

DEARBORN HEIGHTS

DEARBORN HEIGHTS was presented as part of the Marathon '95 at Ensemble Studio Theatre (Curt Dempster, Artistic Director) in New York City, on June, 1995. It was directed by Irving Vincent; the set design was by Mark Symczak; the costume design was by Lourdes Garcia; the lighting design was by Greg MacPherson; the sound design was by Jeffrey Taylor; and stage manager was Gwen Arment. The cast was as follows:

GRACE Linda Powell
CLARE Celelia Antoinette

DEARBORN HEIGHTS

Grace is a very light-skinned Black woman, late 20s, early 30s. She is dressed in the "dress up" style of the early 50s: A close-fitting hat banded around the top of her head, perhaps with a bit of a small veil attached. She wears summer net gloves, stockings with the seams down the back, 50s style high heels, a "smart summer suit" of the mass-produced variety based on "high fashion." Her purse, which usually dangles from her wrist, is resting in her lap.

She is seated at restaurant table. The table is draped in checkered cloth, napkin dispenser, a tiny vase with a single plastic flower stem. It should give the feeling of a "homestyle" restaurant-diner. Several shopping bags and packages surround Grace underneath the table. She takes out a large, folded newspaper article from her purse, admires it.

A song like The Andrews Sisters: "T'U Be With You in Apple Blossom Time" plays in background, coming from an unseen jukebox. Grace is clearly waiting for someone. She sips the lemon Coke in front of her. A basket of fresh bread has been already placed before her. There is a second table setting with a second lemon Coke placed across from Grace. She should appear to be glancing out of an imaginary window.*

A few more beats and then suddenly her face lights up and she waves to someone unseen. She quickly folds her newspaper article, returns it to her purse and waits.

Sound of a door chime jingling.

Enter Clare, dark-skinned Black woman, same age as Grace and dressed in the same style. Clare faces the audience. Grace

* See Special Note on Songs and Recordings on copyright page.

waves as though through a window and gestures. Clare turns, crosses to the table with her shopping bags in tow.

CLARE. (*Fanning her perspiration.*) Whew! If it ain't hot as all get out, out there! (*Smiling, Grace helps Clare with the packages which they tuck underneath their seats.*)

GRACE. Oh you should feel Knoxville you think this is aggravating! I thought moving to Michigan was my release from "the fiery furnace," I see I was mistaken ... truth is I done pulled off my shoes ha ... I'm (*Whispering.*) in my stocking feet.

CLARE. Ha. Well I'm 'bout to pull mine off right behind you girl ... got a bunion that's sounding off like a bugle at the V-E Day parade!

GRACE. (*Gazing around.*) Ain't this a sweet place?

CLARE. (*Glancing around.*) Well ... yeah ... I guess ... I mean why is it ... well ... empty?

GRACE. Chile I come here every time I come to Dearborn shopping ...

CLARE. Oh?

GRACE. Copied their way of doing tuna salad.

CLARE. Where's the waitress hiding out? (*Looking around for a beat, she then smiles and gives a brief friendly nod to an unseen waitress in the distance.*) Oh ... good ...

GRACE. (*Indicating the drinks on the table.*) See? Got us our lemon Cokes.

CLARE. (*Still staring out, puzzled.*) Y'see that?

GRACE. I been here couple times, trust me. I promise she won't be as slow as that salesgal in the *Lingerie Department*.

CLARE. (*Distracted.*) Ummm? Don't mind me girl I just ... well when a place is empty makes me jittery ... (*She "caakles" with a wave of her hand.*) Starts me to wonder "what am I gonna be spending my money on"? Funny food or something...? (*Sound of a door chime jingling.*)

GRACE. Ha ... your turn to be the stranger and have me show you a new place! ... See? here come a couple of people.

CLARE. Oh! Wonderful! (*Settling into her seat, relaxing, buttering her bread.*) I am ready to *chow* — my stomach is about to *maturity*.

GRACE. (*Pause.*) Well what happened? What did I miss?

