

F.A.C.E. (FRAGILE. ANGEL. CRUSHED. EMOTIONALLY.)

Bernard Mersier

A play in two acts

ACT IScene 1

(The stage is bathed in a soft blue glow, with stars projected above, and the sound of a gentle breeze and rustling leaves. ALICIA's ethereal voice narrates.)

ALICIA (OFF STAGE)

In a world teetering on madness, nature's beauty is a fleeting refuge. Stars, some say, are angels watching over the broken. The brighter the star, the deeper the mark they left on earth.

(A single star flickers dimly in the constellation, streaking briefly across the sky.)

ALICIA (OFF STAGE)

Some stars return home before their light can fully shine. But their glow lingers—not just in their deeds, but in the hearts they touch, if a soul dares to heed their warning.

(The stage fades to black, transitioning to—Fluorescent lights buzz harshly. Four LOITERERS laugh jaggedly, slurring, standing outside of a store. A crash from inside the store is heard. EBONY, wearing a tattered coat reeking of sweat, is shoved through the door, sprawling onto cracked concrete.)

STORE OWNER

(From doorway, furious)

Stay out, you filthy bum! And take what you tried to steal! Your hands ruined it!

(EBONY drags herself up, stuffing scattered food into her coat pockets. The LOITERERS jeer.)

EBONY

(Standing tall, defiant)

Can I get a cigarette?

LOITERER 1

I got one. What are you willing to do for it?

EBONY

(Eyes narrow)

Nothing that'll drag me lower than I am. I'm homeless, not prideless.

LOITERER 1

(Laughs)

A bum with pride? That's rich.

(The LOITERERS howl. EBONY turns, and their taunts fade as she trudges to behind a crumbling Fourplex. Faded brick, flickering windows, and weeds choking a rusted car. EBONY pries open the car's back door, pulling out a blanket and sleeping bag. She spreads the bag against the wall, sits, and takes out a pint of vodka, a crumpled cigarette pack, and a lighter. She takes a swig, and then lights a cigarette. A window above creaks open, and women's clothes rain down, burying EBONY. She shoves them aside.)

KRIS

(Off stage, booming)

Since you think I'm always cheating, get out! I called you an Uber, it'll be here soon!

SHALETA

(Off stage, desperate tone)

An Uber? Why can't you just drop me off at my mother's house?

KRIS

(Off stage)

Be more responsible with keeping up with your car's maintenance, and you wouldn't have this problem!

SHALETA

(Off stage)

I can't believe you right now.

KRIS

(Off stage)

Keep talking, and I'll give you something to believe.

SHALETA

(Off stage)

Every time I try to discuss something with you, and things don't go your way, you're quick to put me out!

KRIS

(Off stage)

Because you need me! I don't need you!

SHALETA

(Off stage)

Are you serious right now?

KRIS

(Off stage)

If you don't get out, I'll cancel the Uber and call you an ambulance!

SHALETA

(Off stage)

I can't believe—

(A shattering sound.)

KRIS

(Off stage)

Stop running your mouth and get out! The next thing I throw will hit you in the face! Trust me!

(SHALETA sobs follow the sound of a door opening, and closing.)

KRIS

(Off stage)

I don't know who she thinks she is. It doesn't matter what I do because I'm the man and she needs me. When I decide to let her come back, she better remember that, and stay focused on what she's supposed to do as far as being my woman.

(The window slams shut. EBONY shakes her head.)

EBONY

(Muttering)

Fool.

(She rises, and then slips into the shadows. SHALETA is standing with an overnight bag, wearing tight jeans and a T-shirt, with her eyes brimming with tears. EBONY watches from the alley's edge. SHALETA looks around and spots EBONY.)

SHALETA

(Snapping)

Can I help you?

EBONY

(Soft tone)

I could if you let me.

SHALETA

(Scoffs)

No offense, but what can a homeless woman possibly teach me?

EBONY

That anyone can fall, but losing your self-respect takes longer to reclaim—if you ever do.

SHALETA

(Eyes narrow)

What do you think you know about me?

EBONY

Everything you're showing. A woman losing herself to a man who doesn't love her, thinking he does. Does that sound about right?

SHALETA

Says the woman in the position she's in.

EBONY

And she's trying to help a woman so she doesn't end up in my position or worse. Don't let my appearance fool you. There's knowledge under this filth.

(SHALETA glances at EBONY, and rolls her eyes.)

SHALETA

Maybe use that knowledge to get yourself back on your feet. Do whatever it is you do for the night, and enjoy.

(SHALETA walks off. EBONY shakes her head, returning to the alley.)

(Lights fade.)

ACT IScene 2

(Bright morning light fills the designer clothing store. SHALETA, in a crisp button-up and slacks, pauses at a black dress, letting her fingers graze the fabric, lost in a fantasy. MY'SEAN enters full of life, walking behind her.)

MY'SEAN

Excuse me?

(SHALETA sighs softly and turns around. Her eyes light up and blush creeps onto her cheeks.)

SHALETA

Oh, my God. Look at you.

MY'SEAN

(Soft chuckle)

I figured it was you. A woman with a specific beauty can never be mistaken.

SHALETA

(Blushes, shy laugh)

Boy, stop it.

MY'SEAN

I'm serious. But aside from that, how have you been?

SHALETA

I'm still the same girl you always flirted with in high school. Nothing much has changed.

(The smile on his face slowly vanishes, replaced by disappointment.)

MY'SEAN

I guess that means—

SHALETA

Yeah, I'm still with him.

MY'SEAN

I apologize. It wasn't my place to spark something that involves your personal life.

SHALETA

No, it's fine. No harm done.

MY'SEAN

I beg to differ. Anyway, it's nice seeing you after all this time.

(He turns, preparing to walk away.)

