

Erica J. Myers  
Theatre 3300  
Dramatic Writing  
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Assignment 6 Midterm

PASSING

CHARACTERS:

CAROLINE

ALEX

MARY

JOHN

MAMA PEARL

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MARY: (slightly angry as she opens the door, and slightly over her breath.) I swear these blacks get lazier each day. (immediately cheers up) Oh, Alex, she's beautiful! Welcome, Caroline!

*(Alex pushes Caroline first into the awaiting, open arms of his mother. Caroline is hugged with a careful passion of the eager grandmother-to-be.)*

How far along are you now?

CAROLINE: (slightly afraid) Hi, Mrs. Rutherford. Eight months now.  
*(skiddish)* Almost due.

MARY: Oh you poor thing, having to sit in that car with Alex all the way from D.C. *(She motions with her hand for Alex to come closer.)*

Come here you!

*(Alex moves in closer for an awkward hug.)*

You silly boy! I love you so much!

*(Mary looks behind her to find her husband absent from the welcoming.)*

John, get in here! Alex is home with Caroline!

*(Entering in from the center hallway, John walks in.)*

JOHN: Alex, my boy!

*(John greets him with a hearty hug. He looks next to Alex and sees the radiant Caroline.)*

Caroline, I swear, you get more beautiful everyday.

*(John is careful at hugging Caroline. Mary is a little uncomfortable with John's comment and hugging of Caroline.)*

MARY: (to the servants) Well, get her bags. I swear, insufferable.

*(cheery)* Well, you two must be famished. I've had the help prepare an early dinner for the four of us. Come, let's go sit in the parlor.

*(The four enter the parlor and sit for lunch. Alex and John are talking feverishly about the local game. Mary and Caroline talk about the baby and marriage. Black servants buzz like bees around the table, serving. Whispering amongst themselves.)*

CAROLINE: Mrs. Rutherford, we decided to wait until after the baby has come.

MARY: Nonsense! It's Mary, or Mom, if you please. *(snorting)* I don't get you young ones these days. Having a baby before getting married.

*(Fans herself frantically.)*

CAROLINE: Well, since it happened the opposite way, Alex felt it wouldn't be right to stress me with nuptials while already stressed with motherhood.

*(Caroline grabs John's hand by accident. She draws away quickly and reaches Alex's hand to the right of her.)*

Sorry.

JOHN: It's OK, Caroline.

CAROLINE: Alex is a gentleman for wanting to wait. I have had a rollercoaster of emotions these past eight months.

ALEX: *(Gleefully)* She sure has! I didn't know a shoe could be thrown around the corner. *(Nudging Caroline)* She's got a mean arm, Dad.

JOHN: Perhaps we can sign her up for the Braves next season.

*(Alex and John have a good chuckle. Mary chimes in.)*

MARY: *(Sarcastically)* Such Gentleman, indeed.

ALEX: I tried not to get on her nerves that often, Mom. It was just when we found out he was pregnant. I was kind of happy at the news. She was the one throwing things.

*(The Black servants buzz around the table once more, refilling teas and giving each other the eyes. Mary watches them closely.)*

MARY: I hope she had the smarts to hit you in the head. I would hit these servants if I could.

ALEX: *(ignoring the comment)* Damn near did!

MARY: *(ignoring the comment, but a disgruntled look her face)* Alex! That is no way to talk around women. That kind of talk may be good and well for the District of Columbia, but not for Atlanta, Georgia. I should have never let you stay up to watch *Gone With The Wind*.

JOHN: Now Mary, the boy is just excited about becoming a father.

ALEX: Sorry, Mom. *(looks at John)* I sure am, Pop. *(chuckles)* Pop is what they call their fathers in D.C. I though they were Midwesterners talking about Coca-Cola for the longest time.

*(Alex grabs another roll from the basket in the middle of the table.)*

MARY: Caroline, I would love to know more about you. What about your parents? Are they happy with the news?

*(The servants are whispering in the corner.)*

CAROLINE: My mother is. My father died when I was a baby. I did not have the chance to know him.

MARY: Well, you should invite your mother to spend some time with us. We'll cover the travel arrangements.

CAROLINE: Oh no, ma'am. My mother is on a trip overseas.

ALEX: Your mother is always on a trip overseas. Where is she now?

CAROLINE: What are you implying? That my mother cannot travel since she is a woman? She's spending time in Africa.

MARY: Now there would be a trip! Africa. Oh John, let's go. To see the savage lands, all those dark people. They make the most beautiful cloths. I've seen them down at the Auburn Street Market. The colors!