CLARE. Humph! The so and so of ah Floor Manager finally decided to put in a appearance ...

GRACE. (*Glancing at her wristwatch.*) Girl I was wondering if I should have the waitress hold the table. I started to go back 'cross the street to check on you ... wondered how long they'd keep you waiting. (*Clare stops and reaches down into her packages. She pulls out a box and reveals a pair of long white evening gloves. She salutes Grace "army" style.*)

CLARE. *Mission accomplished* under enemy fire.

GRACE. (*Impressed.*) Well!

CLARE. I tole you if I waited there long enough and held out for that store manager ...

GRACE. (*Overlapping.*) ... and they finally let you exchange them for the right fit.

CLARE. That's right! Boils me how they try and treat us when we shop in these suburbs.

GRACE. Well I'm impressed ...

CLARE. They up there trying to tell me they *can't* exchange my gloves 'cause they was purchased in the Detroit Montgomery Wards and not this here Dearborn Heights branch of Montgomery ...

GRACE. (*Overlapping.*) ... Wards ...

CLARE. Yeah you heard they *crap!* That's all it was! *Crap.*

GRACE. (*Glancing at the menu.*) ... You gonna have fries or ... you still on your diet...?

CLARE. (*Putting on one of the formal gloves as she speaks.*) I just explained to them with a smile on my face (*She illustrates "smile."*) that fine "I will make sure to write *The Chronicle*, Michigan's largest Negro newspaper and to tell all my church members to make sure not to shop at Montgomery Wards period."

GRACE. That did it huh?

CLARE. And I tole him, I say, "You know Wards got no business putting better quality merchandise in the Dearborn stores then they got in the Detroit stores anyway." Like we *enjoy* driving out all this way into the suburbs just to get us decent ...

GRACE. Well it's so *pretty* out this way ... but no you right

... you right ...

CLARE. (*Pauses, shrugs.*) I guess they just figured, "let's just get this colored bitch out the way, what the hell."

GRACE. Nunnol! No! What you did was ... y'know ... I admire ... I mean ... anything large or small that we do for the Race ... (*Clare carefully packs the gloves back in their box, she then takes up her menu.*)

CLARE. Dearborn is a very long way to come to shop if you don't drive ...

GRACE. Is it? (*Pause.*) ... Driving out here with you was nice but I like the bus ... I don't mind ... (*Stiffly smiling. The door chime sounds again as other unseen customers enter.*)

CLARE. (*Smiling.*) Ha. (*Pause.*) That is one sharp hat you got ... been meaning to tell you all morning ...

GRACE. (*Touching her hat, smiling.*) Oh I collect hats, I love hats ... thank you ... you so sweet ... didn't know if I should wear it just for shopping

CLARE. It's gorgeous on you girl! If you got it why not flaunt it.

GRACE. People ... well ... don't want folks to think one is you know ... (*She makes a silent gesture to indicate "stuck on oneself."*) ... people can think things you know ...

CLARE. (*Placing her hand on top of Grace's hand.*) Girl ... when that moving van pulled up and you and your husband got out ... and next thing I know there you are out there putting in rosebushes along ya driveway, and I thought to myself, *thank you Jesus* ... 'cause see we on our street are *vigilant* ... the last thing we want is a bunch of *sorry*, shiftless Colored Folk *ruining* what we all trying to build!

GRACE. Didn't mean for two months to go by 'fore I came over.

CLARE. You're a little on the *shy side* ain't ya.

GRACE. (*Smiles.*) My husband teases me ... I thought you maybe thought ... took it for granted I was ... you know ... (*She makes a gesture to indicate "stuck up."*)

CLARE. (*Smiling, waving off suggestion.*) Chile pal-lease! Okay now the question is do I have the *BLT* dripping in mayo or ... GRACE. ... oh and *by the by* ... they delivering me and O.Z.'s

new television set tomorrow....

CLARE. Well ah right!

GRACE. (*Pauses rather uncertain.*) Well yeah ... I think I'm gonna miss the radio ...

CLARE. Now you can keep up with that crazy Lucy every week ...

