STRANGER IN MY BODY

by

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SCENE IV

(LIGHTS change and dim in ABIA’s apartment. Abia lives alone in an old Victorian one-bedroom in the Cass Corridor, near Wayne State University. There is a black leather couch, and mahogany coffee table. The kitchen can be seen and there are a number of pots on the stove, the oven light is also on. ABIA lights some candles around the apartment, putting the finishing touches on things before Jacqueline comes over. ABIA has lowered all major lights so the room is dimly lit with candles and maybe a lamp. ABIA turns on the stereo. Something smooth begins to play, like Miles Davis. A mix of Jazz, soul and maybe some hip-hop should play throughout. JACQUELINE buzzes from offstage. ABIA buzzes her in and quickly checks himself in the mirror, before checking the apartment again for any loose ends. JACQUELINE knocks at the door, ABIA pauses a moment before opening the door.)

(Beat)

(JACQUELINE is dressed casually – wearing dress slacks, nothing too revealing and carrying two bottles of wine. One red and one white.)

ABIA

Hey Beautiful

(Beat)

JACQUELINE

Hey...

(Beat)

ABIA

You can come in...

(Chuckles)

JACQUELINE

Thanks

(Beat)
(JACQUELINE begins to look around the apartment, admiring the décor)

JACQUELINE
Woow... [... ]

JACQUELINE
This place is huge – you live here alone?

ABIA
... I do...

JACQUELINE
I love old places... old apartments...

(Beat)

JACQUELINE
They seem real to me, ya know... not like the places out in the burbs with their drywall walls, I mean... this stuff is solid... plaster walls, right?

ABIA
... ya

JACQUELINE
-and so elegant and... how’d you find this place?

ABIA
I went to school down here... Wayne / State

JACQUELINE
Oh okay...

(Beat)
(JACQUELINE hands ABIA two bottles of wine)

JACQUELINE
Oh here...I...uhm... I didn’t know what kind you liked... or what would go with dinner /... I didn’t want to come empty handed...

ABIA
Thanks

(ABIA takes the wine reluctantly)

ABIA
I appreciate it
(JACQUELINE, interrupting ABIA, picks up a photo and looks around the apartment some more at other photos)

JACQUELINE

oh! Is this you... you were such a cute little girl... look at you! Beautiful... look at your little curly hair... those big eyes... god your eyelashes are so curly... I’m jealous... oh... Is this your mom.... wow she’s gorgeous... she looks so young... not that I wouldn’t expect her to be... I mean...

ABIA

My moms is beautiful... no doubt

(Beat)

JACQUELINE

... Caaan I wash my hands... / I just wanna get (the dirt off)

ABIA

oh ya ... that way... down the hall...

Thanks

(JACQUELINE walks offstage towards the bathroom)

JACQUELINE

(Off stage)
oh I love this hallway! Look at your moldings! ... You just don’t see stuff like that this anymore.

(The sound of running water is heard from offstage. ABIA chuckles to himself and prepares the dinner plates. He also brings two wine glasses down from the cabinet.)

ABIA

You ok in there?

JACQUELINE

Oh ya, I’m fine...

(JACQUELINE re-enters.)

ABIA

Did you look in the bedroom, while you / were
JACQUELINE
Well, it’s only polite to give someone a tour when they come to your home for the first time.

ABIA
oh, so we’re talking polite and impolite now...

JACQUELINE
I mean... I’m just saying

(Beat)
(JACQUELINE walks towards the kitchen)

JACQUELINE
So... Whooo taught you how to cook?

ABIA
Would you like to see the recipes?

JACQUELINE
No... I mean it smells wonderful

ABIA
Well I’ll accept that as a compliment... Why don’t you sit down, I’ll get the appetizers

-Jacqueline

ABIA
You wouldn’t have made me appetizers...?

JACQUELINE
... How do you have time?

ABIA
I enjoy it... it’s cathartic

JACQUELINE
I can barely heat a can of soup without making it a disastrous mess, breaking a nail or cutting myself...

ABIA
... So you mean, how do I know how... to co/ok

(JACQUELINE looks away shyly)
ABIA
A black woman who can’t cook... God...? Is that even possible? / You are an unexpected anomaly, ‘sis... really...

JACQUELINE
Stop...

JACQUELINE
...I try...

ABIA
Do you need some lessons... ?

JACQUELINE
I haven’t tasted your food yet... I’ll let you know later.

(Beat)
(ABIA chuckles and holds up the wine)

ABIA
So which one is best?

JACQUELINE
Shouldn’t the expert chef know these things?

ABIA
I’m not a big drinker

JACQUELINE
But at the bar the other week...

ABIA
I wasn’t drinking... my friend was... not everyone at a bar has to / drink...

JACQUELINE
I guess I didn’t notice... too disgusted by Kwame’s unfortunate victory.

ABIA
Kwame – nah ... I think you were too busy staring into my eyes ...

JACQUELINE
hmph...