CAROLINE: The Kente fabrics are so beautiful!

MARY: We should go down there tomorrow.

CAROLINE: Yes, let's. I would love to purchase some cloth to make for the baby.

JOHN: What are you going to call him?

MARY AND CAROLINE: Him?

JOHN: Sorry, OK, it.

MARY AND CAROLINE: IT?

JOHN: Dammit, her!

MARY: John!

JOHN: Mary.

CAROLINE: Actually, we're not sure what the baby will be. I want it to be a surprise. But if the baby's a boy, we are naming him Stephen. And if the baby's a girl, then Stephanie.

MARY: Those are good, Christian names.

CAROLINE: I thought so, too. *(Rises from her chair)* May I be excused?

MARY: Certainly, down the hall to the right.

*(Caroline exits down the hall. Mary leans forward for her tea.)*

What a lovely girl, Alex. Shame about her mother. Must be very wealthy to be able to travel like that. And to Africa! The furthest John and I travel is to the Fox theater when there's a Broadway hit in town.

ALEX: I really don't know much about her family. I know she has some friends in town. She's told she's going to go see them later on tonight.

MARY: A White woman? Alone? At Night? In Atlanta? Surely you won't let her go by herself.

ALEX: She's a grown woman, Mother.

MARY: A grown, pregnant, white woman. Who I might add, shouldn't be traveling, much less in Atlanta at night.

JOHN: Mary, D.C. has more crime at night. Atlanta isn't as bad as you make it out to be.

MARY: Still, it's mighty peculiar when a young lady would want to step out at night to "visit" friends.

*(Mary stands and leaves the table. She walks down the hall.)*

JOHN: Your mother does have a point.

ALEX: I am not following the mother of my child. She has never shown me any signs of unfaithfulness. You can follow her. I will not.

JOHN: *(grabbing his jacket from the chair)* That's really up to your mother. I'm glad I've eaten though. I would be without dinner if I didn't do as she said. I better get ready to go.

*(The servants buzz the table once more as Alex leaves down the hall as well. John strides out the front door. The servants leave the table with the dishes and exits.)*

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*It is nightfall and Caroline is down in Five Points, walking past the closed shops and to an open shop right past a juke joint. John follows behind her at a distance, ducking into doorways when she turns around. John speaks to himself.*

JOHN: What is this girl up to? *(follows some more and dip into a ladies clothing doorway. Breathes heavily. Continues on.)* What am I doing? I'm spying on my son's future wife, that's what I'm doing. All for the sake of my insane wife and her intuitions.

*(John peeks out from another storefront foxhole.)*

Did she just go into the juke joint?

*(John jogs up to the juke joint and peeks inside. Nothing but black faces stare back at him as music continues to play. He sees no sign of her and moves on. He sees the shop with a hand-painted sign reading MAMA PEARL'S VODOO and a picture of Africa.)*

Is she getting a head start on Mary? Voodoo?

*(John walks up to the door carefully, but the shades are drawn. He grasps his heart as he hears the clicking of the lock on the door. He quickly dives around the corner where he cannot see all the way through a crack in the window, an older woman with long locks in kente cloth. He can hear two women talking and recognizes Caroline's voice.)*

MAMA PEARL: Been a long time since I seen you, baby.

CAROLINE: I know, Mama Pearl. I know. I've been wanting to come sooner, but this is the only time I could get away.

MAMA PEARL: Just look at you. You either been eating too much sweets or you got a little sweet roll in the oven.

CAROLINE: Oh Mama Pearl! *(rubs her stomach)* I need to know, Mama Pearl. I don't want any surprises anymore.

MAMA PEARL: You know there are things I can't see. God does what he wants for a reason. I can't give up that secret you and he holding. *(reaches for a shelf behind her. She gives the box to Caroline.)*

CAROLINE: What is this Mama Pearl?

MAMA PEARL: It is your past, your present and your future. This holds the keys to what your child will be.

CAROLINE: This? This is it? No spells, no potions? No rituals?

MAMA PEARL: There are things in there that will make you feel like God spoke to you personally and some things that will make you feel something mighty awful.

CAROLINE: What am I supposed to do with this?

MAMA PEARL: You can hold on to it or throw it away. Whichever you choose is the life you choose for yourself.

CAROLINE: *(backing away)* I don't know if I can handle this, Mama Pearl. I don't know if this is what I want. What if something is wrong with the child and Alex no longer wants me? What if the child is different from others, some deformity?

