

Daughter of the Juice

by

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# DAUGHTER OF THE JUICE

Daughter of the Juice is a father/daughter drama. The main action takes place twenty years after an infamous legal trial but the emphasis is on archetypes rather than historical detail. It is a play about art, media and explores larger issues embedded within the Western psyche. Why are we born into certain lives? How does fate define us? Is it possible to free ourselves from the role which fate has assigned by changing geographies? Is it possible to escape the identity which destiny imposes? This play concerns itself with issues of race, identity and a dream that descends into classic tragedy.

*Caveat emptor*: The issue of culpability and crime should not so much be elided as structured as a mystery.

## CHARACTERS

**LAURA NELSON**: The Daughter of the Juice. She is a young, beautiful early-thirties brown skinned British woman. She wears glasses and conservative attire and speaks with an adopted British accent. The glasses fail to conceal a sexuality that leaks. Until the play's end, Laura attempts to keep herself walled in the world of intellect.

b) **LITTLE LAURA NELSON**: Laura twenty years earlier. An intelligent nine-year old girl interested in dancing, skipping and stories. She is innocent, unstained by life and full of love, hope and wonder. She speaks in these scenes with an American accent.

**INGRID CORLISS**: Female, late thirties, Associate Professor of Art History, Oxford. She wears this position as a badge. Her accent is British upper class with these inflections and mannerisms. Keyword - 'condescending'. Her language drips with the fact that she is well-born, bred as an academic with a waning era's arrogance. She speaks with a distracted quality. Normal-day-to-day conversation takes away from the important tasks she will accomplish in life.

**OJ NELSON** - A well-built, elderly, African-American male who has seen much in life and speaks with an American accent. For the play's main action he is presented in his early sixties. He is a tragic hero who has not yet lost his pride. We pity and fear him. He is at once a classic Hollywood icon and absent father. His greatest strength is also his weakness. In OJ's case, it is his constructed vision of himself. It does not conform with what is commonly called 'reality'.

**ANDY KURETOR**: Pale white late forties gay male art maven. He is a Francis Bacon-type, a detached figure who has little use for morality. He is only interested in pure art and has little regard for people. One thing is central - his art.

**DOLORES and BARBARA**- Both these characters are quintessential aging British upper class

women but also, simultaneously, the fates from Greek tragedy. They knit and cut yarn with the sense that they are cutting, measuring and guiding lives.

**NURSE 1 and NURSE 2:** These minor roles are doubled by Dolores and Barbara. The baby-blue nunnish nurse outfits are typical seventies - young and sexy. The women both now speak with American accents.

**VIDEOGRAPHER:** Assistant to Andy Kuretor. Unobtrusive, black, leather clad woman. The hint of S&M surrounds her.

## SCENES

Structurally, this play does not follow a chronological order but begins *in media res* and moves backwards and forwards in time and geographic place. Because of this, scenic design and costumes regarding time and place are especially important and should be kept minimal and iconic.

Before the play's beginning and at intermission, selections from five songs are interwoven. 1) Bobby McFerrin's "Sweeter in the Morning" 2) Overture to film "Conan the Barbarian." 3) Britannia Rules the Waves 4) Overture to Mahler's Symphony #1 "Frère Jacques" 5) Negro Spiritual "Take Me Down to the River".

Directly below the scene notes in the play program, the following motto should be displayed:

**Book of Job 30:31** "My skin is black upon me. My bones are burned with heat. My harp also is turned into mourning. My organ into the voice of them that weep."

### ACT I

1. Oxford academic office. Noon.
2. Tate Modern Art Museum. Three days later.
3. Oxford academic office. The morning of scene 1.

### ACT II

1. Los Angeles Backyard, USA. Twenty years back.
2. Oxford academic office. Afternoon Tea.
3. Tate Modern Art Museum. Continued from I, 2.

### ACT III

1. Oxford academic office. End of workday.
2. Tate Modern Art Museum. Continued from II,3.
3. Waiting Room. St. Vincent's Hospital. Thirty-three years back.

## Daughter of the Juice

### ACT I SCENE I

*(An academic office, University of Oxford, Bodleian Library. Center stage: Two desks - one large and grand, one small and plain. Right stage front is a photocopier. Centerstage back is a long Chinese painting that hangs from ceiling wire. The painting is on white rice paper. In large black calligraphy is a single Chinese ideogram - "Courage." (This ideogram is made up of a stick figure man walking forward with an ox. In this loose representation, the man may be mistaken for carrying a football and the ox may be mistaken for the endzone posts of a football field).*

*To the right of the photocopier is a bookcase with all manner of books and orientalized curios. Next to these hangs a Noh play's child's mask. Next to that a simple large clock. The clock reads quarter after twelve.*

*OJ walks in carrying a wrapped basket-shaped present under one arm. PROFESSOR INGRID CORLESS is between desk and bookcase furtively labelling files.)*

OJ

Excuse me.

*(OJ approaches INGRID.)*

OJ (CONT'D)

Ma'am?

INGRID

May I help you?

*(OJ takes out and reads off a piece of paper.)*

OJ

Is this the office of INGRID CORLESS?

INGRID

Yes.

OJ

Chair of Art History, Department of Research Archives, Bodleian library, Oxford?

INGRID

I am she.

OJ

Does Laura Nelson work here?

INGRID

She does.

*(INGRID points with a pen to a smaller desk. A small placard on the desk reads LAURA NELSON, RESEARCH ASSOCIATE.)*

OJ

You can help me. Yes

INGRID

Well?

OJ

I'm looking for her.

INGRID

Who might you be?

OJ

Her father.

INGRID

Mr. Nelson? I see. (Pause). At the moment, she's on an errand.

OJ

I'll wait.

INGRID

You'll have to wait outside.

*(OJ makes no move to wait outside but goes toward Laura's desk.)*

OJ

Outside, yes. She's not expecting me but . . . I thought I'd surprise her.

*(INGRID goes to her books).*

OJ (cont'd.)

I'm her father.

INGRID

Yes, you said. Her father. Nice to meet you.

*(INGRID goes back to her work. She examines a scroll with a magnifying glass.)*

OJ

I haven't seen her for a long time. A very long time. (Pause) This is where she works. A University. You're her boss. . . A university library. Never thought she'd be working in a place like this and across the ocean yet. (Pause) She was such an imaginative little girl.

*(Pause. OJ gets up and examines one of the bookshelves.)*

OJ

You've got all of these books I passed in that hallway. (Pause) I spent three years in college - never went to the library. (Pause) When do you expect her?

INGRID

She should have been back already.

OJ

I just missed her? What was your name again?

INGRID

Corliss, Ingrid Corliss.

*(INGRID taps with her pen on a name card which reads INGRID CORLISS, Ph.D. O.J walks to her desk, puts down his present and picks up INGRID'S name card.)*

OJ

Ph.D. I always wondered what that stood for?

INGRID

(annoyed)  
Doctor of Philosophy.

OJ

Thank you. I thought it was Piled High and Deep.

*(INGRID does not laugh.)*

OJ (cont'd)

Get it. P-H-D. Piled High and Deep.

INGRID

I do get it but I fail to see the humor.

OJ

Hmm.

INGRID

If you'll excuse me. I have work to do.

OJ

Don't let me get in the way. Quiet as a mouse.

*(OJ picks up a book lying on the desk and flips through it.)*

OJ

What sort of work is it?

INGRID

I'm an academic.

OJ

(Pointing to the placard)

I noticed.

INGRID

I'm an Egyptologist and Orientalist. I study art. I'm interested in scrolls, language, iconography, the representation of women. (INGRID points to a Gustav Klimt poster in the background). I give lectures to the public. (Pause) I'm working on a book on the representation of women in ancient Egypt.

OJ

How were they represented?

INGRID

Excuse me?

OJ

You said you were working on a book on the representation of women in Egypt. How were they represented?

INGRID

Ancient Egypt. (Pause) It's a large complex answer with no facile explanation. You've hit upon the crux.

OJ

Give it to me.

INGRID

What?

OJ

The cross. I'm a good judge.

INGRID

I said crux, Mr. Nelson and it would take me too long.

OJ

If you're going to be a snob about it.

INGRID

It's not a question of . . . (she can hardly bring herself to use the word) snobbery. It's a question of time.

*(OJ nods. INGRID hurriedly gathers up her things, flustered.)*

INGRID

(Leaving)

Would you tell Laura I'm on the sixth floor if she comes back?

*(OJ walks over to a Gustav Klimt "Pallas Athene" poster hanging from the wall but then sits. A few moments later LAURA enters. She is a beautiful young mixed white and black woman, wearing glasses that conceal a sexuality that drips. As she enters and notices her father, she drops the photocopies, books and manilas that she carries.)*

OJ

Laura?

LAURA

Dad?

OJ

Laura.

*(OJ stands up. They stand across from each other, unsure whether to hug, take a step forward or even begin to pick up the papers.)*

LAURA

(beginning to pick up papers)

I'm clumsy.

OJ

You're beautiful.

*(LAURA continues picking up papers.)*

LAURA

I'm shocked. Seeing you. After all these years.

OJ

You're beautiful.

LAURA

You're . . . here.

OJ

You turned out beautiful. Look at yourself.

LAURA

What?

OJ

My God. You are gorgeous.

*(OJ begins to pick up papers.)*

LAURA

How did you find out where I work?

OJ

It wasn't difficult.

LAURA

You've met Ingrid? Isn't she sweet?

OJ

That would be a term. (Pause) These papers. What is this?

LAURA

Nothing.

OJ

I never dreamt my daughter would have some position at a university, Oxford yet. Research Associate. I saw that on your card.

LAURA

It's not important.

*(When OJ speaks, he is going through motions - an actor in a melodrama.)*

OJ

You were going to be a dancer.

LAURA  
Twenty years ago.

OJ  
We've got so much to catch up on.

LAURA  
For instance.

OJ  
Your life.

LAURA  
My life.

OJ  
(handing papers to her)  
Your life, yes, but I don't want to keep you from your work. Just do what you were going to do.

LAURA  
Dad? Should I call you that?

OJ  
Let me look at you.