GRACE. Something well I dunno something *cultivated* 'bout the radio.

CLARE. Chile, last night, Lucy died her hair jet black, would you believe, and *Desi* got hisself on this *quiz show* he had no business fooling with ... oh they had me *in stitches* so I nearly choked to death!... *Cultivated* ... (*Pause.*) you got such a ... *sweet way* with words I been admiring all morning how you ... GRACE. Some Negroes get excellent educations down South contrary to what you might hear 'bout us!

CLARE. Course you gotta be *word-fancy* if you gonna qualify as *telephone operator*. (*Graciously.*) Oh we must order something extra special, you're my first new girlfriend to celebrate! (*Grace offers a toast with her lemon Coke.*) I'm living right next door to "one of the first five Negro women to be hired by the phone company," I tole my Momma 'bout it.

GRACE. Ah ain't you sweet! Ain't you the sweetest thing!

CLARE. Well the whole entire street is proud! My goodness! (*Pause.*) You make sure you persevere that picture they had of you in *The Chronicle* for your children! (*Pause, staring at her.*) 'Bout time some Negro women got hired to do something more worthwhile then that ole *mop and pail* stuff I be doing up at the hospital! (*They toast with their lemon Cokes. Pause.*) I tell you, here I am living right next door to a Negro Pioneer! GRACE. Truth be told, when I went for the interview my hands were shaking so ... I could barely hear my voice ... CLARE. Who cares? For the very first time in Detroit, whenever we call *directory assistance* it could be one of five new Negro operators ... could be you ... don't worry ... if I recognize your voice I won't *chat* ... I know how to act as opposed to some of our people ... GRACE. (*Graciously.*) Well now you got something to be proud

of yourself now ... standing up for yourself like that!... Whew that's what I love 'bout being up North! Back down in Knoxville you wouldn't dare ... they don't even allow us to try the clothes on, just have to take your chances ... and you don't dare return it if it don't fit ...

CLARE. Well I am proud to say I've never been south of Dayton Ohio where I'm from.

GRACE. (*Glancing over the menu.*) This being our first shopping trip together and a day of celebration ... I say we sin and have hot fudge Sundays ... (*The door chime sounds again as other unseen customers enter.*)

CLARE. Let's see the picture.

GRACE. Well ... I dunno ... I mean ...

CLARE. Naw — naw ... don't you carry it round with ya? I would, you couldn't stop me from showing it round if it was me ...

GRACE. We don't want folks accusing me of the "sin of pride" now do we?

CLARE. So how's your hubby liking driving for the bus company? Course my Clyde's got lifetime job security at Chrysler's ... (*Grace takes out a folded newspaper photo from her purse and hands it over to Clare.* *Continuing: reading from the paper.*) "July 23, 1952" ... Course I have my own copy back at the house ...

GRACE. Ain't you the sweetest thing! (*Pause.*)

CLARE. Some Colored folks might think I was causing too much of a ruckus over a pair of gloves ...

GRACE. Girl you don't know me! (*Laughing.*) Wait till you get to know me better ... I admire *spunk, grit* as we call it back down home.

CLARE. Well like you say ... our very first girls day out ... didn't wanna embarrass you.

GRACE. The first of many! (*They toast.*)

CLARE. Folks keep staring at us Grace ... don't look ... (*Grace on reflex reaches her hand to her hat to make sure it's on right.* *Door chime sounds.* *Clare slowly gazes around.* *The door chime jingles as more "unseen" patrons enter.* *There is the soft sound of murmuring.* *Continuing.*) ... act like nothing's wrong
GRACE. What is wrong?

CLARE. Oh gawd ...

GRACE. What?

CLARE. Oh mercy.

GRACE. What is it?

CLARE. Oh Jesus, my Jesus ... don't stare! Sorry but ... don't let 'em know we know.

GRACE. What? What do we know?

CLARE. Girl you made a mistake in coming to this place ...

GRACE. You don't mean ...

CLARE. That's right, that's the ticket all right ...

GRACE. But ...

