sofa in the living room.

AT RISE: Carol has just phoned Anita and they are talking.

CAROL
Nothing much cept I'm dying.

ANITA
Ain't we all.

CAROL
Seriously Anita. I ain't pullin' your leg—I'm dying.

ANITA
What? I don't understand.

CAROL
I didn't stutter. The doctor told me I was dying.

ANITA
(Frowning, and confused about what she is hearing)
You're dying!?

CAROL
I know you ain't deaf!

ANITA
NO, I'M NOT DEAF! But what do you mean you're dying? Are you sick?

CAROL
Well some might say it's a sickness.

ANITA
Carol, stop playing with me! What the hell did the doctor tell you!?

CAROL

He been telling me I gotta stop drinking for a while now. But this time, he said if I don't stop, umma die in a few months. He said my liver is shot.

ANITA

(Tongue in cheek)

When did the doctor tell you all this Carol?

CAROL

I had some blood work done a few weeks ago, and I'd forgot all about it. The doctor called me Thursday, said I had to come see him as soon as possible. Me and Evan went to see him Monday morning, and he gave us the results of the blood work.

ANITA

AND YOU JUS TELLIN' ME THIS SHIT NOW!?

CAROL

Will you calm your ass down? You ain't gotta lose your mind. I ain't going nowhere tomorrow.

ANITA

How you 'spect me to calm down with THAT news?

CAROL

I expect you to calm down because um calm. Listen at how soft my voice is. Am I screaming, am I hollering? No, I ain't.

ANITA

Well, you gotta stop drinking. That's it, that's all.

CAROL

Anita, I ain't gon' stop drinking now, so I guess I'll be dead soon.

ANITA

DAMN CAROL, HOW CAN YOU BE SO NONCHALANT ABOUT IT!?

CAROL

Cuz, it don't bother me—and I told you to calm your ass down.

ANITA

Okay, I'm sorry. But why don't it bother you?

CAROL

You gotta die sometime, from something, Anita. I guess my number came up. I crapped out.

ANITA

(Sucks her teeth)
I guess Evan know already?

CAROL

Didn't I just tell you that he went to the doctor with me? Damn! He been cryin' ever since the doctor told us, and he won't leave me alone for one minute. Don't want to go to work, keep calling his job taking sick days. Anita, I got one nerve left, and he is steady gittin' on it. I had to come in the bathroom just to call you.

ANITA

He loves you Carol, and he's frightened of being without you.

CAROL

I know he loves me and all that shit, but it ain't gon' change nothing. Um still gon' die.

ANITA

It could change, if you stop...

CAROL

(Cuts her off)
It's my life Anita, um in charge of it, and I ain't gon' stop drinking.

ANITA

Oh God Carol.

CAROL

Please don't bring no God into it. You know how I feel about HIM, if it is a him?

ANITA

Okay, okay, I'm sorry, but now, its God that I call on when I'm feeling helpless, and I do feel helpless, hearing what you just told me. I feel so sorry for Evan—and the kids, of course.

CAROL

The kids gon' survive. They doing whatever they big enough to do, and that's anything and everything. Evan is the only one I'm bothered about.

ANITA

You guys haven't been married but two or three years. You just started getting to know each other. He's got to be devastated.

CAROL

He's so pitiful Anita. He scared to death cuz he can't do nothin' about it.

ANITA

You can't even stop drinking for him Carol?

CAROL

No Anita. I was drinking when I met him—hell, I was drinking when I met you—over twenty years.

ANITA

You that much in love with drinking?

CAROL

I like to drink Anita, you know that—besides, it's too late now, I can't stop.

ANITA

WHATCHUMEAN YOU CAN'T STOP!?

CAROL

I MEAN UMMA ALCOHOLIC! Don't front, you know that!

ANITA

God..., I don't know what to say.

CAROL

(Closes her eyes and shakes her head)

PLEASE, PLEASE, don't keep callin' that name!

ANITA

Um sorry, but I just...

CAROL

(Cuts her off)

Ain't nothing for you to say. Like I said before, everybody gotta die sometime, Anita. My number just came up—its check-out time for me, and I already accepted it.

ANITA

Dang, Carol, I'd be freaking out. Your so cool and calm about it. You really aren't scared?

CAROL

I told you I wasn't scared. Can we change the subject please?