LAURA  
Dad.

OJ  
I want to look at you.

*(LAURA walks to the photocopier with her paper pile. OJ continues looking her over.)*

LAURA  
Come here.

OJ  
I can't believe it.

LAURA  
You look . . . the same. It's been twenty years.

OJ  
I work out. (Long pause) It doesn't seem that long. You still seem like my little pumpkin. Can I call you that, Ms. Associate?

LAURA  
No, you can't.

OJ  
Spunky.

LAURA  
(beginning to photocopy)  
Not quite.

OJ  
You're a woman now.

LAURA  
Yes, I am and glad to be one.

OJ  
I see that.

LAURA  
I don't mean it that way. My boss, Ingrid.(OJ nods). They say Hollywood is tough to break in. Someone should try Oxford.

OJ  
I bet. (Pause) You remember those dancing lessons. You were great dancing around. I thought you were going to be a dancer.

LAURA  
I don't even think about that anymore.

OJ  
A little?

LAURA  
Not in the slightest.

OJ  
Remember the birthday parties we had?

LAURA  
Too big, too many people, too much noise. I lead a quiet life now. Is that why you came today?

OJ  
I wanted to bring you this (holds forward present). Remember we took you kids to the Oscars. No babysitter for my kids.

LAURA

God. Dad, I don't even own a T.V. or VCR. If you can believe that. I haven't watched T.V. for the past eleven years.

OJ

How 'bout movies? This is England. They still go to movies here, don't they?

LAURA

I haven't gone to a movie since I was a little girl. I live in a different world. This city. It allows me to . . . to forget things. I'm an (awkwardly) intellectual.

OJ

An intellectual.

LAURA

I live in a world of books - languages people don't speak.

OJ

I didn't think those people existed.

LAURA

They do. I'm one of them. Proud of it. I haven't even felt the need to watch T.V. for the past ten years. It was trash when I stopped. I can't be bothered. I think about other things.

OJ

Other things?

LAURA

Yes. You may think them unimportant. Most people do, but Dad, I'm not most people.

OJ

You were never 'most people', little girl.

LAURA

God. You haven't changed. You're still the same. I'm not a little girl.

OJ

A lot of people say I have.

LAURA

Excuse me?

OJ

A lot of people think I have changed.

*(Pause. LAURA begins photocopying.)*

LAURA

Well, Dad, I like where I am. I like working at Oxford. I like this photocopy machine. It makes me . . .

OJ

Go on.

LAURA

Forget.

OJ

You were saying.

LAURA

It makes me forget things.

OJ

Laura.

LAURA

Whatever.

OJ

I'm sorry if . . . I mean I'm sorry that . . . .

LAURA

It's alright.

OJ

Laura, its just that . . . you were such an outgoing little girl. (Pause) It kills me to see you in a place like this.

LAURA

This is a wonderful place and how do you know I don't like it?

OJ

(He picks up an old book.)

How can anyone like this?

LAURA

The past is past. I've left that. I don't think about it.

OJ

Never?

LAURA  
Ever.

OJ  
We're more alike than I thought.

LAURA  
How could we be alike?

OJ  
Blood.

LAURA  
Blood?

OJ  
Kin, family.

LAURA  
Our skin's not even the same color. How could we be alike?

OJ  
Blood is thicker than water.

LAURA  
I spent years distancing.

OJ  
(under his breath)  
You haven't run far enough.

LAURA  
Excuse me?

OJ  
You haven't gone the hundred yards Laura.

LAURA  
Is that a mean thing you're saying after not seeing me for eleven years? What is the hundred yards?

OJ  
Farther.

LAURA  
Did you say 'father'?

OJ  
I said 'farther'.

LAURA  
How can you say that?

OJ  
You're my little girl. I love you.

LAURA  
Please.

OJ  
It's true.

LAURA  
Ok, you've brought a present and seen me on my birthday.

*(OJ goes to the bookshelf and starts to look at a porcelain ballerina sitting on the shelf. LAURA walks away from him, begins another copying task.)*

LAURA  
This job is menial.

*(OJ examines the ballerina.)*

OJ  
It's respectable.

LAURA  
I stand at this photocopier, run from one library to the other, take orders like some slave.

OJ  
You work at one of the finest universities in England.

LAURA  
That says a lot.

OJ  
You're beautiful.

LAURA  
You're the same sweet talking liar.

OJ  
I'm telling the truth. I'd say it even if I wasn't your father.

LAURA

I don't need to be reminded.

*(OJ goes back to examining curios. LAURA gets another stack of papers and starts to collate)*

LAURA

You're back to acting?

OJ

You do read the papers.

LAURA

(guiltily)

I heard it on the radio.

OJ

What am I supposed to do? It's what I know.

LAURA

Not the only thing.

OJ

I'm a name, a commodity, an old man. It's a game.

LAURA

A game?

OJ

That's right, a meaningless game which lets me pay rent.

LAURA

You don't need to pay rent.

OJ

I have children...

LAURA

I will never take a cent of your money.

OJ

I'm not saying now.

LAURA

Ever.

OJ

Laura. I'm not making anywhere near what you think.

LAURA

I don't think about it. I haven't for twenty years.

OJ

(Long Pause)

I guess I have robbed you of a lot. I've been gone a long time.

LAURA

How about my childhood...?

OJ

Laura.

LAURA

Or my life. I don't know you. (Long pause) Do you know who I am? Do you know my name? Do you know what I'm called?

OJ

No.

LAURA

I am the one referred as 'the ever more reclusive Daughter of the Juice'.

OJ

'Ever more reclusive Daughter of the Juice'. That's ridiculous. Nobody's called me that in years. And you've just been saying you don't read the papers. What's that about?

LAURA

I don't, but I do have friends. I can't prevent them from watching T.V. or going to art galleries or reading tabloids.

OJ

What's the art gallery have to do with this? And tabloid trash?

LAURA

You'd be surprised. (Long pause) That's what I should have been, Laura Nelson, trash archivist, gossip librarian. Do you realize how many stories have come out over the . . .

OJ

Please.

LAURA

Please what? You don't know. I've spent the last twenty years trying to empty myself.

OJ

Of what?

LAURA

Your identity for one

OJ

My identity, and what's that?

LAURA

Jury's still out. Hasn't been decided, yet. Still up for trial. In the public mind. What we in the academy call the 'collective imaginary'.

OJ

'Collective imaginary'. Laura, I just came here to give you a birthday present.

*(Trying to hide. LAURA begins to weep)*

LAURA

Thanks, but I'm not celebrating. If possible, I'd like to forget.

OJ

Laura.

LAURA

You've given me enough for a lifetime, thank you.

OJ

Laura.

LAURA

I don't think I'll be able to live out what you've given me.

OJ

Don't exaggerate, Laura.

LAURA

Exaggerate! My friends tell me. My therapist tells me. (A tone up). They don't have to walk in my shoes.

OJ

Please.

LAURA

They don't have to see their name in the paper. Family lives picked apart month by month, year by year. They don't have to measure lives through some . . .

OJ

You measure your life?

LAURA

Of course not.

*(Pause. LAURA starts another task. OJ takes a handkerchief from his jacket and drops it onto the photocopying machine. LAURA picks it up, wipes her tears.)*

LAURA (CONT'D)

So tell me about Genie and Michael. How are they doing? How's their baby?

OJ

Michael's well. Oh, I brought you a picture.

*(OJ takes out a photograph)*

LAURA

I still can't believe I'm an aunt. She's so cute.

OJ

Michael's such a proud father. I can hardly believe it. I'm a grandfather.

LAURA

I'm so happy for him. Is he happy?

OJ

He's happy. How could he be happier? He's got a young wife, a good marriage, two little babies.

LAURA

I remember. You would take us to Santa Monica and we would throw around a football.

OJ

You remember that?

LAURA

That football was red. I was so proud of myself.

OJ

You remember that? You could hardly walk. You couldn't have been older than three or four.

LAURA  
I have that football.

OJ  
You do?

*(LAURA walks over to the case of orientalized curios and statues. Beside the woman's Noh mask is a little red nerf football.)*

LAURA  
Here.

OJ  
I can't believe you kept that. (OJ picks it up) God, this small football! This was the one?

LAURA  
God knows I still have it.

OJ  
What were these called again?

LAURA  
Nerfs.

OJ  
Think fast.

*(OJ passes her the football. LAURA misses the catch. She picks it up and awkwardly throws it back.)*

OJ  
Why did you bring this here?

LAURA  
I was moving from L.A. . . I kept it. One of the packing crates got mixed up. A case of things ended up here. Do I have to have a reason for everything?

OJ  
Now I remember this. (Squeezing the nerf) This was the little red football I bought for your crib. But then Mikey got a hold of it. You guys never wanted to share. I couldn't even get you two to play catch.

*(LAURA takes the football from OJ, places it back on the shelf and then goes back to her work.)*

LAURA  
You're back to acting?

*(OJ gravitates around the shelf.)*

OJ

Oh, yeah, bright and early Monday morning. Remember we used to play catch on the beach together?

LAURA

Movie, T.V.?

OJ

It's commercials, infomercial talk shows. Monday I'm supposed to do some kind of art museum interview at the Tate Modern. That's why I'm in England.

LAURA

I see.

OJ

I take what I can get.

LAURA

What can you get?

OJ

Laura, I roll with the punches.

LAURA

Roll with the punches.

OJ

Past is the past. I gotta get on.

LAURA

We all gotta.

OJ

Look, I know it must have been hard. (Pause) I'm sorry for that. What can I say? If I could have . . . There's nothing to say. What can I say? I can't talk.

LAURA

Both of us.

OJ

I'm sorry and . . . (Pause) We gotta get on.

*(OJ walks from LAURA to a Gustav Klimt "Pallas Athene" poster next to the bookshelf.)*

OJ

I've seen this before.

LAURA

That's Klimt's 'Pallas Athene, Goddess of Wisdom'.

OJ

That's not where I've seen it. It's from a movie.

LAURA

That was done before movies existed.

OJ

No, I'm sure. This is where the designer got his idea.

LAURA

I doubt that.

OJ

Seriously. Have you seen Conan?