CLARE. Everybody else is being served over there, over there ... over there ...

GRACE. But they served me! They always serve ... (*Embarrassed pause between the two women.*)

CLARE. Well! (*Pause.*) I guess they realize now that they took a few things for granted didn't they?

GRACE. Oh God.

CLARE. You had them fooled.

GRACE. Gawd.

CLARE. Now they realize you ...

GRACE. Don't say it.

CLARE. Ain't the shade they assumed you was.

GRACE. Jesus in Heaven.

CLARE. We better call on somebody.

GRACE. (*Mortified.*) Clare ... I'm so ... I'm so ...

CLARE. Numno ... don't get up ... don't let 'em think we know ...

GRACE. Least down South they got ... we got signs up.

CLARE. Well I never been down South, couldn't drag me down South.

GRACE. I'm still not used to dealing with up here ... the signals to go by ... that waitress has always been so nice to me ... how could I be so stupid ...

CLARE. KEEP YOUR SEAT ... keep your face in the menu for the time being.... (*Pause.*) We came here to have lunch and by-golly have lunch is what we gonna have! They'll have to serve us or throw us out! (*Pause.*) Now then ... (*Clare reaches*

into her bag and pulls out a ribbon brooch the size of a small badge. She hands it to Grace. *(Continuing.)* ... "The Southwest Detroit Ladies Cavaliers" wants to welcome you as a new member! *(Grace distractedly waves off brooch.)*

GRACE. Shouldn't we just get up and go ...

CLARE. *(Reaching down.)* Don't look around ... pretend nothing's wrong ... *(Smiling self-consciously.)* ... now uh the *grapevine* tells me you being uh ... shall we say *approached* by the "Metropolitan Ladies of Triumph" ...

GRACE. Well ... they have you know ... uh ...

CLARE. Oh I know they *after ya* right? They always scrounging round for *new blood* like *gnats* at a picnic ... not that I'm bragging but they ain't the ladies club for a Colored woman of *quality* ... believe me ...

GRACE. Look why cause a whole lotta fuss? Let's just ...

CLARE. Keep smiling so they don't know we're upset ... hate it when Colored people don't know how to keep their dignity in public....

GRACE. I am so, so embarrassed! *(Pause.)* How do you tell up North where *we* can go and can't go?

CLARE. Grace, you gotta learn the difference 'tween Detroit and the suburbs — Detroit and Dearborn, Dearborn and Detroit ... me being President of Cavaliers means I can, you know, *guide* you more easily then they can in "Ladies of Triumph." ... *(Pause.)* Relax ... lean back, let 'em know we ain't to be *budged* and we ain't to be *bothered!* Now then ... *(Pause.)* ... every year we "Cavaliers" happen to raise more than "Ladies of Triumph" do for the NAACP ... why *they* was so *low class* they held the "Annual Fashion Show" at the "Y!" We at least rent the Elks Lodge over on Livermois and 9 Mile ...

GRACE. *Up North* was supposed to be so 'easy' ... come to find out it's even more complicated ...

CLARE. You just gotta fine-tune your sense of place! Look for other Negroes and if you don't sense 'em there then they don't want us there! Feel out the air around you!... We sponsor this *Gospel Jubilee* in the Spring that'll send you to Heaven and back ...

GRACE. Down South it is clearly marked ... please, please

pardon me ...

CLARE. It is very unusual for any *newcomer* to get a *unanimous* vote from our membership.

GRACE. I shoulda sensed something ... no wonder everybody's sitting so spread out away from this table.... Lord the *cook* is peering out at us from the kitchen...!

CLARE. Let him ... see when *we* shop in these here suburbs we gotta be armour plated inside, girl.... Don't let *them* push us around...! That's the spirit of a Lady in "Cavaliers"! *(Pause.)* Plus, as an added bonus ... I'll teach you how to drive ... guarantee you'll pass the road test ... and don't you dare ask me to accept no feel! *(She guffaws softly.)*

GRACE. My man's the, you know, the basic *ole-fashioned* Southern type ... he prefers to do the driving in our ...