ANITA

(Reluctantly)

If you say so. But you gotta admit, it's a heck of a shock for me to process right now.

CAROL

Yes, I know it is. That's why I didn't tell you right away. How's Mr. Mac doing? Is he still getting rich?

ANITA

Yes, he's fine. Oh yeah, Carol? Guess who I saw the other day on Lenox Avenue?

CAROL

Who?

ANITA

I was waiting at the bus stop, and along comes your aunt.

CAROL

Who Eva?

ANITA

Yes ma'am. She tried to talk me into going to St. John's.

CAROL

She always try'na drag people off the street into that joint.

ANITA

Ha, ha, and guess what? My bus came just in time.

CAROL

Ha, ha, ha. Saved by the bus. But I love my aunt Eva though!

ANITA

You so funny Carol. Yeah, Eva is my girl too.

CAROL

But her damn sisters...

ANITA

I know, I know. You've been carrying that heavy load for Mary, Valerie and your self, for a very long time. Don't you want to at least...

CAROL

(Cuts Carol off)

I mean it, Anita. I hate em. If being saved makes 'em act like they better than their own flesh and blood, if God makes 'em turn their back on little helpless children...

ANITA

God doesn't...

CAROL

(Cuts her off)

Treat em like dirt... HUMPH!

ANITA

Carol, God is loving. He really is.

CAROL

Who needs God! I ain't about no God. Don't want him, don't need him, don't like him.

ANITA

Carol, don't you think under the circumstances you need to at least consider another view?

CAROL

What other kinda view um sposed to consider? A God one?

ANITA

I don't know I guess...

CAROL

Right, you don't know! Remember Anita, I lived that thing! No thank you, no God for me.

(BLACK OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 4

SETTING: Anita's living room. A bible lies open on the coffee table.

AT RISE: Anita picks up the phone and dials Lisette's phone number. Lisette answers.

ANITA

Hello?

ANITA

Yeah, hello?

ANITA

Oh, hi Lisette, how you doing? Listen, could I get the number to the phone at your mother's hospital bed? I misplaced it somewhere, and I want to call Carol.

ANITA

WHAT!

ANITA

WHATCHU MEAN!? WHATCHU MEAN, LISETTE?

ANITA

TUESDAY!? WHAT? WHAT THE HECK HAPPENED!?

ANITA

Oh my God in heaven. Sudden..., no, no, oh no, Lisette!

ANITA

Why nobody ain't call me!?

ANITA

Only Evan?

ANITA

Piper either?

ANITA

Oh God, Lisette, oh no, no!

ANITA

(Anita whimpers)

ANITA (cont'd)

Huh, huh, huh, yes, yes, thank you. Make sure you do, Lisette.
Good bye—oh Lisette?

ANITA

Maggie Mae know?

ANITA

How she takin' it?

ANITA

I didn't think she would.

ANITA

Okay, okay. I understand. And Lisette, just tell Evan to call me
if he needs anything at all, and you call with the arrangements,
as soon as you can, you here?

(BLACK OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 5

SETTING: The outside of St. Johns Holiness
Tabernacle Church.

AT RISE: Anita and Maggie Mae stand in
front of the church talking.

ANITA

Maggie, are you going to the burial?

MAGGIE MAE

Yeah, um going, Anita. Uhhh, can I get a ride wit' you?

ANITA

You know you can ride with me Maggie Mae. Why you even ask that
question? We can go to the repast at Eva's after the burial.

MAGGIE MAE

Uh, Anita, I don't think so. I don't wanna deal with them ugly
sisters.

ANITA

Just come for a few minutes. We don't have to stay long. I can't
stay either. Eva told me that before Carol died, she gave her a
note to give to me. I want to at least get the note.

MAGGIE MAE

I, um, uh..., I don't wanna go to Eva's with all them tee tolers.

ANITA

(Anita smiles at Maggie Mae)

Don't you want to see Eva at least?

MAGGIE MAE

I seen her at the funeral, and I seen her before at the
hospital. Can you jus' drop me off home after the burial Anita?

ANITA

Oh, Maggie Mae! You're going to make me face those ugly sisters all by myself?

MAGGIE MAE

Um sorry. Please Anita, can you just drop me off?

ANITA

Oh, all right Maggie. Let's go then.