LAURA

Excuse me?

OJ

'Conan the Barbarian', old Hollywood flick starring (OJ mimicks a German accent) Schwarteneggah. Do you remember him?

LAURA

I can't say I remember either.

OJ

Not important. What you gotta know is that Conan has a helmet like this (points to painting). It will save his ass.

*(OJ points to the painting and goes through the motions of a sword coming down.)*

OJ

Great beginning. (Slowly) Drums. Distant sound of horses. Then - the axe will fall. Bum, bum, bum, bum. Black screen dissolves to white. Quote. "If something does not kill you it will make you stronger." Cut to Conan chained to water wheel. Bad ass nigga.

LAURA

That's Nietzsche.

OJ

No, it's (German accent) Schwarzeniggah, low-budget pic. I've seen it a zillion times.

LAURA

No, the quote, it's Nietzsche.

OJ

I'm not sure of the writer but those words . . . I live off those.

LAURA

Frederick Nietzsche. He wasn't a screenwriter but a German Romantic.

OJ

With those lines I'm not sure how romantic that dude could be.

LAURA

Romantic in the sense of a tradition, a philosophical movement with larger ramifications . . .

OJ

Larger ramifications, Laura? The only ramifications I know is the L.A. ramifications. (Pause)  
That's a joke.

LAURA

I know. It's not funny.

OJ

And you were saying you didn't see the movie?

LAURA

I didn't but I know the philosopher. I know the quote well.

OJ

And what about the L.A. ramifications?

LAURA

Nietzsche was the Nazi's favorite. He came up with the idea of "will to power," "superman." He went insane.

OJ

Little girl that's out of this old man's territory.

LAURA

(under her breath)

I'm not so sure.

OJ  
Excuse me?

LAURA  
Nietzsche is coming back into vogue but I would still say there's a lot to be said against him.

OJ  
Laura, you are an 'intellectual'.

LAURA  
Thanks, dad.

OJ  
The new black intellectual.

LAURA  
Half black.

*(OJ mimes a football halfback.)*

OJ  
Hut. One. Two. Three. Get it. Half back.

LAURA  
Enough.

*(LAURA goes back to her photocopying. OJ takes a seat.)*

LAURA  
What are you hoping to achieve by coming here?

OJ  
Achieve? I dropped that long ago.

LAURA  
What about those jobs?

OJ  
That's different.

LAURA  
Different?

OJ  
I gotta stay alive.

*(LAURA raises the speed of her work.)*

LAURA  
Keep your mind occupied.

OJ  
In a way.

LAURA  
That's good.

OJ  
I'm busy, memorizing lines, back in routine. Keeps me decent.

LAURA  
On track. Back in business.

OJ  
Would you like to see what I'm working on?

LAURA  
What do you mean?

OJ  
I've got a copy of the script.

*(OJ takes out a copy of the script from his jacket.)*

LAURA  
My God, you haven't changed.

OJ  
I've got these lines to memorize. I got to keep them at hand.

*(OJ tries to hand LAURA the script.)*

OJ  
Would you read these with me?

LAURA  
Really, I'd rather not, no.

OJ  
Please.

LAURA

I said I'd rather not. (Pause. She goes back to her work but then changes her mind.) Give me the script.

OJ

No, I'm sorry. (Putting script down on copier) Here, tell me about your studies. What are you studying?

LAURA

Most of my studying is tied up with Ingrid.

OJ

Right, Ingrid.

*(LAURA picks up the script.)*

LAURA

(perusing script)

This script seems kind of funny. Comedy?

OJ

Black comedy. Now you and your boss, Ingrid. . .

*(OJ picks up Ingrid's name card.)*

LAURA

Dad, you don't have to do this. You're not interested. If you're not interested.

OJ

I'm interested.

LAURA

I said before...

OJ

I know, this is a different world.

LAURA

I belong here.

OJ

I'm glad you found your place.

(Pause.)

LAURA

What did you hope to achieve coming here?

OJ

This.

*(OJ picks up the wrapped present.)*

LAURA

After eleven years of not seeing each other.

OJ

Laura.

LAURA

Why come here?

OJ

You're my daughter.

LAURA

No.

OJ

What?

LAURA

It's too much.

OJ

You're still talking to me.

LAURA

We are adults. There's a part of me . . . I've left it. I can't be reminded.

OJ

If I knew you felt that way.

LAURA

Eleven years of refusing to see you wasn't enough of a hint.

OJ

I thought things could be different, Laura.

*(OJ tries to reach toward LAURA. She recoils.)*

LAURA

Look, Dad, you've found me. We can visit with each other, this once. That's all. I don't want to begin a relationship.

OJ

Should I leave?

*(OJ puts on his jacket and stands to leave.)*

LAURA

No. (OJ begins to walk out) I didn't mind when you mentioned those dance lessons.

OJ

You were the best.

LAURA

I was never best. (Pause) But I did enjoy those concerts. I've got about an hour's work left. (Pointing to teapot). Make some tea. I've got to find Ingrid, finish a few things. We'll get dinner.

OJ

How 'bout your present?

LAURA

Later.

*(LAURA rushes out. OJ goes toward the central back shelf where the little red Nerf sits. He looks at other objects. A gravitational force pushes him toward the football. Enter INGRID).*

INGRID

(surprised)

Mr. Nelson, you're still here.

OJ

Call me OJ.

INGRID

Did you find Laura?

OJ

She went to look for you.

*(Ingrid notices OJ eyeing the little red football.)*

INGRID

I don't know why she keeps that here. It doesn't belong here at all.

OJ

Excuse me?

INGRID

That shelf. That's all Tang dynasty infant pottery. Why in the world she keeps that here . . . I don't know. I've asked her to take it home but she's absent-minded. You found her?

OJ

She was here for awhile. (About football) I had completely forgotten this. Going to the beach in Santa Monica with my kids.

INGRID

Excuse me?

OJ

Just a crazy old man mumbling.

INGRID

You used to play what they call football here, wasn't it?

OJ

Once, I did, yes.

INGRID

The Lakers?

OJ

That's a basketball team.

INGRID

I don't follow sports. (Pause) I've never understood it.

OJ

Football?

INGRID

Sports, in general. You were also an actor?

OJ

I didn't know this was going to be "this is your life".

INGRID

Oh, no. It's just . . . Laura doesn't talk about her family, much . . . at all, really.

OJ

I see.

INGRID

Doesn't seem to have much of a personal life, any personal life outside . . .

OJ

Outside.

INGRID

Outside our work. I was wondering.

OJ

(resigned)

What were you wondering?

INGRID

No need to get defensive, Mr. Nelson.

OJ

What were you wondering, Professor Corliss?

INGRID

(She walks over to the football.)

Maybe it's best you take this and leave.

OJ

What do you mean?

INGRID

It can't do Laura any good to see you here. I see it already.

OJ

That's for Laura to decide.

INGRID

I wish you'd leave.

OJ

Are you asking or telling?

INGRID

Asking.

OJ

I see, her boss asking . . .

INGRID

I like to think myself . . .

OJ  
Don't.

INGRID  
Excuse me?

*(A glimmer of violence surfaces.)*

OJ  
Don't think yourself.

INGRID  
Mr. Nelson, I'm aware.

OJ  
I'm aware also. Leave it.

*(OJ takes a seat at Laura's desk.)*

INGRID  
If you're going to be that way.

OJ  
Could you just let me wait here?

*(INGRID walks to the football.)*

INGRID  
This doesn't belong here. Now we have a good reason why it can disappear.

*(Pause while OJ sits thinking with head down).*

INGRID (CONT'D)  
It's you.

OJ  
No, it's not.

INGRID  
I knew you were going to be like this if I ever met you. I anticipated.

OJ  
What did you anticipate?

INGRID

Don't think I don't keep abreast of affairs, Mr. Nelson. Don't think I don't read the paper like..Laura. I realize the strategy she's taken. The reasons. I'm aware.

OJ

You're aware of less than nothing.

INGRID

I wouldn't be sure. At first Laura was hesitant.

OJ

Hesitant.

INGRID

Yes, hesitant. For the first three years of our relationship she didn't even let on who she was. I knew from the beginning.

OJ

(with contempt)

You did?

INGRID

Yes. The papers kept constant surveillance of her, where she was going, where she was trying to hide.

OJ

Hide?

INGRID

Because of you. (Pause) What was the idea in coming here?

OJ

What do you mean?

INGRID

What could you possibly hope to achieve except causing the girl more pain?

OJ

I'm her father. I wanted to give her a present. It's her birthday.

INGRID

(somewhat shocked)

Her birthday? That's funny. She never mentioned anything.

OJ

That says a lot.

INGRID

Indeed. It clears a few things up about what happened this morning. Why don't you take this football and leave? I'll tell her something came up and you left.

OJ

No.

INGRID

Excuse me?

OJ

I said 'no'. Put that down, go back to your work. Let me sit. I don't want to talk to you anymore.

*(Long pause. INGRID goes to her desk with the football, goes back to her scroll, puts on her glasses. She realizes she has the football and puts it back on the shelf.)*

INGRID

You probably think seeing this there are other things at her home. Reminders. That's what I originally also thought but I've been there, on more than one occasion. Would you like me to tell you something?

OJ

No.

INGRID

*(placing football back on shelf)*

This is the final trace - her previous life. She can't even keep it in her home.

OJ

She's free to do what she wants.

INGRID

You don't know Laura.

OJ

Stop.

INGRID

Should I? You continue to torment her. *(Pause)* Why? I'll tell you, it's because she had the misfortune to be . . .

OJ

Time out.

INGRID

Please. Laura had the misfortune to be born to you. I see her at the desk, tears in her eyes, trying to lose herself in work. Don't think I don't see. I may be an academic but I do know a few things. I know you have no regard for our work here. That joke you made. Ph.D. To me, that's so distasteful. Our work is important to us. We take it seriously here at Oxford.

OJ

Thank you.

INGRID

Thank you?

OJ

Thank you for laying it out, mastah.

INGRID

What is that supposed to mean? Mastah? Are you making a racial slur? Is that the analogy? Is that what you're implying?