CLARE. Chile you up North now!! We the *new Negro* women up here!... *(Leaning in on her and softly poking her.)* I can tell ya want to ... tell the truth ... ain't you tempted by just a itty-bitty bit of independence?

GRACE. Thing of it is, they know me here!... The waitress over there ... Mattie? told me all 'bout her *bunions* ... even promised me the recipe for *chicken-a-laking*.

CLARE. *Mathe* huh? Ooough, if I just had it *in* me to *lay her out* to her face!

GRACE. Clare, please ...

CLARE. I'm not blaming you — don't think that, you made a honest mistake ... but see now this is the very reason why you need to join us "Cavaliers."

GRACE. *(Graciously smiling.)* ... To tell the truth, very soon I'm gonna be in need of the restroom facilities ... oh, otherwise I'd be all for sitting this out ... *(Pause.)* 'Sides *(Smiling.)* I seriously doubt if I'm gonna be able to, you know, *receive* the proper *impression* of Calaviers — I don't think your club members want me to be famished in the process ...

CLARE. ... *(Pause.)* Ha. *(Pause.)* Sweetness *(Pause.)* let us leave this minute! Please — please pardon me!

GRACE. Nunno, I'm the one got us into this —

CLARE. Nunno ... *last* thing I want is for you to be put through ... you know ... stress and strain and *devil-made*

conceptions 'cause of *yours truly* ... please ...

GRACE. Nunno ... it's *my* fault ... but we'll just take our stomachs and our business to where we can get respect AND so we can concentrate ... ha ...

CLARE. Fine... All we need to do is just *maneuver* out of this here with some lil' bit of *dignity* ...

GRACE. Just follow me to the door ...

CLARE. Don't panic ... worst thing is to panic ... compose your face 'fore you get up ...

GRACE. Everybody's eyeing us ... oh gawd... The longer we sit here it's just more awful!

CLARE. I will not give them the *satisfaction* of seeing me panic ... think they gonna *run me out* oh naw! Get up when I'm good and ready, *my time, not they time*... Grace control yourself!

GRACE. All their eyes trained on us!

CLARE. My dear just gimme one second... Don't come unstuck ... you are not *down South* now just keep a steady hand till I get my shoes on ...

GRACE. Fine — fine long as we don't get into no more monkey business foolishness, let's go.

CLARE. Wha kinda *business* excuse me?

GRACE. Clare ... please ...

CLARE. Please *explain* that last remark ... calmly compose your face and then we will rise and get out of here.

GRACE. (*Pause.*) There is no need for you to *order* me around in such fashion.

CLARE. (*Taking a long gulp from her glass.*) Sons-of-bitches! (*To Grace.*) Excuse me, pardon me.

GRACE. Nunno, under the circumstances I'd say the same 'cept I got too much of the church woman in me.

CLARE. I'll sit here as long as I can stand it — ain't gonna run me off like no whipped mongrel!

GRACE. Thing of it is, they don't ... they don't snarl at us or ... or yell at us or attack in the same way they do down home.

CLARE. No, I will not just fold my tent and like a lamb, *bleat* all the way home... Oh, it gauls me ... but they ain't

gonna break me...!

GRACE. Pardon me, but there is no need to make the situation any worse.

CLARE. I'm the *dark* one that's gotta get past their stares, *and* walk through to that door over there!

GRACE. Now hold up, Clare Henderson ... just 'cause I'm light don't mean I'm not feeling the same as you're feeling!

CLARE. (*Overlapping.*) Take it easy... Nobody's saying nothing 'bout you ...

GRACE. Well what are you saying?

CLARE. Well who you calling a *monkey*?

GRACE. Now wait a minute here! We are not gonna lower ourselves to such a *level* now are we?

CLARE. Look if the boot fits then march in it!

GRACE. (*Pauses, then.*) Well! Trouble is *your kind* gets so ...

CLARE. So?

GRACE. *Wound up.*

CLARE. (*Folding her arms.*) Here we go! I knew you'd get to it sooner or later ... the *darker* we come, the more we embarrass you huh?