SHALETA

Wait a minute. How have you been? As handsome as you are, I know some lucky woman cuddles with you every night.

(He turns back with a dry smile.)

MY'SEAN

I work full-time at the Italian restaurant downtown, a couple of spots down from the bakery. I'm a cook.

SHALETA

Ooo, a chef. Maybe you can cook me something one day.

MY'SEAN

When my skills improve, I'll do it. Aside from that, I've been in and out of relationships. Nothing truly based on love. Well, at least on my part, there wasn't any love involved.

SHALETA

And why is that?

MY'SEAN

Like I told you in high school. Love comes and goes. Being in love with someone you know will complete you only comes around once. Why ruin that moment with someone you know won't fulfill their end of the deal?

SHALETA

So... Why were you bothered with women you knew wouldn't put forth their share?

MY'SEAN

I could ask you the same question, but because I still love...

(He catches himself, covering his mouth. SHALETA stares at him with her eyes wide with curiosity.)

MY'SEAN

I'm sorry. I was about to rekindle feelings that shouldn't be there. Maybe I'll see you around.

SHALETA

You know you could give me your number?

MY'SEAN

I could. But if he's still the same, there's no...
(Stops a low laugh)

It's good seeing you again, 'North Star.' If it's meant to be, I'll see you again.

SHALETA

You still call me that after all these years. Why?

MY'SEAN

If you know what the North Star means, you know the answer.

(He turns and walks off. SHALETA stands there, blushing, lost in memories of their high school days. Her phone buzzes, and the fleeting joy vanishes when she pulls out her phone looking at a text from Kris.)

(Lights fade.)

ACT IScene 3

(KRIS, in all black, exudes arrogance, sucking his teeth, sliding his phone back into his pocket before approaching the front counter. As a few customers shift in line, he spots CAROL, a woman he finds attractive. Just as CAROL reaches the register, KRIS tells the worker he'll take it. He steps behind the register with a smile spreading across his face.)

KRIS

How can I help you today?

CAROL

I'd like two deep dish specials.

KRIS

That's all?

CAROL

That's what I said.

KRIS

You don't have to respond that way, my baby. I'm just making sure you're satisfied with our service today, and you get everything you want to your satisfaction.

(She meets his gaze with a seductive glance.)

CAROL

You want me to be satisfied with the service?

KRIS

That's what I said.

CAROL

Then my order should be free.

KRIS

Only if you appreciate it, and know why I'm doing it, aside from what you're thinking.

CAROL

Hm. I can roll with what you're saying.

KRIS

So, again. Does this complete your order?

CAROL

(Smiles, light chuckle)

You can add extras if you plan on spending time with me later tonight.

KRIS

Your order will be out before you know it. I'll make sure when it comes out, you'll have a way to contact me. Cool with you?

CAROL

As long as everything is good.

KRIS

I'm about to have them start on it now.

(Lights fade.)

ACT IScene 4

(EBONY wakes up on top of her sleeping bag. She sits up and stretches, surveying her surroundings.)

EBONY

Another day in heaven.

(Getting up, she walks to the car, opens the back door, and pulls out a large black plastic bag, and a battered diary with its pages worn with sorrow. She places the diary inside her coat pocket.)

EBONY (CONT'D)

Time to round up enough cans for dinner and a drink.

(She places the bag beside the sleeping bag, and then rolls up her blanket and sleeping bag, tucking them back into the car. Closing the door, she picks up the plastic bag and makes her way to the front of the building. KRIS and SHALETA come on stage, and EBONY stands aside, watching them. KRIS looks over at her and cocks his head.)

KRIS

What do you want?

EBONY

Nothing from you. Although, there is something I would love to give her that I know would change her life.

KRIS

(Scoffs)

What could that possibly be, 'street trash?'

EBONY

"Street trash?"

(Laughs)

That's a new one. What makes me street trash?

KRIS

Look at you. Not to mention you live behind our building. Need I say more?

EBONY

(Smirks, suppressing a laugh)

If that's what you're basing it on, the only difference is you have a roof over your head.

KRIS

(Laughs)

I'm not about to entertain this.

(He goes inside the apartment. SHALETA prepares to follow, but EBONY'S soft snicker stops her, causing her to turn and look at her.)

SHALETA

Is there something you find funny?

EBONY

Yeah. You.

SHALETA

And what's so funny about me?'

EBONY

You're a stand-up woman with sass for any and everybody, except towards the person you need to stand up to. So, that makes you funny.

(SHALETA folds her arms across her chest.)

SHALETA

By you saying that, I'm guessing you're talking about my man.

EBONY

If that's what you call him.

SHALETA

(Clicks tongue)

I'll let that slide. Now, what makes you think I don't stand up to him?

EBONY

Baby girl, I'm sure everybody in this building knows you don't. But if that's not enough, I sleep outside your window. Need I say more?

(SHALETA sighs, lowering her head before looking back at EBONY.)

SHALETA

...What do you want?

EBONY

Nobody can give me what I want. But...

(She reaches inside her coat and pulls out the diary. A flicker of sorrow crosses her eyes as she stares at it for a few seconds before looking at SHALETA.)

EBONY

There's still hope for you.

(She walks towards her, extending the book. Shaleta eyes it warily.)

SHALETA

What is this?

EBONY

Hopefully, something that will help you realize things need to change before it's too late.

SHALETA

You want me to read your old memories, thinking-

EBONY

Either you will or you won't. It'd be a shame if you end up being 'street trash' as your boyfriend calls me.