*(INGRID moves so she is in OJ's face.)*

OJ

(slowly)

Go sit over there. Shut your yap.

INGRID

I won't shut my yap. I'm not going to be accused of racism in my own office by a man who's completely destroyed the life of my assistant. I'm not going to . . .

*(LAURA enters carrying another pile of papers.)*

OJ

Laura.

LAURA

Dad, Ingrid, hi. I guess there's no need for introductions.

*(Fade lights.)*

## ACT I SCENE 2

*(TATE MODERN ART MUSEUM - MEDIA Retrospective. The stage is set-up to resemble a Post-Modern art retrospective. Splashed about stage back in large letters: **MEDIA: A RETROSPECTIVE: Made possible by AT&T and the Tate Modern Art Museum.**" Stage left are large explanatory museum-type posters which remain illuminated throughout the scene.*

*The posters read:*

### ***(Media - Origins***

*While the work of every artist is distinct, the paintings, video and installations in this retrospective constitute defining examples of the mid-nineties movement known as "Media" and "Media Art." The works presented here are often described as "Mediaist," a term used to characterize nonhierarchical works of art concerned with 'mass media', 'mediation' and representation through mass media inclusive of television, radio and print culture. The originary point of the Mediaists' search for expression has been defined by some as the mid-nineties OJ Nelson trial. While the trial literally defined a new term, 'media circus', the Mediaists took the event to explore larger pre-millennial themes. In early works like "Black Christ"(1997) or "4X4"(1995) we find an apocalyptic type imagery presaging the millennia. In other works such as "We the Jurors"(1996) the body politic of American society is imaged as an absent family in a T.V. living room. The works presented assert their own literal presence and stand ultimately for nothing less than media itself.*

*This retrospective was made possible through generous donations of AT&T, Video Pool and Evhan B. Tischman Foundation.)*

*Three distinct 'Art Installations' are spaced across the stage from left to right. Number three takes center stage:*

***Installation One: "4X4"*** 16 television sets set up four by four. On them is broadcast one large image of a looping video of OJ's 4x4 Bronco Ride. Over the sets hangs a small model helicopter with two tiny model cameramen hanging out the side. Painted on the floor in front of the sets is a representation of white football field yard lines. Beside the T.V's. is a placard which reads, "Go Juice Go."

***Installation Two: "What about. . ."*** An Andy-Warhol-type large primary color lithograph of a younger OJ posed in profile leaning on a trial chair worriedly looking forward. A streak of red paint and what looks like a tear stains the lower left of the lithograph.

***Installation Three: "We the Jurors":*** An early nineties type living room, carpet, couch plus T.V. set-up. The couch is empty.

*OJ walks in stage left followed by ANDY KURETOR and a VIDEOGRAPHER. Both ANDY and VIDEOGRAPHER are dressed from head to foot in black. ANDY also wears dark glasses. Throughout the scene the VIDEOGRAPHER tapes the interchange between the two men. The VIDEOGRAPHER is as unobtrusive as possible maintaining a static camera position and only moving when OJ goes totally off camera or ANDY gives her signals.)*

OJ

This place gives me the creeps.

ANDY

That. . .

OJ

It's a nightmare, one of my nightmares realized.

ANDY

I see.

OJ

These are valuable?

ANDY

From museums and collectors around the world.

OJ

No kidding. I can't see anyone wanting this in their living room.

ANDY

You'd be surprised.

OJ

What is it you want me here for again?

ANDY

Impressions.

OJ

For that you're going to give me twenty five K. For an hour of walking around.

ANDY

Uhhh. Your time is valuable,

OJ

What am I supposed to do again?

ANDY

Amuse yourself.

OJ

How can I amuse myself here? Is that thing rolling?

ANDY

It is.

OJ

It might as well be rolling. Twenty Five K is twenty five K. What do you want me to say?

ANDY

What you wish.

OJ

You don't have a script?

ANDY

No script.

OJ

No script. 25k for one hour. No script or questions.

ANDY

Good.

OJ

What? What I just said? 25k for one hour of no script or questions.

ANDY

Excellent.

OJ

Excellent? I can't believe this is the Tate Modern Art Museum.

ANDY

After - Washington, Paris, New York, Munich and then Madrid.

OJ

This takes the cake. Where is this originally from in New York? The Metropolitan?

ANDY

Guggenheim.

OJ

That place should be a skateboard park.

ANDY

Excuse me?

OJ

That was a joke. I said that place that should be a skateboard park.

ANDY

Frank Lloyd Wright was the architect.

OJ

(With contempt)

You look like the type of guy that would know.

*(OJ goes to the couch installation.)*

OJ

Can I sit here? Is it okay if I sit?

ANDY

Sit.

OJ

Like I said, I'm not sure. Is this art or a couch and T.V.? (Pause) That was a joke.

ANDY

Amusing.

OJ

You two are a barrel of laughs. (To videographer) How much do you get per hour. Maybe we can party together later. (Pause) Does this T.V. work?

ANDY

Try it.

OJ

I think I might.

*(OJ goes to the T.V.)*

OJ

I wouldn't mind catching the last quarter of the Lakers game. If you don't have any objections.

ANDY  
None.

OJ  
What's that? (Pointing to 4X4) Bronco ride?

ANDY  
It's called 4X4.

OJ  
You know what I'd call that.

ANDY  
A pun.

OJ  
A waste of sixteen T.V. sets.

ANDY  
I see.

OJ  
I bet you do. Now what am I supposed to do?

ANDY  
Mr. Nelson, whatever you like?

*(OJ walks to the football yard line markers on installation #1.)*

OJ  
I'll play quartz. Let's set up plays. How 'bout that?

ANDY  
Whatever you like.

OJ  
You really got a sense of humor, don't you?

ANDY  
Are you being sarcastic?

OJ  
You did say I can say anything I like.

ANDY  
I encourage it.

(Pause.)

OJ  
What do you think I am, some kind of . . . animal?

ANDY  
I never said that.

OJ  
Live in action, Conan the Barbarian.

ANDY  
Mr. Nelson.

OJ  
Give the monkey twenty five K, watch him perform.

ANDY  
You said it.

OJ  
(pointing to artwork)  
What do you get for one of these?

ANDY  
That's inconsequential.

OJ  
I want to know. You're giving me twenty five K for an hour like you shit it out and. . .What do you get for one of these?

ANDY  
Not a concern.

OJ  
(Pause) Say for hypothetical reasons, I wanted to buy one.

ANDY  
Mr. Nelson.

OJ  
Say I was one of your buyers.

ANDY  
Really.

OJ  
Say.

ANDY  
You couldn't afford it.

OJ  
I couldn't afford it.

ANDY  
These works are priceless. They represent a historical movement gone - *fait a complis*.

OJ  
I'm not even dead yet.

ANDY  
That's different.

OJ  
These pieces, as you call them, are about me, aren't they?

ANDY  
Actually, no.

OJ  
What do you mean 'actually no'?

ANDY  
They're about something larger with which your life just happened to coincide.

OJ  
And this video camera and the 25k, with what does that coincide?

ANDY  
Coda.

OJ  
Excuse me.

ANDY  
Coda, the word means addendum, a final passage of a composition introduced after the essential parts . . .

OJ

Dictionary definitions in England, is that from the OED.

ANDY

Let me finish.

OJ

(pointing to artwork)

The coda. . .

ANDY

Take what you will.

OJ

Well, finish then.

ANDY

Excuse me?

OJ

I said finish. You said you haven't finished.

*(ANDY delivers this as if he has contemplated it for a long period of time.)*

ANDY

Yes, uhh, a final passage of a musical composition introduced after completion of essential parts giving a satisfactory definitive ending.

OJ

I see.

ANDY

The composer Mahler put it, "As father asking the nurse to see his newborn before eventide".

OJ

(with contempt)

How poetic, before eventide! How long do I have left with you?

ANDY

A little less than a half hour.

OJ

You know which one of these I hate most. Can I tell you?

ANDY

Anything you like, Mr. Nelson.

OJ

That one upstairs with the home movies of my kids. Whoever did that stole that footage, ripped it off. That's a private home movie of my kids playing catch on the beach.

ANDY

That's not my work.

OJ

Whoever did that.

ANDY

Specifically, which one are you referring to?

OJ

That piece of trash on the second floor.

ANDY

Ahh, yes, "Daughter of the Juice", the Uffizi owns that now.

OJ

'Daughter of the Juice'. Is that what it's called?

ANDY

I believe so.

OJ

The Ooh-Footsie has no right to display. Those images are from an innocent time. Bullshit. This is bullshit. That's what this is. What did you say that one was called again?

*(Punch lights down.)*

### **ACT I, Scene III**

*(Oxford University office. The morning of scene one. The clock reads quarter after nine. INGRID reads the morning paper. LAURA makes tea.)*

LAURA

Ingrid. . . Would it be possible for me to take off early?

INGRID

Early? Do you have a doctor's appointment?

LAURA

No, I just need a couple of hours.

INGRID

We have so much work here, Laura.

LAURA

If it's a problem . . .

INGRID

We're behind from last week.

LAURA

We're always behind.

*(INGRID goes back to her reading. LAURA gathers some more papers and starts photocopying.)*

INGRID

Would it be a problem running this agenda down to the museum?

LAURA

This morning?

INGRID

They need it for my lecture. They want it by noon.

LAURA

What about this?

INGRID

That also needs to be finished.

LAURA

I'll try.

INGRID

They said noon.

LAURA

It may be two.

*(INGRID looks up from her paper as if this LAURA'S behavior is out of ordinary.)*

INGRID

Laura, come here.

LAURA

What is it?

INGRID

I need to speak to you.

LAURA

What?

INGRID

Come here. I don't want to shout.

*(LAURA stops copying, walks over to INGRID.)*

LAURA

Yes.

INGRID

Is anything the matter?

LAURA

Nothing's the matter.

INGRID

You seem to be acting out of the ordinary this morning? Anything you want to speak about?

LAURA

I can't see how any work will be done if I spend the morning like this.

INGRID

Fine, fine, back to work.

LAURA

I do need those hours.