GRACE. Look I'm the one they treated so nice before.

CLARE. Before me.

GRACE. Before!

CLARE. You wouldn't be treated like a leper *now* if I wasn't sitting up here, would ya?

GRACE. You think it's easy? D'you think it's easy being taken for granted as one thing then facing the *flip* look when ...

CLARE. Then you knew they was *taking it for granted* yet you lead me in here!

GRACE. (*Putting on her gloves, grabbing her packages to leave.*) I made an honest mistake. I'm *new* in this here city if you have the decency to recall.

CLARE. I got the decency to recall that soon as you and your high yella Clark Gable *wannabe* husband moved on the block, you've had your noses tipped in clouds, so high and mighty! (*Pause.*) Oh yeah anything to lord yaselfs over the whole entire street! The block votes to get all new look alike "Lamp Lighter" Front Porch Lamps in front of each and every

house ... like in the white suburbs, but naw — naw! You and your husband gotta do something *fancier*, something more *high toned* — just a tad one step above the rest.

GRACE. Humph!... Why don't you get yourself a telescope out of one of them Sears catalogues so you can keep your busybody nose better in everybody's business? A neighbor can't sneeze and you report it to everyone!

CLARE. (*Pauses. Studies Grace with contempt.*) And to think you had me growling ... at your feet to ... (*She snatches up the club brooch.*) ... oh all them begged me to take you out, show you shopping ... lunch you as our treat ... but I tole 'em I said, "I wonder if she's not too siddy, too *high-toned* and stuck up for us."

GRACE. You are so damn pushy who would want to join? (*Grace reaches for her bags under the table.*)

CLARE. Damn you red-bone, *high yella*, lemon meringues. Always the first to be hired to the best jobs ... always flaunting ya color, and every other Negro fawning over ya!

GRACE. That's right! *vanilla* still beats out *chocolate* any day!

CLARE. Every night probably get down on ya damn knees and pray, "thank you Jesus for making me light, bright and almost white." (*A pause, then.*)

GRACE. Is that what you would do in my place? (*Clare is stunned a little but struggles to hide it.*)

CLARE. I tole the "Cavaliers" you had no intentions of joining us anyway ... (*She starts putting on her gloves.*) ... Or do you think it entirely escapes me that "Ladies of Triumph" all happen to be just about as pale as they can find 'em? (*Grace remains stock still.*)

GRACE. Nobody's telling me I ain't a dedicated Negro woman same as you!

CLARE. Ha ... *dedicated!*? (*Mocking Grace.*) "Lez go, lez go 'fore we cause mo' trouble".... You can't wait to go shuffling out of here with your tail between you legs ... (*Pause.*) so your lil' diner friends have let you down ... well *ta-ta* ... (*Clare gestures dismissively to Grace.*)

GRACE. Hell with you, I'll sit as long as I want to!

CLARE. Fact is the rest of us ... don't want y'all *high tone*

types ... don't need ya ...

GRACE. Oh you want us, you crave us ... don't blame us if you faun all over us ...

CLARE. Y'all don't have no real idea what real color feels like.

GRACE. And you do?... You and the way you just had to throw your weight around in that store 'bout those ... gloves ... not the principle of the thing I minded but you had to be so loud, so pronounced about it ...

CLARE. If I was standing up for something (*Gesturing with her gloved hand.*) but of course you got treated way way more courteous by the salesgal ... guess you thought I didn't notice?

GRACE. I noticed that the other Colored shoppers were *cringing* but of course you thought you were displaying your courage in front of each and every damn body ... (*Clare coolly lights a cigarette and studies Grace.*)

CLARE. What's it like being accepted everywhere you go?

GRACE. And what the hell is that supposed to mean?

CLARE. Taken for granted as just a ... you know ... *normal* everyday pretty woman ... what's it feel like?

GRACE. Don't you dare start toying with me ...