(She places the diary on the ground, pats SHALETA on the shoulder, and then walks off. SHALETA watches her go, and then looks down at the diary. She bends, picking it up, tapping the back against her palm. With a sigh, she slips it into her purse before entering the building. The apartment is a pigsty. Clothes lay scattered across the floor and sofa. SHALETA sighs, walking over to the sofa, setting her purse down. She's about to take a seat when KRIS enters, looking spiffy with a wide smile plastered on his face. A blush spreads across her cheeks.)

SHALETA

Well, ain't you the finest man on the Eastside of Detroit.

KRIS

(Winks)

As long as you know.

SHALETA

Oh, I know. So...

(Blushes, walking towards him)

Where are we going?

KRIS
(Confused)

Huh?

(SHALETA takes a step back, with
her own confusion mirroring his.)

KRIS
What do you mean, huh?

KRIS
Um... I'm about to go out with the fellas and watch the game.
You...

(Laughs)
We were just arguing yesterday, and you think I'm about to
take you out somewhere?

(SHALETA folds her arms, staring at
him.)

KRIS
And you really believe I think you're about to go out with
your boys dressed like that?

KRIS
(Sighs, shaking his head)
See. This is what got you in trouble yesterday.

KRIS
Got me in trouble?

KRIS
You heard what I said.

KRIS
Who do you think—

(He steps closer and places a
finger on her lips.)

KRIS
Let's not ruin a good day. I'm about to go out and have a
few drinks with my friends. If you plan on staying...
(Glances around the room)
You know what you have to do, and have it done before I get
back.

(He kisses her cheek, then turns to
leave. Only a few steps away, he
pauses and turns back.)

KRIS (CONT'D)

I only turned around because I can sense you're about to talk, so before you get some words formed together in your mind, don't. That's unless you want this relationship to end on a bumpy note.

(He waits a few seconds to see if she'll respond. Satisfied, he chuckles softly and walks out. SHALETA stands in silence with tears stinging her eyes, and her face burning with shame.)

(Lights fade.)

ACT IScene 5

(SHALETA stares out the window with shame in her eyes. Below, EBONY sets out her dinner—a sub, juice and vodka. A thought crosses SHALETA'S mind as she leaves the room. EBONY prepares to open the sub when she hears footsteps. Looking up, unbothered, she sees SHALETA round the corner. EBONY scoffs and focuses back on her sub.)

SHALETA

Is that dinner for the night?

(EBONY places the sub down.)

EBONY

Every day is a feast as long as you get to eat.

SHALETA

Understandable. But, how about we go to the coney up the street and get you some real food?

EBONY

And why would you want to do that? I don't think your man would appreciate you feeding street trash.

SHALETA

...He's not my man.

EBONY

Since when?

SHALETA

Since what you told me earlier made me realize you were right about what you were saying.

EBONY

What's the catch? We go down there and you try to embarrass me.

SHALETA

No catch. I just...

EBONY

You just what?

SHALETA

I need someone I can talk to right now, other than my family, because I know they'll judge me.

EBONY

I'll do this so you can vent, and you can understand why I've been trying to communicate with you. The food is the least of my worries.

SHALETA

(Shy laugh)

I know. You're a strong woman with pride who can stand her own ground.

EBONY

(Playful laugh)

You got that right.

(SHALETA looks at her with a slight smirk playing on her lips.)

EBONY (CONT'D)

What?

SHALETA

I know you're not worried about the food, but do you think you'll want that after we get some hot food?

EBONY

Nothing wrong with a little snack and a drink after a meal. Besides, I didn't get this lovely shape from not eating.

SHALETA

(Laughs)

Let's go.

EBONY

You know I ain't lying.

(Lights fade.)

ACT IScene 6

(There's mellow music while couples dance and others are at tables. MY'SEAN and KRYSTAL enter, and take a seat at a table. KRYSTAL is enjoying the vibe, but MY'SEAN'S mind is preoccupied.)

KRYSTAL

This is a cool place. I've never been here before.

MY'SEAN

Yeah, it's okay. I like coming here because it's laid back.

KRYSTAL

What's wrong? You seem dry.

MY'SEAN

I'm good. Just thinking about something, that's all.

KRYSTAL

Could you possibly be thinking about what we're doing after we leave?

(He covers his mouth, trying to hide a soft, blushing smile.)

MY'SEAN

Maybe after a few drinks I'll be thinking about that.

KRYSTAL

Okay, seriously. What's going on with you? I've never seen you this caught up in your thoughts or whatever. You don't like being with me anymore?

(MY'SEAN wipes his face, then offers a slight smile as he reaches across the table to hold her hands.)

MY'SEAN

I love being with you, you know that. You're right. Let me stop thinking about it because I'm being rude.

KRYSTAL

We can talk about it if you want.

MY'SEAN

Nah, I'll pass. Talking about it will lead to an argument, and I'm already putting a damper on the mood.

KRYSTAL

When has there been a time you couldn't talk to me about anything?

MY'SEAN

I understand that. But..." He releases a soft sigh. "When a man wants to talk to his female friend about another female, it instantly—

(She snatches her hands away, with her eyes flashing with anger.)

KRYSTAL

What female are you thinking about while you're with me?

MY'SEAN

See. That's why I said—

KRYSTAL

I'm sorry. Go ahead and—

MY'SEAN

It's all good. Let's just focus on what we're about to drink and have a good time.

KRYSTAL

No, I was wrong for coming off the way I did. You love being with me, but right now, some female has you thinking about something you need to get off your chest. So, tell me.

MY'SEAN

Nah, I'm not falling for that. I can tell you the story and you'll pretend to listen, but in the back of your mind, you really don't care because it's not about you.

KRYSTAL

No, I'm serious. It's bothering you, so it's bothering me. I swear I won't brush it off as nothing.