MAMA PEARL: It is not a deformity. It is a gift from God. It is something needed in the cycle of life to help people get over what ails them.

CAROLINE: You're not making sense! How can this be helpful, Mama ... Pearl? I don't need this. I just need to know.

MAMA PEARL: That is all I have for you child. I don't want no more questions. Take the box. Do as you wish. I will not be seeing you any more soon. God has saw fit for me to retire.

CAROLINE: Mama Pearl? What are you talking about?

MAMA PEARL: Go child. There are people waiting on you.

CAROLINE: but -

MAMA PEARL: Go. Now. They will be seeking you. You shouldn't be in the parts in the condition you are. Git!

*(Caroline trots to the door, unlocks it and speed walks to her car, toting the box. She marches right past John, hidden in the alley.)*

JOHN: What is going on? Is she trying to get rid of the child?

*(remembers the box in Caroline's hand)* That box! I must get that box. I want to know what's in it.

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*Caroline arrives back at the Rutherfords' home. She sits in the car, rummaging through the box. She pulls out photographs. She pulls out trinkets. She looks deeper and finds letters. She reads through them. She realizes that time has passed and she should go inside. She greets Alex with a big kiss. Alex remains seated on the sofa, holding a beer on his stomach and watching TV.*

ALEX: That didn't take long.

CAROLINE: It was a short reunion. But I got to see everyone and they were shocked at my tummy!

ALEX: What's in the box?

CAROLINE: All that boring remembrance stuff. Photos, trinkets, tassels. Probably nothing of value. Not even any good juicy love letters.

ALEX: Aw, then it's of no use to me.

CAROLINE: Coming to bed?

ALEX: After the game. Extra innings.

CAROLINE: *(placing another kiss on Alex's forehead)* OK, but don't stay up too late.

*(Alex waves her off. Caroline slips to their bedroom. She closes the door and presses her back against it. There is a knock on the door. Caroline, dumps the box into an empty drawer and answers the door.)*

MARY: Caroline? Oh glad to see you're back. How was the visit with friends?

CAROLINE: Uneventful. Nothing much you can do when you're with child.

MARY: I hope you haven't been drinking.

CAROLINE: Of course not, I want the baby to be healthy.

*(There's a sudden jerk in Caroline.)*

Oh!

MARY: What is it? The baby? Oh my God, Alex!

CAROLINE: I think *(doubling over)* the baby *(panting)* is coming!

MARY: Alex! Quick! Get the car!

CAROLINE: OH! *(trying to count)* two, one thousand, three, one thousand, four, one thousand, OH MY!

*(Mary walks Caroline down the hallway. Caroline is grasping her stomach. Alex is running around like a chicken with its head cut off. Grabbing the keys and jackets and Caroline.)*

MARY: Your father! Where is he? I'll have to leave him a note. Alex take her to car.

ALEX: Yes, Ma'am.

CAROLINE: ARGH!

MARY: Caroline, keep breathing! Alex just take her! I'll meet up with you at Grady. Go! Go! Go!

*(Alex and Caroline drive off. Mary sits and waits for John. Mary decides to fix an overnight bag for Caroline. She goes up to the room and begins to put stuff into a small carryon. John comes into the room just as Mary finds the box.)*

JOHN: What's in it?

MARY: I don't know. *(Mary fumbles with the lock.)*

*(John and Mary stares in disbelief at the photographs. Caroline has just delivered the baby. The nurses have taken it for cleaning. Alex sits in the waiting room as Caroline is transferred to another room.)*

JOHN: Oh My Lord!

MARY: (still astonished) OH My Word!

JOHN: Caroline. Oh Caroline!

MARY: What a secret to hide!

*(Alex is in the room with Caroline awaiting the arrival of the freshly cleaned baby. The nurse knocks and then enters with a wrapped bundle of joy. The nurse hands the baby to Caroline. Caroline unwraps its face. Alex reels backwards.)*

ALEX: There's some mistake! Nurse! Nurse! Miss! There's been a damn mistake!

*(Caroline is overjoyed at the baby, ignoring the rampage by Alex.)*

You brought us the wrong, damn baby! You brought us some black woman's baby!

*(Caroline nods and coos at the baby.)*

Stop playing with that thing! That's not even ours!

CAROLINE: Oh yes it is. It is mine. It is me. It is my mother.

*(In the background is overheard a doctor yelling for assistance for a black woman who had collapsed in the doorway. He takes Mama Pearl's heart rate. He looks up at the couple. The nurses helps takes the proclaimed dead Mama Pearl away from the new arrival.)*

WORKS CITED

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