ABIA
I know you just wanted to get me loose... so you could take advantage of me

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(ABIA chuckles. JACQUELINE teasing)

JACQUELINE

I’d do no such thing

(Beat)

(JACQUELINE approaches the kitchen... ABIA blocks her)

JACQUELINE

Well, what’d you make?

ABIA

Kitchen off limits to non-cooking black women!

JACQUELINE

I don’t know...I wash a mean dish... might be useful after dinner

ABIA

Now how po-lite would that be ‘sis... come on...

JACQUELINE

Well, I guess I’ll just sit here and let you serve me

(JACQUELINE goes back to the couch.)

JACQUELINE

Go with the red... It’s my favorite

ABIA

(Reading the label)

Spellbound...

JACQUELINE

It’s a Petite Syrah they used to have at one of my favorite wine bars in college... I can never find it... a lot of memories there.

(ABIA holds the bottle, staring at the label)

ABIA

Aren’t you little Ms. Fancy French words and wines... will it go with the meat?

JACQUELINE

Meat?
ABIA
Ya - pork... / It’s

JACQUELINE
But I don’t eat / meat

ABIA
A non-cooking, non-meat eating black / woman...

JACQUELINE
It’s not funny

(Beat)

JACQUELINE
We didn’t all grow up the same, ya know...

ABIA
True...

JACQUELINE
You teach in the suburbs... I went to school in them...

(Beat)

ABIA
I’m sorry, Jacqui...

JACQUELINE
...Fine...

(Beat)

ABIA
So which school did you go to?

JACQUELINE
Mercy

ABIA
Enough women for you there, eh... bet you had a good time

JACQUELINE
It wasn’t like that

ABIA
ok

(SILENCE)
(Beat)

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(ABIA pours the wine...)

JACQUELINE
So you’re gonna / have a dri-

ABIA
Ya... with the food ... should we toast or something

JACQUELINE
oh ok.. to work?

ABIA
Work...

JACQUELINE
...ya.. uhm.. to work.. counseling... and teaching...

(Beat)

ABIA
To new memories...

(Jacqueline pauses awkwardly for a moment)

JACQUELINE
To... To the youth!

(THEY toast and drink, then JACQUELINE dives for an appetizer)

(Beat)

(ABIA chuckles)

ABIA
Appetizer?

JACQUELINE
I’m kinda hungry... guess I talked through the appetizer portion of the night

(ABIA chuckles)

ABIA
s’alright. Everything is ready... you just sit tight

(ABIA goes to the kitchen)

JACQUELINE
You sure you don’t want any help...
ABIA
(from the kitchen)
I’m fine...

(ABIA emerges with two plates)

JACQUELINE
When did you do that?

ABIA
While you were on your tour...

JACQUELINE
Ha -ha

(Abia sets the plates on the coffee or dining room table)

JACQUELINE
This looks wonderful...

(JACQUELINE extends his hands towards Jacqueline, to pray)

ABIA
Shall we...

(JACQUELINE, a little shocked, joins hands with ABIA and bows her head)

ABIA
Heavenly father, we praise you and thank you for this food and for those who are about to savor what your love has helped prepare. Shine in our hearts, blessing this heavenly meal. In your name, Amen

JACQUELINE
... A-amen

(Beat)

ABIA
You ok, there ‘sis...

JACQUELINE
That was a beautiful prayer.

ABIA
My parents always encouraged me to say grace

(Beat)
(JACQUELINE begins to eat)

JACQUELINE

...That’s nice

ABIA

Have they been supp-

JACQUELINE

Do you go to Chu-

(Beat)
(Both Laugh)

ABIA

Ladies first…

(Beat)
(JACQUELINE Smiles)

JACQUELINE

Do… do you go to church?

ABIA

Sometimes, but there aren’t many around here I’d feel really comfortable at I guess…

JACQUELINE

… Comfortable…

ABIA

I haven’t found the right spiritual home yet, so - I … I don’t know how important it is to sit in a room and worship anymore - when I can just do it alone.

(Beat)

I can find church with anyone…

(Beat)

This is church right now…you and me

JACQUELINE

o-oh...

(Beat)
ABIA
You don’t believe that?

JACQUELINE
I grew up in the Church, so I guess it’s a little different.

ABIA
I grew up in church too, but it never quite fit

(Beat)

JACQUELINE
I mean... I never saw myself at Church either... but... I ...like... the self I did see ... I mean, you can’t like the girl at the locker next to you, ya know... that wasn’t allowed.

(Beat)

ABIA
... so what about now?

JACQUELINE
I believe in the word, but...

ABIA
But you’re questioning because you don’t see yourself in the word.

JACQUELINE
I didn’t come out like you... I... I don’t have a community to go to. I don’t feel like I see myself out there... I mean... I know that the way I feel about a woman is wrong, but I still feel it.

(Beat)

JACQUELINE
(Realizing)
I don’t think I’ve ever said that before...

ABIA
Wrong... / who

JACQUELINE
Yes, Abia...this... according to the word... is wrong...

ABIA
So why are you here, sister?