MY'SEAN

Uh huh. Well, yesterday, I ran across an old friend from high school. Everything was going good until she told me—

(MY'SEAN cuts himself off when Kris and Carol enter making their way to the bar. KRIS pulls out a stool for CAROL before taking his own. Anger darkens MY'SEAN'S eyes, fixed on the couple, while KRYSTAL tries to regain his attention.)

KRYSTAL

Hello? Hello, what's wrong with you?

(Snapping out of his fury, he refocuses on KRYSTAL, though his gaze still flickers to KRIS and CAROL.)

MY'SEAN

I'm sorry, I blacked out for a moment. Umm... It doesn't matter about the rest of the story, I'm over it.

KRYSTAL

That quick?

MY'SEAN

Yeah. We're here to—

(The WAITRESS approaches their table.)

WAITRESS

What can I get for you guys?

(MY'SEAN gestures for Krystal to order first.)

KRYSTAL

Can I have a Long Island and a double shot of Jack Daniels?

WAITRESS

Okay. And for you?

MY'SEAN

I'll have some Remy straight and a Corona.

WAITRESS

Okay. I'll be back with your drinks.

(She walks off.)

KRYSTAL

Ooo, a Remy night.

MY'SEAN

(Winks)

You already know what that means.

KRYSTAL

(Licks lips provocatively)

You know it.

MY'SEAN

Long as we both know.

KRYSTAL

Uh huh. I'm about to go to the bathroom.

I'll be here.

MY'SEAN

(She gets up and gives him a kiss on the cheek before walking off. His gaze returns to KRIS, noting how touchy-feely he and CAROL are. Anger simmers inside MY'SEAN, but he fights to maintain his composure, knowing it isn't his place to confront KRIS. The WAITRESS returns, placing their drinks down. MY'SEAN keeps his eyes locked on the couple with a deep seated instinct telling him he should intervene. CAROL kisses KRIS, and then gets up and walks off. MY'SEAN picks up his glass and downs it. Savoring the smooth burn of the liquor, he rises and makes his way to KRIS. Standing beside him, the desire to hit him grows by the second.)

MY'SEAN

I see you're still the same from high school.

KRIS

(Turns, confused)

What?

MY'SEAN

You heard what I said.

KRIS

I don't know who you are, but you can—

MY'SEAN

You know who I am, scumbag.

KRIS

(Takes a sip, laughs)

Because I'm having a good night, I'll let that slide. But if you call me out of my name again, I won't be responsible for—

MY'SEAN

I don't understand why she's still with you. I don't understand what she saw in you in the first place.

(KRIS pauses with the glass halfway to his lips, and then he puts it down, finally recognizing MY'SEAN.)

KRIS

Oh, it's you.

(Laughs)

You still have an obsession with my property, I see.

MY'SEAN

That's sad you label her that.

KRIS

Because that's what she is, and how she likes to be treated. That's why you never had a shot with her. You're too soft. Then again...

(Laughs)

I mean, look at you. That says it all.

MY'SEAN

If I were the type of man to—

(KRYSTAL comes over, wrapping her arm around MY'SEAN'S waist.)

KRYSTAL

Hey baby, who is this?

KRIS

Somebody he better leave alone before things get ugly.

MY'SEAN

In your case, it's too late for that.

(KRIS prepares to stand, but KRYSTAL pulls MY'SEAN back.)

KRYSTAL

This is not why we're here. Come on, let's go back to our table and drink.

KRIS

You better listen to her. She's not as fine as my woman, but you're better off settling with that because you're not getting mine.

(KRYSTAL is offended, but she ignores it, tugging MY'SEAN back towards their table. CAROL returns, walking past MY'SEAN and KRYSTAL, looking at them confused before focusing on KRIS.)

CAROL

What was that all about?

KRIS

Nothing. Somebody needs to keep their feelings in high school, and realize he can never have what I have because he's not that guy.

(Fed up, MY'SEAN snatches away from KRYSTAL and storms back to KRIS, greeting him with a punch to the mouth, followed by grabbing him by the back of the head, slamming his head on the counter. Everyone stops what they were doing, focusing on the brawl. Bouncers are pushing through the crowd, trying to break them apart.)

(Lights fade.)

CLOSE CURTAINS:

END OF ACT I:

ACT IIScene 1

(SHALETA and EBONY enter the apartment, and the first thing EBONY does is look around at the squalor.)

EBONY

And I thought living on the streets was bad.

SHALETA

(Laughs)

Yeah, I need to clean up.

EBONY

Why do you need to clean up? This is his place.

SHALETA

Yeah, but I do live here, too.

EBONY

And why is that?

SHALETA

What do you mean?

(EBONY walks over to the couch and moves the clothes onto the floor before taking a seat.)

EBONY

Exactly what I said. Why do you live here with this slob?

SHALETA

(Lowers head, sighing)

...I wonder the same thing sometimes. I guess it's because I love being on my own.

EBONY

You can be on your own without this luggage you call a man.

SHALETA

I understand where you're coming from, but you don't understand.

EBONY

Help me to understand.

SHALETA

(Sighs)

It's just... Let me go get some clothes for you, and then I'll come back and talk about it.

EBONY

The clothes can wait. Shaleta, don't you think it's best to get a peace of mind first?

SHALETA

...Yeah.

EBONY

Okay then.

SHALETA

Ebony, just let me get the clothes first. I promise we'll talk.

EBONY

Okay.

(SHALETA walks off. EBONY looks around the room, disgusted. Loud, drunken footsteps approach the door. It bursts open, and KRIS storms in, furious. His face is bloody and his clothes are torn.)

KRIS

Where are you?!

(He's so consumed by rage that he doesn't notice EBONY on the couch as he marches towards the bedroom. EBONY remains unbothered until she hears SHALETA shriek.)

KRIS (OFF STAGE)

Look at me! This is all your fault, you know that?!

SHALETA (OFF STAGE)

What are you talking about?