INGRID

I'll give them to you. If you'll tell me 'what for', Laura,

LAURA

Why can't you just let me have my privacy? Do you have to know all my comings and goings?

INGRID

We have a lot of work here. I don't know all of your comings and goings.

LAURA

Give me that program.

INGRID

It's not ready.

LAURA

When will it be ready? If you want me to run it down to the museum by twelve.

INGRID

No need to get testy, Laura.

LAURA

I'm not testy. If you'd take less time with the paper perhaps I could run the program down, get this copying done and have time for lunch.

*(LAURA goes back to the photocopier but sees INGRID is still not working on the museum program. She walks back to the file cabinet.)*

INGRID

What are you doing?

LAURA

I'm doing the notes. I've seen you do it often enough. I can finish.

INGRID

You are annoyed about not getting the afternoon off, Laura.

LAURA

I don't need the afternoon off. I'm not mad about not getting the afternoon off.

INGRID

If you'd tell me.

LAURA

I don't need the bloody afternoon off. Drop it.

*(LAURA walks over to INGRID with the file)*

LAURA

Could you sign this, please?

INGRID

If you'd just tell me, Laura

LAURA  
Please. INGRID. Drop it.

INGRID  
Laura.

LAURA  
Sign - the bloody - release - please.

*(INGRID signs the paper. LAURA puts on her coat to leave. LAURA exits.)*

INGRID  
(calling after her)  
Laura, if you really need it, you may have the afternoon off.

*(Fade Lights)*

**ACT II, SCENE I**

*(20 years earlier. Light for an exterior Fall setting. The opening "Frère Jacques" tune to Mahler's First Symphony plays in the background until OJ walks in. The stage is bare except for a tree in silhouette which casts moving shadows of falling leaves. A nine year old mixed white and black girl, LAURA, skips rope.*

*OJ walks in. )*

LAURA

*(she sings this skipping)*

First comes love, then comes marriage then comes little Ashly in a baby carriage. A-S-H-L-Y-ing, kissing and a-huggin so Daddy can't see.

OJ

*(affectionately)*

Who's that little natty-haired girl singing to?

LAURA

Ashley.

OJ

Who's Ashley? I don' see any Ashley.

LAURA

She's right here next to me. She's visible.

OJ

You mean invisible.

LAURA

No, visible. She's right here.

OJ

I see.

*(LAURA goes back to skipping)*

OJ

Laura, come here. Daddy wants to talk to you.

*( LAURA bends down and pretends to whisper to Ashley.)*

LAURA

Wait here, OK?

*(LAURA walks to OJ)*

OJ  
Bring Ashley, too.

LAURA  
She doesn't wanna come. She doesn't like you.

OJ  
After all I done for Ashley.

LAURA  
You never snuk her a Peanut Butter Buster.

OJ  
Last night? Didn't your gramma bring you any Peanut Butter Busters?

*(LAURA nods her head 'no'.)*

OJ  
How in the heck is Ashley supposed to sleep without a couple snuk Peanut Butter Busters

*(LAURA breaks off from OJ and picks up a book.)*

LAURA  
I forgot my page.

OJ  
What book is that?

LAURA  
'The Ballerina's Dilemma'.

OJ  
Dilemma? Looks like a lot of words for a small girl. Where's the pictures?

LAURA  
Mommy bought it.

OJ  
I see. (Pause)

LAURA  
The kids at school tol' me.

OJ  
What did they tell you? (Pause)

LAURA  
They tease me.

OJ  
Laura, just stick your head in "Black Ballerina's Dilemma" or go tell the teacher.

LAURA  
Then I'm a tattletale.

OJ  
You ain't no tattletale, baby. You jus' doin' what's right. You tell the teacher and then stick your head in that book.

LAURA  
I'm almost finished.

OJ  
Ask your grandma to take you to the library. There's a stack a books there. Fairytales. And don't pay those kids any mind.

LAURA  
Ashley says I can play with her. (Pause, Laura goes back to reading)

OJ  
If you read enough of those books, you gonna get smarter than all the kids in school. Won't matter what they say. (Pause). Laura, pay attention'.

LAURA  
I know.

OJ  
What do you know?

LAURA  
Ashley tol' me.

OJ  
What did Ashley tell you?

LAURA  
You're goin' away.

OJ

You know daddy's always gonna love you.

LAURA

The kids at school tease me.

OJ

Don' listen to those ragamuffins.

*(LAURA nods her head no.)*

OJ

That's good.

LAURA

*(goes back to reading)*

Except Maria.

OJ

Except who? Who's Maria?

LAURA

My partner.

OJ

That chubby little girl with the pigtails in your dance class.

*(Laura nods her head 'yes')*

OJ

That little chubby girl with glasses.

*(LAURA returns to reading.)*

OJ

Laura, you payin' attention? You see this tree?

*(LAURA nods her head 'yes')*

LAURA

The kids tease her, too.

OJ

You see this tree? How many foolish conversations you think it's listened to? How many do you think?

LAURA

One hundred and three.

OJ

At least that.

LAURA

A long time.

OJ

That's right, ragamuffin. It's been here a long time. How ol' you think this tree is?

LAURA

Twenty-two.

*(LAURA starts counting out years as she gets up and skips)*

LAURA (CONT'D)

One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. (Etc.)

OJ

That tree's older than that.

*(LAURA nods her head 'yes', She skips silently counting through this.)*

LAURA

Are you comin' for my birthday?

OJ

Well, baby . . .

LAURA

Are you gonna bring me a present?

OJ

Laura, you remember on the beach how we played with your brother.

LAURA

(nods her head 'yes')

He doesn't know how to share.

OJ

Daddy's gonna be gone for a while. And I'm making you in charge of Mikey. That means you can't be hoggin' no football.

*(OJ makes snorting sounds and plays a catch-me-if-you-can game with LAURA. He catches her and sets her down in his arms.)*

OJ

I wouldn't be surprise if he doesn't want to share. He doesn't even remember the way you were hoggin' it.

LAURA

Me an' Ashley are gonna be in charge. He's gotta lissen to Ashley, too.

OJ

Listen. You an' Ashley can't be hoggin' that little red football either.

LAURA

It's a nerf.

OJ

You gotta share the nerf with your brother.

LAURA

How come you don't bring me Peanut Butter Busters?

OJ

Laura . . . I'm goin' away.

LAURA

Ashley told me some bad things about you?

OJ

Even Ashley. Well, don't that beat all. After all the Peanut Butter Busters I snuk her.

LAURA

She said . . .

OJ

Laura. I don't believe it and I don't ever want you to believe it.

LAURA

I don' wanna go to school.

OJ

Laura, do like I said. Take out one of them fairytales and start readin' and don' lissen.

LAURA

I don' want you to go.

OJ

I have to go.

LAURA

I don' wan' to stay with gramma and grampa.

OJ

Laura, I'm gonna keep sendin' you fairytales, so many books and fairytales you won' have time to think about anythin'.

*(LAURA starts to cry.)*

LAURA

Me an' Ashley wanna be dancers. I don' wanna read books all the time.

OJ

Laura, lissen, I have to go.

LAURA

You don' have to go. You wanna go. I hate you. I hate you.

OJ

Come here. Laura, settle down, baby.

LAURA

I hate you. Me an Ashley don' wanna be your friend.

*(LAURA runs off)*

OJ

Laura, come back. Laura, I'm your father, not your friend.

*(Fade Lights.)*

**ACT II, SCENE II**

*(Lights up: OXFORD. The Clock reads 2:15. LAURA is at the photocopier. OJ sits next to LAURA in front of a table and tea set.)*

OJ

Why don't you take a couple days off?

LAURA

I don't need a couple days off.

OJ

I still have the beach house in Santa Monica.

LAURA

What would I do there?

OJ

Lay on the beach.

LAURA

I don't like the sun. I like books and libraries

OJ

Bring some books and read.

LAURA

I read here.

OJ

I just want to spend time with you, Laura.

LAURA

Dad, once today, that's it. I said before.

OJ

You meant that?

LAURA

I'm serious.

OJ

You're serious about not wanting to know me. I could introduce you to a couple of friends?

LAURA

I don't want to meet your friends.

OJ

Do you have a boyfriend?

LAURA

What does that have to do with anything?

OJ

I'm curious.

LAURA

Well, if you must know. I don't have a boyfriend.

OJ

You don't want one.

LAURA

I don't want to meet your 'friends'.

OJ

Laura, I could introduce you . . .

LAURA

Dad, you know nothing about me. . . I don't swing that way.

OJ

What do you mean?

LAURA

I don't like men.

OJ

In what sense?

LAURA

Dad. Do I have to feed you this. . . God.

OJ

You're not?

LAURA

I am. And I couldn't take the time off. It's the beginning of the lecture circuit for Ingrid and I have work to do.

OJ

That's all the more reason to take a couple of days. Get your mind off things.

LAURA

That would definitely not get my mind off anything. What's it been? Two hours. This is too much.

OJ

Not even.

LAURA

Like I said. I don't want any part.

OJ

I didn't think you were serious.

LAURA

I am.

OJ

I'm your father.

LAURA

I'm aware.

OJ

Laura.

LAURA

What?

*(INGRID walks in carrying a stack of work and putting it down on the table. She picks up a cup of tea)*

INGRID

Laura, when you get a chance, I need to talk to you about our Egypt project (points to stack).

LAURA

Now would be a good time. I'm not even started (Ingrid hands her a cup of tea). Dad, did Ingrid tell you about our Egypt project?

OJ

The ancient women?

LAURA

It's going to be the first book published on the representation of women in Ancient Egypt.

OJ  
Exciting.

LAURA  
There's only been a couple books published on the topic.

OJ  
Thank God for that.

INGRID  
Your daughter, Laura. She's indefatigable as a research assistant.

OJ  
Is that good?

LAURA  
That's a compliment, dad.

INGRID  
Valorized throughout the academy for a scholar.

OJ (to Laura)  
So you won't come to the beach?

LAURA  
Drop that.

OJ  
Don't you think the beach is a good idea, Professor Corless?

INGRID  
(ironically)  
Your father could introduce you to his acting friends.

OJ  
Please.