CLARE. Since I'm so bossy and nosy I'm gonna be sure and tell the whole block ... (*Clare pauses smiling with a sardonic expression on her face. Grace rises to leave.*)

GRACE. (*Mocking expression.*) You are such a *small-minded* woman.

CLARE. Why sure not as *sharp* as you girl. After all, as you say yourself, "they know you here" right? What's-it been like? Lemme guess ... here you ain't been in Detroit two months and ya already staked out a nice friendly homesyle diner in Dearborn Heights where you *beat* yourself to cool, restful, summer lunches ... (*Pause.*) Tell me what's it been like Grace, so I can tell the whole street!

GRACE. No hold up...! It ... has never been my intention that I was ...

CLARE. What's that? Sorry I'm too *simple-minded* ... (*Grace's face contorts in sudden shock and pain. She drops her head in silence. A long beat. Suddenly a tight smile crosses Grace's face.*)

GRACE. Don't try and pull that outlandish crap on me.

CLARE. So she does her passing on a shopping spree to the suburbs, now don't that beat all!

GRACE. You the one who would want to wouldn't ya?... Not me.

CLARE. How many afternoons do ya treat yasef to make believing you a white heifer?

GRACE. Wouldn't you just like to know ... wouldn't you just like to be able to *dress yasef* in my dreams?!

CLARE. Thank God I was born with some real paint on my bones and not no poor in-between! Lease ways when folks see me they know what side of the fence I'm looking back from!

GRACE. *Fence!* Oh and don't you just wish you could *open the gate!* Don't try and tell me you don't just, just wish you could scrub even just a *layer* of that ...

CLARE. *(She is visibly trembling but softly taunting Grace.)* And we all know how ya got that shade of grey.

GRACE. ... a layer of that dirt color down the drain *(She is trembling.)* ... don't care how much face cream and lipstick you put on ...

CLARE. *(Trembling and smiling a fierce vicious smile.)* Generations of *poorn-tyg* raped and put out on the market ...

GRACE. ... and rouge and ... and eye-shadow, and *Nu-nile* gloss on that nappy, hot-combed head you still not gonna be close to being ...

CLARE. *(Hurt but taunting.)* The real true woman you get to be every time you *escape* ... right? right? And you thank God you can *escape* ... don't chal! Don't chal!

GRACE. *(Nodding.)* Absolutely ... Abso ... *(Realizing what she's saying, she cringes, drops her head. Suddenly there is a ground swell of sound. The unseen white patrons begin banging tableware against glassware to protest Grace and Clare's presence. They both look up startled.)*

CLARE. *(Softly. Grabbing Grace's hand.)* Don't turn around Grace ... don't let 'em see your fear ...

GRACE. But what if they ... if they grab us ... if they punch us.
CLARE. They too gen-teel for that ... we're just women and it's just two of us ... they won't go too far ... *(Clare lifts her*

glass and shouts out loud, facing the audience. Continuing.) Well, I got a lemon Coke out of it, nothing you can do about that can ya!! Smash the glass but you can't take the Coke back!!
UNSEEN VOICE. Get on back to Detroit where you niggers belong!

GRACE. *(Grace takes a long sweeping look at the audience, she stares at Clare as they gather their packages.)* Oh, it gauls me ... oh, it gauls me.

CLARE. *(Softly smiling.)* Welcome to the "Motor Capital of the World." *(They rise together. They stare out at the audience as they clutch each other's arms and hold their heads high. They take slow steps towards the audience. Soft "cackling" from an unseen "crowd" can be heard in background. They take slow "dignified" steps towards audience. They "cross" a lighted boundary, the door chime "sounds," traffic noise, they are standing face front to the audience with the impression that they are now outside the diner. They still clutch each other for a few moments, then pull away. Panting.)* Feels like I'm a icicle all over.

GRACE. My heart's racing ... racing.

CLARE. Lemme just stop shaking ... ha ...

GRACE. My heart's pounding ... *(Suddenly Clare checks her packages.)*

CLARE. Did we get everything Grace ... *(Quickly counting her packages. Pause. Frantically.)* ... whew! ... we made it ... ha ...

one day we'll tell our kids how we stood up to the crackers one summer day in Dearborn Heights! *(It is obvious they are too embarrassed to look each other in the face.)*

GRACE. *(Pause, then.)* To think all that ugly could come out of my mouth ...