KRIS (OFF STAGE)

Your high school crush who still has a crush on you is what I'm talking about! You're always accusing me of cheating, so what are you doing that has my face looking like this?!

SHALETA (OFF STAGE)

I haven't talked to—

KRIS (OFF STAGE)

Shut up! You know what I'm about to do?!

(A brief scuffle is heard, and then SHALETA comes running from the back with KRIS right behind her. EBONY rises from the couch and rushes to

stand in front of SHALETA. KRIS'S face contorts in confusion.)

KRIS (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing in my house?

EBONY

Thank God I'm here. It looks like you're ready to do what every coward who calls themselves a man always does when they get angry.

KRIS

Why do you have this street trash in my house?!

EBONY

Don't you worry about her right now because I'm the one that's in your face. She's scared of you for whatever reason, but I'm not. And I'm not about to let you lay a finger on her.

KRIS

Listen, you bum. You're sticking your nose in something that can land you a position far worse than what you're already in. Now, we can—

EBONY

We're not doing anything. And there's nothing you can do to me that I haven't been through already that can land me in a position worse than what I am. What's about to happen is me and Shaleta are leaving you in this dump like the bum you are, because you truly define every aspect of a bum.

KRIS

(Laughs)

Okay, I get it. She probably gave you a couple of dollars, something to eat, and some of her old clothes. That's why you're standing up for her, but you truly don't care because bums will do anything to get a handout. So look.

(Pulls wallet out, extracts some money)

Here's a few dollars so you can get you some food, a room for the night, and actually take a bath. Doesn't that sound better than sleeping on a sleeping bag in the alley, and smelling the way you do?

(He extends the money. EBONY looks at it with a slight smile playing on her lips.)

EBONY

You know something? A hot bath, food, and a bed would really come in handy right now. And if I take this, you want me to leave so you two can discuss your personal issues, right?

KRIS

That's right, street trash. Either that, or suffer what I'm going to do to her.

EBONY

You know...

(She smiles before hauling off, slapping him. SHALETA stares, shocked.)

EBONY (CONT'D)

I think I wanna see what you think you're about to do to her.

(Before he can retaliate, she kicks him hard and deep between the legs, holding her leg there for a second as he bends forward, moaning in pain. She lowers her leg, and he drops to the floor, balling up in the fetal position, moaning.)

EBONY (CONT'D)

I don't know what she's used to allowing you to do to her, but that's not happening on my watch. And your few measly dollars means nothing to a woman with pride, who knows she's worth more than money.

(Looks back at Shaleta)

Let's go.

(EBONY makes her way to the door. SHALETA remains stunned, staring at KRIS. EBONY looks back at her.)

EBONY (CONT'D)

Are you about to continue being his personal property, or do you realize you're a woman who deserves better? The choice is yours.

(EBONY walks out. SHALETA is dazed by what transpired. Coming from her stupor, she starts towards the door.)

KRIS

If you walk outta that door, you'll be no better than her. Trash. Worthless. Without me, what would you be?

(SHALETA pauses at the door, and then turns to look at him.)

SHALETA

In a better position than I knew I could've been in without you.

KRIS

You're stupid, you know that?! You're stupid, and you'll end up just like your street trash friend!

SHALETA

(Shakes her head)

If it comes to that point, I'll be content with the outcome until I get back on my feet. You made me believe without you there's no me, and I was stupid to believe it. My eyes are open, and as I look at the woman I was, the woman I am now knows better.

(SHALETA walks out.)

KRIS

Stupid! You're nothing without me, and you know it!

(Lights fade.)

ACT IIScene 2

(SHALETA and EBONY enter a not-too-shabby motel room with two beds. SHALETA sits on one bed, covering her face, sniffing softly. After locking the door, EBONY takes a seat on the other bed across from her.)

EBONY

Why are you crying?

(Slowly lowering her hands, SHALETA looks at her and sighs, shaking her head.)

SHALETA

Because I'm stupid.

EBONY

That's a harsh word.

SHALETA

And it fits perfectly with who I am.

EBONY

I wouldn't say that.

SHALETA

Well, thank you for sparing my feelings. Although, I know that's what you're thinking.

EBONY

If that's what I'm thinking, why wouldn't I tell you? What do I have to lose?

SHALETA

You make a point. Thank you for helping me back there.

EBONY

Oh, I can't accept that.

SHALETA

Huh? Why not?

EBONY

Because I'm only helping you see how situations should play out. The true help is you helping yourself with what I'm showing and telling you.

SHALETA

If only it could be that simple.

EBONY

Why can't it be?

SHALETA

You see what he puts me through.

EBONY

No, I see what you allow him to put you through.

(Shaleta closes her eyes, shaking
her head in shame.)

EBONY (CONT'D)

Right. So... Why do you allow him to do it? And please don't
say it's because of love.

SHALETA

How can I exclude the reason why?

EBONY

If that's the reason why you allow him to do it, fine. You
remind me of my best friend.

SHALETA

How?

EBONY

She was going through the same thing as you.

SHALETA

How did she solve the problem?

EBONY

He solved it for her when he killed her.

SHALETA

(Covers mouth, gasps)

Oh my God. I'm so sorry.

EBONY

Don't feel sorry. I have enough of that to share between us.

SHALETA

Why do you say that?

EBONY

If I had stood up for her like I'm doing for you, she would
probably still be alive.

SHALETA

What stopped you?

EBONY

I just gave up on her because she had the same attitude as you.

SHALETA

(Lowers head)

...Oh.

EBONY

Her death hurt me so bad, I lost track of who I was, and I ended up going down the same path she was on.

SHALETA

What happened in your situation?

EBONY

I decided I'd rather get things done on my own and keep my pride, instead of having a person treating me like trash, possibly killing me, and easily replacing me as if I didn't exist.