INGRID  
Parade Laura around.

OJ  
Please.

INGRID  
Like one of those pageant queens.

OJ

If that's some kind of insult.

LAURA

Ingrid my father is not an academic.

OJ

Thank God for that.

INGRID

Among other things.

OJ

What?

INGRID

Perhaps you two could attend one of those basketball games together. What is the Los Angeles you mentioned team called again?

LAURA

The Lakers.

INGRID

Yes, the Lakers.

OJ

What's wrong with the Lakers?

LAURA

Ingrid just means that we don't follow sports, dad.

OJ

What do you follow?

INGRID

I mean a little more than that Laura. With Chomsky I take the view that a sports team, like the Lakers, serves an ideological purpose to turn the citizen's attention away from injustice and inequality.

OJ

You're one to talk.

INGRID

Excuse me?

OJ

Inequality. Like the way you order around my daughter. Any books about Lincoln in this venerable library?

INGRID

I don't know what you mean?

OJ

Review - he freed the slaves.

INGRID

Mr. Nelson, I've spent my entire career investigating issues of race and orientalism.

OJ

Exotic. So progressive with that Japanese woman's Noh mask.

INGRID

More so than the majority of. . . You have had more than two hundred years to get your act together. . . .

OJ

(to Laura)

Our kind? Gee, Laura, you didn't tell me this was the Oxford base of the Klan.

INGRID

What? I never. . .

LAURA

You're twisting everything, Dad.

OJ

Yes. I am. This old buck has a way of twisting.

LAURA

Dad. Ingrid may have a British accent.

INGRID

Please, Laura, I'm capable of fending for myself.

OJ

Two against one now, is it?

INGRID

Mr. Nelson, if you wished to disrupt our day, you've succeeded quite well.

OJ

Maybe it's time to call the Oxford lynch patrol.

INGRID

Please.

OJ

Please yourself, Ms. Ph.D. I knew about you when I walked in.

INGRID

Did you now?

OJ

How you told me I couldn' wait here.

INGRID

I said no such thing.

OJ

I know when I'm told there's a separate waiting room.

INGRID

Well, have you achieved what you set out to?

OJ

Excuse me?

INGRID

If you haven't noticed, Laura's crying.

OJ

Laura.

*(INGRID walks over to the little red football on the shelf.)*

INGRID

Why don't you just take this and leave.

LAURA

Put that back.

OJ

Yeah, put that back on Laura's shelf and stop sticking your nose in my business.

INGRID

Laura's welfare is my business.

LAURA

I don't want to go to your beachhouse, Dad.

OJ

You don't have to. I was trying to be nice.

LAURA

You were trying to control me, re-establish. . .

OJ

Laura.

LAURA

What makes you think you can come here after twenty years?

OJ

I'm your father, Laura.

INGRID

That doesn't mean you have the right to come. . .

*(OJ approaches INGRID)*

OJ

I've heard enough out of you. Butt out.

LAURA

Ingrid's right, Dad. You can't just come in here with a birthday gift and expect me to throw twenty years away and come home with you.

OJ

Laura, I'm not asking you to come home with me. I was simply asking if you needed a couple days off.

LAURA

I don't.

*(OJ goes over to the little red football.)*

OJ

And why does this bother you so much, Professor?

LAURA  
Dad.

OJ  
Because it's something good Laura remembers about me?

LAURA  
Dad.

OJ  
Hold on for a second, Laura, I'm talking to your boss.

INGRID  
I will listen no longer.

OJ  
My theory about this (holding football) Doctor Professor.

INGRID  
This is ridiculous.

OJ  
Let me finish.

LAURA  
Dad.

OJ  
Laura, you've had your chance. (to INGRID) This is a reminder that the black man does have a field of dignity, an arena, success and achievement. You can't stand it.

INGRID  
This is completely ridiculous.

OJ  
Everything else here is simply dead artifacts for museum lectures.

INGRID  
I've heard enough. Laura, I'll be at my desk.

*(Exit INGRID. Long Pause)*

OJ  
Are we still on for supper? . . . Unless you're going out with 'someone else', Laura.

LAURA  
Maybe I should just go home.

OJ  
I want to take you out.

LAURA  
I'm not quite sure I'm up to it.

OJ  
That's why I came, I wanted to see you and spend some time together.

*(LAURA goes back to photocopying.)*

LAURA  
You certainly come in style. Do you always make such an entrance?

OJ  
Not always.

LAURA  
You sure impressed the Hell out of Ingrid.

OJ  
Why do you need this trouble?

LAURA  
Trouble. It's usually quiet around here. I haven't seen her this mad in years.

OJ  
Really.

LAURA  
'Repression' is a big word in England.

OJ  
I had this feeling a minute ago you were going to kick me flat out on my ass.

LAURA  
I can't say it didn't cross my mind.

OJ  
It did?

LAURA  
Yeah, but some things you were saying were true.

OJ  
Not all black rage.

LAURA  
That part about the Oxford Lynch mob was a bit much.

OJ  
Taking it too far.

LAURA  
You can say that again.

OJ  
Taking it too far.

LAURA  
You're the same.

OJ  
Are you sure you won't come to the beach house?

LAURA  
The same.

OJ  
You were just joking about that Lesbo rap?

LAURA  
Totally serious.

OJ  
Totally?

LAURA  
Exactly the same.

OJ  
Can I ask you a question?

LAURA  
I don't see what more damage you can do today.

OJ  
Why do you work here?

LAURA

It pays the rent.

OJ

You can find other jobs to pay rent.

LAURA

It allows me to be at Oxford.

OJ

You couldn't find a less abusive campus job?

LAURA

Dad, Ingrid's not that bad. She might be a bit of a taskmaster, workaholic and condescending but put that aside, she's not bad.

OJ

That's slave mentality, Laura.

LAURA

Ever think maybe I want to be. . .

OJ

A slave?(Pause) I spent half my life trying to get out of the ghetto, Laura.

LAURA

For what?

OJ

For what?

LAURA

Most of the time I like it. Ingrid's so busy thinking of things for me to do, she gives me no time to think.

OJ

She gives you no time to think?

LAURA

It may be a strange thing to want but that's what I want.

OJ

Laura, I'm sorry.

LAURA

Don't apologize. I'm happy.

OJ  
You are?

LAURA  
Yes, dad and in her strange way, Ingrid was just showing how much she cares about me.

OJ  
She was?

LAURA  
Academics are strange.

OJ  
I learnt that this afternoon. (Pause) Laura, don't you dream?

LAURA  
No, I go home and sleep easy and wake up and go to a normal job.

OJ  
You had potential, Laura.

LAURA  
You did, too. Where did that get you?

OJ  
That's different.

LAURA  
Is it?

OJ  
You shouldn't work here.

LAURA  
That's for me to decide.

OJ  
You exasperate me.

LAURA  
Touchez.

OJ  
Are you almost finished?

LAURA

I might have to put in a few minutes overtime.

OJ

On your birthday?

*(Enter INGRID with a stack of papers.)*

INGRID

Sorry, Laura. I completely forgot this. Still here, Mr. Nelson?

*(Fade lights.)*

### **ACT II, SCENE III**

TATE MODERN ART MUSEUM - MEDIA Retrospective. Continue from Act I, Scene two. OJ sits on the couch with ANDY. The VIDEOGRAPHER stands and tapes.

OJ

You know what I think?

ANDY KURETOR

What do you think?

OJ

Do you really want to know?

ANDY

You want to tell me?

OJ

You're one sick man.

ANDY KURETOR

Right.

OJ

Damn right. One sick puppy giving me 25k to insult the hell out of him. (Pause, to VIDEOGRAPHER) How much you getting?

*(The VIDEOGRAPHER does not respond.)*

OJ

You probably work for peanuts. Free labor. How much you getting? Terrible.

ANDY KURETOR

That bad?

OJ

You run with the best.

ANDY KURETOR

Is that so?

OJ

Agonizing. A 25k welcome mat, but instead of 'Welcome', printed in big red letters is "H-e-l-l".

ANDY KURETOR

Is that what it says?

OJ

No, something different but there aren't letters to spell that.

ANDY KURETOR

Right

OJ

This place gives me the creeps. You know what it reminds me of?

ANDY KURETOR

No.

OJ

It reminds me when I was playing for the Bills. The owner had this wife.

ANDY KURETOR

Yes.

OJ

I've got you interested.

ANDY KURETOR

Slightly.

OJ

The players had to dress in white tuxedos and pour tea.

ANDY KURETOR

Tea.

OJ

That skinny white bitch could care less about football.

ANDY KURETOR

Football

OJ

I know so and I wouldn't be here talking to you and Ms. Bondage if I wasn't. Isn't that part of the reason why you want me on tape? Will we get art?

ANDY

Will we?

OJ

If you are a pale-skinned faggot and I'm a . . .

ANDY

I'm not sure.

OJ

About when you said these pieces don't have anything to do with me.

ANDY

I never said that.

OJ

You said, these works are about something larger with which my life just happened to coincide.

ANDY

Yes?

OJ

We're on the same level, Andy.

ANDY

Are we?

OJ

"Daughter of the Juice" up there on the second floor. That hurts.

*(OJ puts his hand on his heart, pause).*

OJ

I saw my daughter last week. She's hurting. Because of me. (Pause) And then I see 'Daughter of the Juice'. Stolen footage of her as a youngster playing catch with her brother. (Pause) How much time do we have?

ANDY

Five minutes.

OJ

Bring the camera in.

*(ANDY motions for VIDEOGRAPHER to come closer).*

OJ

I wish there was a way of changing the past. My daughter said her friends referred to her as "Daughter of the Juice." Sitting here now around this in the Tate Modern Art Museum, I understand.

*(OJ gets up from his seat)*

ANDY

Mr. Nelson.

OJ

Keep the camera on. You can gather evidence.

ANDY

Mr. Nelson.

VIDEOGRAPHER

Should I call security?

ANDY

Keep taping.

*(OJ rushes offstage followed by ANDY and the VIDEOGRAPHER. We hear the sound of breaking glass and an alarm.)*

*Fade lights.)*

**ACT III, SCENE I**

*(Oxford Office. The clock reads Quarter after Five. OJ sits leafing through a book, drinking his tea. INGRID enters. Startled, he closes the book.)*

INGRID

Where's Laura?