CLARE. All that trash I was talking ... please ... don't see how you could ever *pardon* me ... *(Grace tries to answer, cannot. Continuing. Softly.)* Did I have all the Colored cringing back at Montgomery Wards?

GRACE. *(Turning to her.)* Nunno ... you stood up for ...

CLARE. *(Overlapping.)* ... No, you were right ... I embarrassed everybody ...

GRACE. ... Colored Rightist!

CLARE. I was so — so loud and bodacious ... tell me true

now ...

GRACE. What could I say to you that you could possibly believe after today? (*Staring out in a daze.*) They ... they ... got to see the ... base side of us that's what gets to me.

CLARE. (*Pause.*) You left me standing there at the counter, I must have been behaving pretty awful.

GRACE. (*Pause.*) Clare (*Pause.*) understand something ... I may have *crossed* the Mason-Dixon line but it's still in me.... Even when I take the long ride out here on the bus just to go past all the lovely homes and gardens? Still can't even bring myself to take a seat up front even though I know we're *allowed* to up North here ... and I can't even tell my husband that. (*They both smile to each other a moment.*)

CLARE. Know what we need? (*Pause.*) We need ta shop all this out our system ... calm our nerves haha ... okay.... Hudson's here we come ... gonna get me some new patent leather heels right now! Where'd I park m'car? I'm so frazzled. (*Clare begins to move off, Grace stops her with her voice.*)

GRACE. First time I went there I really didn't think of it as *passing.* (*Pause.*) But then again, didn't I? And then the next time ... and then the next ...

CLARE. Don't start *unraveling* nothing!... Leave where it lays, forget it took place, come on ...

GRACE. But ... truth be told ... when I really deep down think about it.

CLARE. (*Smiling.*) Oh to hell with the *truth* ... thinking too much frays the nerves, don't you know that ...

GRACE. Clare...! (*Pause.*) Every time we meet up *today* is gonna be behind our eyes, our ... smiles ... our *hellos.* (*Grace grabs Clare's hand for a moment as they still look away. Embarrassed, Clare pats Grace's hand, gently pulls off and "brightens."*)

CLARE. Now, we gonna get the car, get back 'cross the line to Detroit and get us some food in us 'fore we faint from this heat ...

GRACE. Will I tell O.Z. about today I wonder? Will you tell Clyde?

CLARE. I always say it's a wise woman who charts a clear course 'tween women's business and men's.

GRACE. Now if I join up with "Cavaliers" you'll probably think ...

CLARE. No, I will not.

GRACE. I'm feeling obliged in some way ...

CLARE. No, you mistake ... I DON'T INTEND TO THINK ABOUT IT EVER ... (*Pause.*) I guess I *push against* folks ... so I don't break ... (*Pause.*) never let nothing BREAK ME ... I JUST — I JUST ... (*Pause. Studies Grace, then.*) ... I say we *toss* this whole day in the pile marked, *never happened* and stop feeding on it, period ...

GRACE. It's not just gonna dissolve away.

CLARE. Don't fool yasef ... pieces fall away bit by bit till finally it's just a haze of a recollection way, way back ... then presto, it never happened.

GRACE. (*Pause.*) Wonder if one day we might end up real buddies ...

CLARE. (*Pause. Smiling.*) Could be dangerous to your home life. (*Pause, smiles.*) ... For one thing, you just might end up learning how to drive.

GRACE. (*Giggling.*) Ha. (*Then she suddenly turns somber.*) ... Toss it back and forget it ever happened...? (*Pause. They stare off in different directions. Grace removes her sunglasses from her purse, puts them on. Clare takes out her compact, checks her face.*)

CLARE. (*Her face is a smiling mask.*) I already have ...

GRACE. (*Pause, then.*) Dearborn Heights. (*Fade out.*)

END OF PLAY