SHALETA

...Good point.

EBONY

On a happy note. Who beat your boyfriend up and had him ready to fight you?

SHALETA

(Chuckles, dryly)

You said boyfriend. That's cute.

EBONY

(Soft laugh)

Well, it's true.

SHALETA

Anyway, the guy he got into a fight with is My'Sean. He's my good friend from high school.

EBONY

Why do you think they were fighting?

SHALETA

They didn't like each other in high school. As you heard, his mouth is reckless when he's been drinking. At that point, he doesn't care about anything or anyone.

EBONY

So, you think he said something disrespectful to your friend?

SHALETA

I wouldn't doubt it.

EBONY

Hm. You don't think they were fighting because he did or said something your friend found disrespectful towards you?

SHALETA

What makes you think that?

EBONY

Why aren't you with...

(EBONY points at her.)

SHALETA

My'Sean.

EBONY

Why aren't you with My'Sean?

SHALETA

Because I've been with Kris since high school.

EBONY

And what made him better than My'Sean?

SHALETA

I... Well, Kris... He-

EBONY

Take your time.

SHALETA

Honestly... I should've been with My'Sean. Anything I needed financially or just a shoulder to cry on, he was there.

(Soft laugh)

He would always call me his 'North Star.' He still does to this day.

EBONY

His North Star. And you turned that down for a true piece of trash?

SHALETA

Don't be so harsh about it.

EBONY

The same thing I said when you called yourself stupid.

SHALETA

You're on a roll tonight.

EBONY

No. We're on a roll. By the time it's said and done, you'll remember your worth as a woman.

SHALETA

I don't think it's going to happen overnight.

EBONY

Anything is possible. Especially if you believe in God and have faith.

SHALETA

It would be nice if he showed me a sign that he still cares about me.

(EBONY taps her on the knee with a warming smile.)

EBONY

He is. You just have to open your heart and eyes to the signs.

SHALETA

I would like to believe that's true.

EBONY

It is. Just like I believe you should give My'Sean a chance.

SHALETA

I don't know.

EBONY

Right. Listen. Do you mind if I take a bath? It's been a long time since I had a hot bath.

SHALETA

We're becoming friends. Why would I care about that?

EBONY

You still have to ask, it's common courtesy. But before I do that. Here's something to think about on why you should give My'Sean a chance.

SHALETA

Okay.

EBONY

Why does Kris love you? And why do you love him?

SHALETA

I'm sorry... Come again.

EBONY

Aside from the typical reasons people tell each other why they love them. Why does he love you, and why do you love him?

SHALETA

I... I never looked at it that way.

EBONY

Now, you can. Thank you for allowing me to take a bath.

SHALETA

No problem. Oh, wait.

EBONY

What's up?

SHALETA

Since my car will be up and running tomorrow. How about after I make a few runs, we go do something fun?

EBONY

(Smiles)

I would love to.

(EBONY stands up and makes her way to the bathroom. SHALETA remains sitting on the bed, smiling.)

(Lights fade.)

ACT IIScene 3

(Indistinct chatter drifts from the PATRONS inside the restaurant as WAITERS and WAITRESSES move across the room. SHALETA enters, smiling, making her way towards the HOSTESS. The HOSTESS looks up at her with a smile.)

HOSTESS

How are you doing today?

SHALETA

I'm doing fine, and yourself?

HOSTESS

I'm having a great day. Do you have a reservation or would you like a table?

SHALETA

Actually, I was wondering if My'Sean is working today?

HOSTESS

I'm sure he is, but let me go check to make sure.

SHALETA

Thank you.

HOSTESS

Not a problem.

(The HOSTESS walks off. SHALETA steps to the side, smiling. After a few minutes, the HOSTESS returns.)

HOSTESS (CONT'D)

He's on the way.

SHALETA

Thank you.

(MY'SEAN enters, making his way to the front, speaking with the other WORKERS he passes. When he reaches the front, the smile on his face vanishes when he sees SHALETA. He walks over to her and stares with no expression.)

MY'SEAN

What's up?

SHALETA

Wow. That's a real dry welcome.

MY'SEAN

What kind of welcome were you expecting?

SHALETA

The usual, bubbly, 'Hey, North Star.'

MY'SEAN

Let's not play with each other. I know you know what happened.

(She lowers her head for a second,
and then looks up at him.)

SHALETA

Can we step outside and talk?

MY'SEAN

For what?

SHALETA

My'Sean, please. Can you do this one thing for me?

(He sighs, shaking his head,
walking towards the door, stepping
outside. She releases a soft sigh,
following behind him.)

MY'SEAN

(Annoyed tone)

Now what?

SHALETA

Okay. Yes, I know what happened between you two.

MY'SEAN

...Okay.

SHALETA

I don't know why he would pick a fight with you, but I wanna say—

MY'SEAN

Is that what he told you? He picked a fight with me.

SHALETA

I know how he gets when he gets drunk, and I'm sure seeing
you set off something he thought about during our high
school—

MY'SEAN

(Shakes head, laughing softly)

You really haven't changed since high school.

SHALETA

What do you mean?

MY'SEAN

Nothing, Shaleta. What do you wanna tell me?

SHALETA

Why are you going hard on me?

MY'SEAN

The real question is why are you going on hard on yourself? Look at you. You're beautiful. Educated. But you're lacking one thing.

SHALETA

And that is?

MY'SEAN

Common sense to use your brain instead of your heart. That's why we got into that fight. Because I know you know better, but you choose...

(Sighs)

Forget it. Listen, I gotta—

SHALETA

No. For once, you're gonna say what you need to say to me.