OJ

She just went down to the sixth floor to finish the work you gave her.

INGRID

Is that one of my books?

OJ

As a matter a fact, it is.

INGRID

I thought you weren't interested in academics.

OJ

Know thine enemy, s my motto.

INGRID

I was going to finish some work here but I'll come back later.

OJ

Not on account of me. By all means, work away. Laura's working overtime on her birthday, why not the boss?

INGRID

I prefer to think our relationship collegial.

OJ

What does that mean?

INGRID

I'll come back later.

OJ

I insist, stay. (OJ goes back to the book) It is your office.

INGRID

It doesn't feel like it.

*(Pause, INGRID tries to do some work.)*

OJ

What does this term 'Presence Africaine' mean.

INGRID

Is that my Orientalism book?

OJ

Why can't you ever give a straight answer?

INGRID

Why are you always trying to argue?

OJ

Will you answer the question?

INGRID

Which one?

OJ

'Presence Africaine'.

INGRID

It's a term used by an English Marxist critic, Stuart Hall, in an essay on Representation, Identity and the Cinema.

OJ

You haven't answered the question.

INGRID

Hall was one of the founders of cultural studies.

OJ

Cut the intro. Can you answer the question?

INGRID

'Presence Africaine' means the foundation of an African root identity which Hall calls fallacy.

OJ

Lost.

*(INGRID goes over to the book.)*

INGRID

It refers to the notion of an African American identity rooted in America and not in some far off long ago country.

OJ

I see. (Long pause) And what about the way you treat Laura?

INGRID

What do you mean?

OJ

You treat her as if she just got off the slave ship.

INGRID

Ridiculous.

OJ

I spent my life trying to raise myself, take my children out of the mentality of 'presence Africaine'.

INGRID

Mr. Nelson. I can't see what you're driving at and your use of the term is incorrect.

OJ

My whole goal was to raise myself. Do you know where that brought me?

INGRID

No.

OJ

For one, this office where a British white academic can write books about 'Presence Africaine' and tell me she treats my daughter in a collegial relationship when I see her working overtime on her birthday.

INGRID

Laura chooses to work for me.

OJ

The saddest part. Do you know how much that hurts?

INGRID

Mr. Nelson, you said you'd be quiet.

OJ

I should leave.

INGRID

Good idea. You've burned enough bridges today and I must tell you, you've succeeded in shaking my confidence in our project. Maybe I shouldn't be working on the representation of Women in Ancient Egypt.

OJ

Well, you do look and sound ancient.

INGRID

Thank you, Mr. Nelson.

OJ

You're welcome, Professor Corless.

*(INGRID continues her work)*

INGRID

Don't think I haven't thought about the projects I'm involved in.

OJ

I'm sure you have.

INGRID

Don't think I haven't agonized whether someone else should be doing my work.

OJ

Someone's got to get tenure.

INGRID

I'm in it for more than tenure, Mr. Nelson.

OJ

A job where you can look down other people's noses isn't half bad either.

INGRID

I'm not trying to look down anybody's nose.

OJ

Except my daughter.

*(OJ goes over to the stack of books published by INGRID.)*

INGRID

Put those down.

OJ  
IRight here.

*(He throws them into the garbage.)*

INGRID  
You beast. Take those out of the garbage.

OJ  
Do you think I'm some homeless garbage picker?

INGRID  
Take those out!

OJ  
No, ma'am.

INGRID  
If you do not take those books out of the garbage this instant, I'm going to call the police.

OJ  
I'm shaking.

INGRID  
Take - those - out - of - the - trash - now.

OJ  
I will not.

INGRID  
Now.

OJ  
No.

INGRID  
Now.

OJ  
No.

*(INGRID walks over to the football.)*

INGRID

Take it and get out.

OJ

Put that down.

INGRID

No.

OJ

Give me it then. Put that down.

*(They chase each other around one of the tables. INGRID runs behind the Chinese Ideogram poster. OJ pulls it down with a crashing thud. )*

INGRID

If you take the books out of the garbage and promise to leave, I will give you this.

OJ

Bitch.

INGRID

You, you. . .

OJ

Say it, it's on the tip of your tongue,

*(LAURA walks in carrying a stack of papers).*

LAURA

What is going on?

OJ

Your boss just called me a nigger.

INGRID

Your father just dumped my publishing career into the trash.

OJ

Racist bitch.

INGRID

Old bugger.

LAURA  
Settle down.

OJ  
Give me the damn football.

LAURA  
What happened?

INGRID  
(she starts to weep)  
Your father is . . . terrible . . . terrible.

LAURA  
Dad, you should go.

OJ  
(To INGRID) If you think shedding a few tears is going to get any sympathy.

LAURA  
This is too much.

OJ  
I'm going.

LAURA  
You're going? Like you left twenty years ago. (To INGRID) Stop crying. Get a hold of yourself.

OJ  
It wasn't easy for me to come here.

LAURA  
Spare me.

OJ  
That's the truth.

LAURA  
I don't want to hear truth. Do you think I would have taken to this job if I was interested in truth?  
Do you think I could face myself if I faced any kind of truth? Please, enough stories.

OJ  
I thought this would be easier.

LAURA

Thought this would be easier to come into my life, remind me of things I have been trying to forget and then leave?

OJ

Laura, I wasn't trying to hurt you.

LAURA

Ingrid doesn't try to hurt me either but there's work to be done. Who cares if it's Laura's birthday? Who cares if she hasn't seen her father in the past eleven years?

INGRID

Laura.

LAURA

(to INGRID)

Don't Laura me. And don't think you know me because you read a few newspapers about what happened in my past. Asking my father to take the red football like some symbolic gesture with yourself as Joan of Arc.

INGRID

I didn't think that, Laura.

LAURA

I've been working with you too long. I know your games.

*(LAURA takes the football from her.)*

INGRID

I need to put myself together.

*(INGRID leaves the room)*

LAURA

(yelling after her)

Neither of you know about this. Neither of you know anything. You're both the same.

OJ

I gave you that football, Laura.

LAURA

You cursed me with it, you bastard. Did I ask for this?

OJ

It was a present, a gift.

LAURA

Some gift. Now you have the audacity, after twenty years, to come here with another present.  
(She walks over to the present) Take it back.

OJ

Aren't you even going to open it?

LAURA

God, no!

OJ

If I knew how you felt, I wouldn't have come.

LAURA

You did have twenty years to think it out.

OJ

Laura.

LAURA

Don't Laura me! If you knew me, you wouldn't have come.

OJ

That's not true.

LAURA

It isn't? If you're looking for a little girl, why don't you go to the Tate Modern Art Museum.

OJ

What are you talking about?

LAURA

Maybe it is time for you to leave.

OJ

Is it?

LAURA

It is. What more do you want?

OJ

I wanted to give you a hug.

LAURA

Daddy's going to bring a Peanut Butter Buster.

OJ  
I didn't mean that.

LAURA  
What did you mean?

OJ  
I don't know.

LAURA  
If you don't know now, you're never going to know.

OJ  
I'm an old man.

LAURA  
I don't want to hear it. It's the same song and dance.

OJ  
What's that?

LAURA  
Get out of here. You're giving me a breakdown. Get out. Get out! Get out!

OJ  
Another time I would have grabbed you, tried to calm you down like your mother. You've got the same stubborn streak. I wish I was wiser twenty years ago. Can I take this?

*(INGRID reenters.)*

INGRID  
Let him take it.

OJ  
You stay out.

LAURA  
Take it and go.

OJ  
Sure?

LAURA  
I've never been more sure in my life.

INGRID

Go.

OJ

You stay out of this.

LAURA

Ingrid, this is between me and my father.

INGRID

Laura, he threw my books in the garbage.

LAURA

That doesn't matter to me.

INGRID

What? That's our life.

LAURA

Your life. My paid job.

INGRID

Laura.

LAURA

Stay out.

*(INGRID picks up the football.)*

INGRID

Take this and go.

LAURA

Put it down and let him pick it up.

INGRID

No.

LAURA

Yes.

INGRID

No.

*(LAURA walks over to INGRID, forcibly takes the football from her and places it on the desk.)*

LAURA

Yes - you - will. (To OJ) Pick it up and go.

OJ

I'm not coming back if I take this.

LAURA

I know.

INGRID

Thank God!

OJ

(to INGRID)

I pity you.

INGRID

I pity you, too. (Pause) Laura, I'm sorry.

LAURA

I'm not. I don't think I can work here any longer either. There's a line between a Santa Monica beach and this birthday. It's over, pass complete. Ball thrown long ago. Caught today. Spell broken.

INGRID

You're hysterical, Laura

LAURA

No, I'm not. I'm sane. Thirty-three years old today and sane. Dead for a long time but now alive. Dad, I never thought I wanted to see you again but you've helped me.

OJ

I have?

*(Fade lights.)*

## **ACT III, SCENE II**

*(TATE MODERN ART MUSEUM - 1 Hour later. The lighting suggests the 'uncanny'. DOLORES and BARBARA, two elderly British women, hobble in stage left. The strangeness of these black-clad well-kept, elderly women suggests the comfort of old people but also the sister fates from Greek tragedy. DOLORES carries a cane, BARBARA a library book and bag for knitting. They*

*hold each other for support. DOLORES walks past the front of the MEDIA write-up to the couch installation. Barbara stops and tries to read.)*

DOLORES  
What are you reading?

BARBARA  
It's interesting. Come here.

DOLORES  
I need to sit. My feet are killing me.

BARBARA  
Come here. Read this.

DOLORES  
I need to sit. I never read those.

BARBARA  
What was that racket?

DOLORES  
There were police upstairs. Did you see police?

BARBARA  
It was one of those homeless black men.

DOLORES  
I think there was a television crew. Did you see the camerawoman?  
(Pause)

BARBARA  
What time is Stanly picking us up?

DOLORES  
He said he'd give us some time. He's so good to me.

BARBARA  
I've got to return this library book.

DOLORES  
Stan'll drive us. What is it?

BARBARA  
It's called, "The Myth of Beauty's Daughter."

DOLORES  
Worth reading?

BARBARA  
Sad. (Pause) But I like that sort of thing.

DOLORES  
I'll have to take it out. What did you say it was called?

BARBARA  
"The Myth of Beauty's Daughter."

*(DOLORES walks ahead of BARBARA ignoring the art installations.)*

DOLORES  
I need to sit down. Are we allowed to sit here?

*(DOLORES sits in the couch T.V. set-up.)*

BARBARA  
I think this is one of the art set-ups.

DOLORES  
It looks like Kleiman's living room. Have you seen their living room?

BARBARA  
That shag? God awful. You're right though. It is like this - tacky. (Pause) Do you mind if I finish this knitting?

DOLORES  
Mind? I've got to rest my feet. Look at this. They call this art.

BARBARA  
I'm knitting these booties for my grand-daughter. Aren't they cute?

DOLORES  
Very cute. I love the color. How old is she?

BARBARA  
(taking out picture)  
Eighteen months - walking. Look at this picture. My daughter-in-law is so proud.

DOLORES  
Babies are cute. (Pause) I wonder if the police arrested that man?

BARBARA

There was certainly enough noise. Take these scissors. Will you help me cut this?

*(Barbara holds out the yarn. Dolores begins to snip.)*

DOLORES

I think the police arrested him. I heard him yelling.

BARBARA

It serves him right.

DOLORES

I don't like this. (Pointing to art) Do you like this?

BARBARA

I can't say I prefer it.

DOLORES

I like something like, "Gustav Klink". I think that's his name. Did you see that show here?

BARBARA

I don't think so.

DOLORES

Stanley took me. I still have the program.

*(DOLORES reaches into her purse and takes out a brochure and hands it to BARBARA.)*

DOLORES

His name is Klimt. Or "Women of Ancient China?" Did you see that? Take a look.

BARBARA

*(looking at Brochure)*

I've seen this one before. I don't know where. What is this called? It's written here but I can't see without my glasses. I'm practically blind.

DOLORES

Let me see.

BARBARA

I'm not even good for cutting yarn anymore.

DOLORES

It says, "Pallas Athene". Greek? Do you want to look at this?

*(BARBARA nods her head 'no'. DOLORES puts away the brochure.)*

DOLORES

Stan takes me to all of these but he doesn't come in. He drops me off at the museum and then goes for a cup of tea and picks me up later.

BARBARA

He's good to you. You're lucky. (Pause) I need help with the yarn again.

*(DOLORES helps BARBARA. Emphasis is on snipping lines.)*

DOLORES

I don't know too much about art but I like to look. And if Stan doesn't mind driving . . .

BARBARA

Sure. It's nice.

DOLORES

There's going to be an exhibit at Oxford's Ashmolean on Women in Egypt next week. Are you interested in that?

BARBARA

Like Liz Taylor in that movie?

DOLORES

Cleopatra. And Richard Burton, remember?

BARBARA

Will Stan drive us?

DOLORES

Sure he will. We'll make an afternoon of it. There's usually a lecture, too. Do you ever go to the lectures?

BARBARA

So boring.

DOLORES

But you do learn something. Usually it's some professor. Sometimes it's interesting if it's a graduate student or a guided tour.

BARBARA

We had this delightful brown skin girl once.

DOLORES

If they're boring you probably go back to your knitting.

BARBARA

Why not?

DOLORES

I dragged Stan last week to a lecture on Hollywood set design.

BARBARA

Was it good?

STAN

I didn't much care for the gentleman but Stan liked him. He showed the set design and costumes from Conan the Barbarian. Do you remember that movie?

BARBARA

I can't say I do.

*(DOLORES gets up and examines one of the installations.)*

DOLORES

Stan knew all about it. (Pause) I don't think I understand this.

BARBARA

No one does. That's the point.

DOLORES

Like all of these TV sets. Let's see. (She walks over and reads the name description) '4x4'. What is that supposed to mean?

BARBARA

I'm not sure. It has to do with an American trial. Read the write up. You can go over there to that explanation and read it.

DOLORES

My eyes are bad. I just want to sit for a bit.

*(DOLORES sits back down.)*

BARBARA

The sign said it has to do with the OJ NELSON trial. Do you remember that?

DOLORES

Twenty years ago?

BARBARA

Quite a while ago.

DOLORES

I can hardly remember. I was still single.

BARBARA

Help me cut this.

DOLORES

I don't really understand. (Pointing to the art)

BARBARA

Don't worry yourself. Just enjoy it.

DOLORES

How can I enjoy it? I feel like I'm in Kleiman's living room. (Pause) So you were saying the baby's walking.

BARBARA

Soon she'll be playing catch with her brother. Hold the yarn. (BARBARA snips the thread but misses). Hold still. You made me miss that.

DOLORES

Cut it later. Come on. Let's take a look upstairs.

BARBARA

I'm almost out of yarn.

DOLORES

There'll be enough time for snipping those later. Stanley's going to be here soon.

BARBARA

Do you think it's all right to go up there?

DOLORES

We assess the damage.

BARBARA

That man. Did he look homeless to you? He didn't look homeless.

DOLORES

They all dress nice. And how can you see anything with those thick glasses?

BARBARA

The doctor says he's surprised I can see at all.

DOLORES

Let's take a look at the damage.

BARBARA

Before I go completely blind.

*(Fade lights.)*

### **ACT III, SCENE III**

*(St. Vincent's Hospital Delivery Waiting Room, Los Angeles. Thirty-Three Years Earlier. The pacing on this scene must be slower and suggest a different time. It is played in innocence with little regard for irony. The lights rise approximating dawn and the song "Sweeter in the Morning" plays background. OJ is young, beaming and with the mannerisms and nervousness of a young father. He is dressed early eighties.*

*The previous scene's elderly matronly fates are now youthful and dressed in nunnish baby blue sexy nurse outfits. Intermittently through this scene, they walk from stage left to right, carrying little bundles in and out - babies!*

*There is a large rectangular window center stage back - the baby holding tank but simultaneously suggesting a huge painting frame.)*

OJ

I'm so glad I got her to the hospital. /amazing. Oh my God, I can't believe we've had a baby. We were getting ready for a Laker's game.

*(Nurse #2 walks by carrying a little set of wool socks.)*

NURSE #1

Your wife's had one, Mr. Nelson.

OJ

You got that right. Is she alright?

NURSE #1

She's fine, exhausted, sleeping, but fine. Would you like to see your baby?

OJ

Of course, I'd like to see her. I've been waiting nine months.

NURSE#1

Stand by this window.

OJ

Here?

NURSE#1

I'll bring her to the window.

*(NURSE #1 goes around the wall and brings a little wrapped bundle to the holding tank frame.)*

OJ

God! She's beautiful, a little picture.

*(OJ searches around his jacket pocket.)*

OJ

Cigars! I'm going to have to go home. Why didn't she tell me she was going to have a baby?

NURSE #2

She probably didn't realize it until she was having one.

OJ

Little girl, sweetness, baby doll. So many little babies in there but you're mine.

*(NURSE #2 walks over to the window.)*

NURSE #2

And they're all beautiful without any worries. Have you picked out a name for her yet?

OJ

If it was a boy, that was my pick, but my wife, well, you know, it's a girl . . . We're going to call her Laura.

NURSE #2

Laura, that's beautiful.

OJ

Yes, it is. Laura Christina Nelson.

NURSE #2  
Your first?

OJ  
I feel like I've scored a touchdown. Still trembling. I haven't felt this good since Superbowl. She's beautiful. I'm going to take her to the beach and my wife will bring her to my games. I'm going to teach that girl to play.

NURSE #2  
She's too small for that right now.

OJ  
Did you say 'smart'?

NURSE #2  
That, too, but I said 'small'.

OJ  
I'll buy her a small football then, junior size. We'll put it in the crib with her. Just let it sit with her.

*(NURSE #2 starts to walk off)*

OJ  
Maybe we'll have to wait a couple months. That's nine months of your mom carrying you around. I still can't believe it.

*(NURSE #1 comes around with the baby.)*

NURSE #1  
Do you want to hold her?

OJ  
Are you sure it's all right?

NURSE #1  
You're her father.

*(OJ takes the little girl.)*

NURSE #1  
It's a baby girl not a football.

OJ  
I've never held one before.

NURSE #1  
Like this.

*(OJ takes the baby again.)*

OJ  
This right?

NURSE #1  
Better.

OJ  
How's my wife?

NURSE #1  
Sleeping. It was a caesarian.

OJ  
By the way she was hollering, I can believe that.

NURSE #1  
Now mother and child are fine.

OJ  
I had a sign. You're going to be beautiful little dancer. When I brought my wife in, this little boy said, "That lady's going to have a baby."

NURSE #1  
What kind of sign was that?

OJ  
His mother was singing (OJ sings) "Take me down to the river." Do you know that one?

NURSE  
I don't think so.

OJ  
It was in that movie 'The Wild Bunch'.

NURSE  
I haven't seen that.

OJ  
I knew when I heard that song this little baby was going to be talented, beautiful and wild - like me. No books for her.

NURSE

Wasn't that one of those westerns?

OJ

My wife and I went to see that the night she was conceived.

*(NURSE #1 is embarrassed.)*

NURSE #1

Mr. Nelson!

OJ

Good lovin! (About baby) She's probably going to be a movie star.

*(Pause)*

OJ

And now, from that night, I'm in the hospital - here.

NURSE

Life.

OJ

A miracle. Football, dating her mother. Love.

NURSE #1

You are lucky, Mr. Nelson.

OJ

I know I am . . . (to baby) I hope that the Good Lord gives you the same luck as me.

NURSE #1

She'll get it. Now go home. I've got to take Laura back to the baby room.

*(The NURSE walks around the other side of the baby holding tank.)*

OJ

Bring her to the window one more time. (Knocking on window) Let me have one last look.

*(NURSE #1 brings the baby to the window frame creating a painterly composition.)*

OJ

Just like a picture, like one of those little China dolls.

*(Fade lights.)*

*(The End.)*