(BLACK OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 6

SETTING: Anita's car.

AT RISE: Anita driving her car to the
burial. Maggie Mae is in the front
seat next to her.

ANITA

Maggie, did you notice that only two of Carol's kids were
sitting with Evan at the funeral?

MAGGIE MAE

No, I was so upset I ain't even seen Carol's kids.

ANITA

I wonder what happened to Piper and Kenner? Kenner's girlfriend
was there but I didn't see him.

MAGGIE MAE

Oh, I lied Anita, I do 'member seein' Patience. Look like she
was high though.

ANITA

I agree, I don't think she even saw us. At lease Lisette kind of
acknowledged us.

MAGGIE MAE

Did she?

ANITA

Yes, I'm sure I saw Lisette nod at us when they came past us.

MAGGIE MAE

Yeah, Lisette da onliest one a Carol's kids done something with
her life. She went to collesh!

ANITA

Yes, we can praise the Lord for that!

MAGGIE MAE

She got her diploma too—even if she is crazy as a bed bug.

ANITA

She's not crazy, Maggie Mae.

MAGGIE MAE

Yeah, she is! You see da way she dress?

ANITA

Yes but...

MAGGIE MAE

(Maggie Mae cuts her off)

And you see da way she wear her hair? What, she a Muslum or something?

ANITA

Yes, I see how she dresses and yes, I see how she wears her hair, and no she is not a Muslim. She just believes in going natural, that's all.

MAGGIE MAE

Natural? Whatchu mean natural?

ANITA

I mean she doesn't put any chemicals in her hair.

MAGGIE MAE

She need plenny chemicals on DAT HEAD! Her hair nappy as a sheep's bahine.

ANITA

Don't be signifying Maggie! Goodness gracious.

MAGGIE MAE

She ain't no African neitha. So, she don't needa be wrappin' her head up in no, uh, uh, uh, watcha-ma-callit cloth?

ANITA

You mean Kente' cloth?

MAGGIE MAE

Yeah, das right, das right, Kenta cloth! She look radicalis! Head all wrapped up, cept a little bit a nappy hair at the top. Just radicalis!

ANITA

Well I think she looks cute.

MAGGIE MAE

She need chemicals AND makeup, if ya ass me!

ANITA

I don't believe she asked you Maggie.

MAGGIE MAE

If you think her hair is so cute, why ain't you wearing your hair like dat?

ANITA

Excuse me! For your information, my husband likes my hair just the way it is.

MAGGIE

Ha, ha, ha, I know das da truf.

ANITA

I guess Kenner was too broken up to attend the funeral. He really loved his mother.

MAGGIE MAE

You ain't lying dere. He sho loved him some Carol—always going to see her, and buyin' her stuff—just like Evan.

ANITA

It happens to some people.

MAGGIE MAE

What happens to some people?

ANITA

You know. Sometime people just can't do the funeral thing. Remember how I didn't get out of the car at my mother's burial.

MAGGIE MAE

Oh yeah, thas right. I do member that.

ANITA

But I know Kenner is going to be alright. He's doing fine otherwise.

MAGGIE MAE

Kenner doin' okay Anita but, I know he be drinking too much. Carol told me.

ANITA

Will the real Maggie Mae McQuillan please stand up? Could you repeat that! I don't think I heard you right.

MAGGIE MAE

Yeah, I know, I know. I drink too much too!

ANITA

You said it, I didn't!

MAGGIE MAE

I know umma akaholic Anita, but um pushin' forty. Kenner got his whole life ahead a him. He a good-looking young man too. Issa damn shame too, cuz Carol tried a raise them kids right.

ANITA

I think Kenner will be okay. He's been working at WPIX since he was in high school.

MAGGIE MAE

Uh hun. And he do got da same girlfriend he had since he was bout sebunteen.

ANITA

That's exactly right. And she was sitting with his family at the funeral.

MAGGIE MAE

Wonder when he gon' marry dat girl?

ANITA

Beats me.

MAGGIE MAE

She been a lady in-waitin' for a long time, he, he, he.

ANITA

Yeah, well.

MAGGIE MAE

She got a UNLUSTED phone number Anita, ha ha.

ANITA

(Anita frowns, turns her head quickly to look at Maggie Mae)

Maggie, you're not funny!

MAGGIE MAE

(Maggie Mae stops laughing)

Uhhh, uh, um, Anita, could you please stop at a liquor store before we get ta the burial?

ANITA

What for?

MAGGIE MAE

I just gotta have a drink and I done drank all I had for I got ta da funeral.

ANITA

Oh Maggie! Even after all this?

MAGGIE MAE

I know Anita, but I just gotta have another drink ta get me through this burial.

(Maggie Mae starts wimpering)

ANITA

Okay Maggie, okay. All right, just don't cry. I'll stop. I'll stop somewhere.

(BLACK OUT)
(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 7

SETTING: People are gathered in Eva's apartment for Carol's repast. The ugly sisters are in the living room sitting together and chatting. A coffee service; a plate of sandwiches; and a plate full of assorted Danishes cover the coffee table.

AT RISE: Anita walks into Eva's apartment, lays her purse on a table and hugs Eva.

ESTHER

Well hello there Miz Anita, how you doin'?

ANITA

I guess I'm doing as well as can be expected under the circumstances Esther. And yourself?

ESTHER

Is dat a real Gucci pocketbook?

EVA

Anita, can I get you something to eat or drink?

MARTHA

(Under her breath)

Proibly ain't.

ANITA

(Anita ignores Martha's slight)

No thank you Eva, I can't stay. I want to drive back to Long Island before it gets too dark.

ESTHER

(Martha laughs nervously and fidgets with her coffee cup)

It's summertime now Anita, it ain' gon be dark for 8:30 9:00 a clock.

MARTHA

Maybe she don't like our company, Esther!

EVA

Don't start ya'll, please. For God's sake, don't start.

ESTHER

(Irritated)

Whatchumean y'all. I ain't said nothing!

EVA

You know what I mean, Esther.

MARTHA

I ain' mean no harm, I was jus' kidding. I know Anita's alright. She saved now, praise God.

ESTHER

Yeah, she go ta Martha's church now, thank you Jesus-her and dat handsome husband a hers.

MARTHA

Thas right. Though they don't stay after service ta socialize wit nobody.

ANITA

Well, I have to rush home and cook for my family Martha.

ESTHER

You can eat at church. Or why doncha cook fore you leave home?

MARTHA

Or cook the night before?

ANITA

(Anita ignores Martha and Esther and turns to Eva)

Eva, I just dropped by to pay my respects and get the note Carol left for me. I really can't stay.

ESTHER

I guess maybe you is right after all, Martha.

EVA

(Eva looks sternly at her sisters)

Come on ya'll. This is not the time or the place for all that!

ESTHER/MARTHA

All what?

ANITA

(Anita turns abruptly towards the sisters)
No Eva, maybe it is the place, because it certainly is time.

ESTHER

Meanin' what?

ANITA

Meaning Martha is exactly right. I don't like your company—hers either.

MARTHA

WHAT!

ANITA

You heard what I said. I don't like y'all's company.

MARTHA

Well I ain' nevuh!

ANITA

AND YOU NEVER WILL! CUZ FOR ONE THING, YA'LL GOT HARD HEARTS.
(Anita visibly tries to calm herself)
And for another thing...

MARTHA

(Martha puts her hand on her hip, cuts her off and says)
What other thing is that Miz high and mighty?

ANITA

You and your sister don't know diddly about the love of Christ.

MARTHA

Don't you tell me nothing bout Christ!

ANITA

WHY! CUZ YOU KNOW EVERYTHING, DONCHA?!
(Calming down again)
Going to church don't make you a Christian.

ESTHER

Honey chile we been saved all our lives, you just started coming to church. We know our God!

ANITA

You're God! That's probably what's wrong now—what god is it that you and Martha know?

MARTHA

Whatchu mean by that dirty crack?

ANITA

(Turns and addresses Martha)

We may go to the same church Martha, but we are not hearing the same messages. The more I hear over that pulpit, the more I know y'all missed the mark.

ESTHER

Whatchu mean by that crack?

MARTHA

You crazy, we ain' missed no mark.

ANITA

I'll never understand what made you believe it was okay with God for you to treat Carol and them like trash.

ESTHER

Trash, we ain' treated nobody like trash. What the hell you talkin' 'bout?

MARTHA

Yeah, ya damn heifa. You think now, jus' because you went to some damn college and got a husband, you got everything figud out?

ESTHER

Humph, comin' in here acting all sady.

MARTHA

You don't know nothin!

ANITA

I know that Carol and Mary were some of the nicest, sweetest people I knew.

ESTHER/MARTHA

(Rolling their eyes and folding their arms across their breasts, they turn their backs to Anita and say in unison)

Humph!

ANITA

I know that if y'all hadn't cut them off just because Mary fell in love with James, Mary's life and her children's lives could have been different.

MARTHA

(Martha and Esther whip back around)

Whatchu mean coulda been different?

ESTHER

Mother told her not to marry James!

ANITA

I know Piper and Kenner and them is drinking too much and taking drugs and..

ESTHER

(Cuts her off)

I ain't surprised at nothin' them kids do? Look who they mother is, and your guess is good as mine about who they daddy is. Carol probly don't even know.

ANITA

No, I guess you're not surprised, Esther. Mary didn't give Carol any guidance because she didn't have any. And Carol couldn't give her kids what she didn't have.

MARTHA

What you mean Mary ain't had no guidance?

ANITA

What I mean is, your bible says that those who are healthy don't need a physician, it's the sick who surely do.

ESTHER

(Jumps up)

Whatchu mean? You damn Bi-bi-

(Esther starts to call Anita a Bitch but looks around and catches herself)

You sayin' we's sick or we's mental?

ANITA

IT WAS MARY AND JAMES—THEY WERE SICK—WITH ALCOHOLISM! And..

MARTHA AND ESTHER

(Sit down and cut Anita off)

We awreddy said dat!

ANITA

AND...

(Anita rolls her eyes, looks up and calms herself again)

all y'all had the ability to show them the love of Christ, but you wouldn't.

MARTHA/ESTHER

(Jump up like they are going to do something)

ALL Y'ALL LIKE WHO?

ANITA

(Ignoring them)

I may not know much from your perspective, but I know that much!

MARTHA/ESTHER

(Sit back down, and in unison, say)

Humph! Witch.

EVA

Well sisters, you sure asked for it.

ANITA

(Anita grabs her purse, turns and hugs Eva, and heads for the door)

Eva, I'm sorry for my outburst, but I just couldn't help myself. Every time I'm in church, and I see Martha, I think about Carol.

(Turns back around to look at the sisters)

And every time I'm in church thinking about Carol, it's always because Martha is loudly carrying on, pretending she's in the Spirit.

MARTHA

Carring on, whatchu mean um carrying on? I go to church to praise the Lord heifer!

ANITA

That's what you call it Martha?

MARTHA

ISS CALLED DA HOLY GHOST STUPIT! NOT CARRIN' ON. YOU DON' KNOW CUZ YOU NEVUH HAD IT!

ANITA

Stupid, stupid? You're the one who's stupid. I feel like slappin' the taste outta your hypocritical mouth!

MARTHA

(Jumps up. Esther physically tries holding her back)
I WISH YOU WOULD JES TRY IT MISSY!

ESTHER

Yeah, jus' go head, try somthin'.

ANITA

Both of y'all gone make me lose my religion if I don't get out of here.

(Anita shakes her head and ignores the grand-standing of the sisters)

Eva, I know I really have to go now.

EVA

Yes, I understand—here's the note Carol gave me at the hospital. She told me not to give it to you until after..., well here it is.

ANITA

I love you Eva, and I hope to see you soon.

(Anita leaves and Eva closes the door. She stops in the hall to read the note. *Dear Anita, my sister and best friend. Guess what? I accepted Jesus Christ. Now get up off the floor (smile). The oncology doctor who was treating me, was a Christian. And each time I saw him at his office, that little old white man would minister the Lord to me, even though he knew I wasn't happy to hear what he was saying. He just would not give up. Can you beat that? You know I was in the hospital for almost two weeks, and he came to see me almost every evening, and sat with me for a few minutes each time. He knew I was going to die soon. I made the decision to accept Christ on the day after I saw you last. I wanted you, and Eva at least, to know the good news. I just couldn't stand for them ugly sisters to know—well, Rome wasn't built in a day you know. If I don't get a chance to see you again, I know I'll see you in heaven. I love you more than Johnny Walker Red Scotch, and you know I loved me some Johnny Walker Red. (smile).*

Carol

(BLACK OUT)

THE END