MY'SEAN

Your heart makes you stupid. Your heart is the reason why you're still with someone you know cheats on you and shows you no respect. Your heart is the reason why you'll forever be blinded from the true love I've been trying to give you from day one. Here I am calling you my 'North Star', and I know you never gave it a second thought, and that's cool.

(Sadness outlines her face as he stares at her, shaking his head.)

MY'SEAN (CONT'D)

Just like I thought. Go back to your life, Shaleta. I won't say I regret running across you again because I'll always love who I know you can be. But whoever this is... Please keep her away from me.

(He turns his back and walks toward the door.)

MY'SEAN (CONT'D)

Next time you come down here, just order something because there's no other reason for you to come in here.

(He walks back into the restaurant. SHALETA stands with tears streaming from her eyes, slowly turning around, walking off.)

(Lights fade.)

ACT IIScene 4

(EBONY is sitting on the bed watching television, and whatever the program is, it causes her to release a deep laugh. SHALETA comes into the room carrying an overnight bag with Sadness lingering in her eyes as she takes a seat on the other bed. EBONY turns her attention to her, feeling the heartache.)

EBONY

What's wrong?

SHALETA

(Sighs, shaking her head)

Nothing. I brought you some clothes you can change into.

EBONY

I appreciate that, but what I'd really appreciate is you telling me the truth about what's wrong with you.

SHALETA

...It doesn't matter anymore.

EBONY

Don't tell me you're letting—

SHALETA

No, it's not Kris. It's My'Sean.

EBONY

The man you should be with. What about him?

SHALETA

I don't think that'll be in my future.

EBONY

Was the conversation that bad?

SHALETA

Let's just say he regrets meeting me.

EBONY

Oh, baby girl.

(EBONY gets up and sits next to her, and as soon as EBONY wraps her arms around her, SHALETA breaks down crying.)

SHALETA

How could I be so blind? So, stupid?

EBONY

You're not stupid.

SHALETA

What do you call it?

EBONY

Trial and error.

SHALETA

Well, trial and error caused me to lose the one man I should've given a chance to because he actually loves me.

EBONY

Girl, you didn't lose him.

SHALETA

Believe me. After what he told me, I—

EBONY

You think you lost him, but you haven't.

SHALETA

I love your positive outlook, but I know it's a wrap. Once My'Sean sets his mind on something, nothing can change it.

EBONY

And I'm telling you, true love never dies. All you have to do is open up your heart and allow it in.

SHALETA

(Wipes tears)

Sadly, life isn't a fairytale, Ebony.

EBONY

It can be if that's what you choose and you set out to make it come true.

SHALETA

...I don't know.

EBONY

You can't see it now because you're hurting. But I promise you, everything will be perfect in the end.

SHALETA

Do you think so?

EBONY

I know so.

(EBONY smiles, patting her on the shoulder before she stands up, and picks up the overnight bag.)

EBONY (CONT'D)

How about after I shower and change, we can go Downtown to cheer you up, and then we can talk to My'Sean together.

SHALETA

Together?

EBONY

Trust me. You want your fairytale ending, right?

SHALETA

(Shy tone)

Yeah.

EBONY

Okay, just let me shower and change. I hope these clothes fit. You know I'm a whole lotta woman.

(EBONY laughs as she walks off.
SHALETA sits on the bed wiping her eyes, slowly forming a smile.)

(Lights fade.)

ACT IISCENE 5

(Inside the cluttered kitchen, KRIS is sitting at the table, drinking cognac straight from the bottle, wearing a dirty T-shirt and jeans. Taking a sip, he swallows hard, and then licks his dry lips.)

KRIS

Who does she think she is? Truthfully... Who does she think she is to call it quits with me? ME!

(Takes a sip)

Not only did she leave me, she sided with that street trash. ...Street trash. That street trash is the reason why she believes this relationship is over with no repercussions. I got a mind to...

(He pauses and a sinister smile creeps onto his face. Pulling out his phone, he turns it on and scrolls for a moment. Picking up the bottle, he lets out a low laugh, taking a sip.)

KRIS (CONT'D)

I'll show 'em better than I can tell 'em why I'm the man, and I'm the only one who can say this relationship is over.

(He takes one more sip before getting up from the table, leaving the room.)

(Lights fade.)

ACT IIScene 6

(EBONY and SHALETA enter eating cookies, radiating joy.)

SHALETA

I'm glad this friendship blossomed into what it is.

EBONY

Me, too. Who would've thought a lonely homeless lady like me would be having fun experiencing new things with a beautiful young woman like you?

SHALETA

You're not just some homeless woman. You're my lifesaver. My light at the end of the tunnel. But above all, you're my best friend.

EBONY

That's nice of you to say.

SHALETA

And I meant every word.

EBONY

I know. When do you think you'll start on the diary?

SHALETA

As soon as I get set up in my apartment, that'll be the first thing I do.

EBONY

That's good. Hopefully, you'll give me an invite.

SHALETA

Invite?

(Playful laugh)

Girl, we're gonna be roommates until we get you on your feet.

EBONY

(Laughs)

We'll see how things turn out. So, are you ready to go talk to My'Sean?

SHALETA

Do you really think he'll listen to us?

EBONY

I don't see why he wouldn't.

SHALETA

You know how men are when it comes to their egos. I don't think—

EBONY

You're My'Sean's North Star.

(SHALETA stops walking, causing
EBONY to stop, too.)

SHALETA

...Yeah... That's what he calls me.

EBONY

Do you know what it means?

SHALETA

I have no idea why he—

EBONY

No, not the actual meaning. His meaning.

SHALETA

...Okay.

EBONY

It's a good thing we became friends.

SHALETA

I'm listening.

EBONY

When a man views you as a complete woman, only wanting you as the woman he's in love with... There's no such thing as an ego because he'll go to the depths of hell and back as long as that woman he loves is comfortable. He knows the love coming from her heart is genuine, and he'll listen to whatever she's going through, right or wrong.

SHALETA

So, you're saying?

EBONY

A genuine man enters your life once. Love him and keep him.

(SHALETA looks at her with love in her eyes before hugging her. EBONY embraces her with the same love.)

SHALETA

Thank you so much. I don't know where I would be if—

(Kris quickly enters and startles them. At this point, he's beyond

the limit of being drunk. The two slowly start stepping backwards.)

KRIS

You'll be dead if you don't come home like you're supposed to.

SHALETA

What are you doing here?

KRIS

Did you forget? We share our locations through our phones.

(SHALETA lightly slaps her forehead.)

KRIS (CONT'D)

That's right. Warm it up for me, baby. When we get home, it'll be far worse than that.

(EBONY steps up in front of SHALETA.)

EBONY

She's no longer your property, and that will never be her home.

(KRIS looks at her with disgust before focusing on SHALETA.)

KRIS

This is what started your problems in the first place. Talking to this street trash has you thinking—

EBONY

This street trash made her realize she's the one who was homeless, digging in the trash, hoping she'll find a treasure that's worth something.

KRIS

You say one more word, and I'll—

EBONY

You'll what?

(Laughs)

What happened the last time you tried to do what I know you're thinking?

(KRIS prepares to swing, and SHALETA steps between them.)

SHALETA

This is not about to happen.

KRIS

You're right. Because you're—

SHALETA

You're about to shut up for once, and finally face the reflection you constantly ignore.

KRIS

What?

SHALETA

You had a good thing you ruined because the only thing you view that deserves your respect is you. With that, I wish you and yourself the best. But this mirage that was shared between me and you...

(Light kiss on the cheek)

It's time we both face reality and move on.

(She turns her back and walks away. EBONY gives him a sly smirk before following behind SHALETA. KRIS is lost for words, pacing back and forth with hate building in him. MY'SEAN enters and spots SHALETA.)

KRIS

Get back here! I'm the one who made you realize your worth as a woman! I made you realize you're beautiful! Get back here before I do something I'll regret!

(The two stop but don't turn around.)

SHALETA

You won't regret it like you don't regret everything else you did behind my back. You do what you need to do.

(MY'SEAN sees KRIS walking towards the two, reaching under his shirt for a gun.)

MY'SEAN

"North Star!"

(Lights fade.)

ACT IIScene 7

(Later on that night down by the skyline, SHALETA is sitting under a tree with the diary on her lap and a bookmark placed inside. On the blanket beside her lies a half-full wine glass, a wine bottle, and a picnic basket. Picking up the glass, she takes a sip with a smile. When she places the glass down, MY'SEAN takes a seat beside her. She leans over, placing her head on his chest, and he embraces her.)

MY'SEAN

"North Star."

SHALETA

Always and forever.

MY'SEAN

(Kisses her forehead)

It's a shame what had to happen for it to get to this point.

SHALETA

I wouldn't say that.

MY'SEAN

I'm listening.

SHALETA

God brought three things into my life. Two were tests that I had to pass in order to receive my blessing, which is the third thing.

MY'SEAN

What were the tests?

SHALETA

Kris and befriending Ebony. Mainly Ebony because she was the key for me to receive the blessing.

MY'SEAN

How so?

SHALETA

When God sees you realize the wrongs in your life, he removes them. Kris is no longer here because he tried to take my life, and ended up losing his life by trying to have a shootout with the police. He was my first test that I'm

thankful Ebony helped me with. Because without her, I would've stayed with him, and he eventually would've killed me.

MY'SEAN

Yeah... But did she have to lose her life?

SHALETA

She's not dead. She returned home to our heavenly father after delivering the message he wanted me to receive. And I'm sure her best friend, who is a special person in both of our lives. I'm sure she was missing her.

MY'SEAN

You lost me there.

SHALETA

Ebony was sent by God and my sister to help with the situation between me and Kris, so I could realize who I should be with.

MY'SEAN

Your sister?

(She hands MY'SEAN the diary. MY'SEAN takes it and opens it where the bookmark is. There's a picture of EBONY and ALICIA standing beside each other, smiling. ALICIA is almost a spitting image of SHALETA. Beside the picture, the caption reads... **'BEST FRIENDS FOREVER.'**)

MY'SEAN (CONT'D)

I never knew you had a sister.

SHALETA

I didn't talk about her because she was murdered by her boyfriend when I was young. That's part of the reason why Ebony became homeless. She felt bad that she couldn't do anything to prevent what happened, and she was going down the same road. She decided she'd rather struggle before suffering the same fate as my sister over a lifestyle.

MY'SEAN

Now, that's a strange coincidence.

SHALETA

The Lord works in mysterious ways. You have to pay attention to his signs in order to receive your blessings.

MY'SEAN

Agreed. And what would you consider me?

(She looks at him and smiles, puckering her lips for a kiss. He smiles before kissing her.)

SHALETA

You're the man I'm glad never gave up on me. Now, I know why you call me your 'North Star.'

MY'SEAN

Why?

SHALETA

Because you need me as much as I need you. And now that we have each other, there's no need for us to use a compass to find love.

MY'SEAN

You're absolutely right.

(They kiss again, and then she snuggles closer as they gaze at the stars, smiling.)

MY'SEAN (CONT'D)

This is a beautiful night.

SHALETA

And our father and guardian angels are looking down on us, protecting our love with their love.

(Two of the stars are shining brighter than the others.)

ALICIA (OFF STAGE)

If you don't believe in 'love conquers all' there's your proof. But you have to allow it into your heart and trust what God has planned for you.

(Lights fade.)

CLOSE CURTAINS:

END OF ACT II: