

make up your mind right here and now. You're gonna have to choose between me and that nigger over there.

YOLANDE: In that case, I already made up my mind.

JIMMY: Good.

YOLANDE: I appreciate your gift, but I can't accept it. I'm getting married,

Jimmy. I'm getting married to Countee Cullen.

JIMMY: To who?

YOLANDE: Now, if you don't mind, we're in the middle of a family dinner.

JIMMY: You gonna marry this nigger?

YOLANDE: And, I'd appreciate it if you would leave.

JIMMY: This ain't right.

WILL: You've been asked to leave, young man.

JIMMY: Come on, Yolande. Go with me. Let's take a walk.

YOLANDE: No.

JIMMY: We can talk about this . . .

WILL: You've been asked to leave.

YOLANDE: There's nothing to talk about.

JIMMY: Tomorrow. We'll talk tomorrow.

YOLANDE: No, Jimmy.

JIMMY: Come with me. Come and look at the apartment . . .

YOLANDE: Listen to me.

JIMMY: We'll stop and get some coffee . . .

YOLANDE: It's over, Jimmy. I'm getting married.

JIMMY: Lenora, do something.

YOLANDE: I want you outta my house.

JIMMY: Talk to her.

YOLANDE: Get out.

JIMMY: Lenora . . .

YOLANDE: Go away, Jimmy. I don't wanna ever see you again. Understand?

I hate you. Get out.

JIMMY: All right, Yolande.

YOLANDE: Get out.

JIMMY: All right. Okay. I'm leaving. I'm gone. *(Exits.)*

WILL: Good girl.

NINA: Yolande's getting married?

WILL: You did good.

NINA: My little girl's getting married.

END OF ACT I

ACT II SCENE ONE

The Du Bois apartment. Nina and Yolande. Nina arranges flowers in a vase.

NINA: *(Sings)* Otis was by the other day. Ten weeks later and she's still talking about your wedding. But I'm not surprised. Everybody in Harlem is still talking about your wedding. Ten ushers in black tie and tails. Sixteen bridesmaids in dresses that were gorgeous, Yolande, just gorgeous up to heaven. Mrs. Otis still can't get over how many flowers were at the church. Roses and orchids and tulips and lilies. She said she had never seen so many flowers in one place before. She said it looked like the Garden of Eden. How she would know what the Garden of Eden looks like, I don't know, I'm just telling you what she said. You know what Mrs. Pingree said? Mrs. Pingree said that she thought there were too many flowers. Said it looked like somebody's funeral instead of a wedding, looked like somebody had died. But she's just jealous 'cause she didn't receive an invitation. I tried to explain to her that there wasn't enough room to invite everybody to the wedding. As it was, there were over one thousand people at the church that day. We were only invited to only five hundred because the church only seats five hundred.

BEGIN

Your father was not happy with the prospect of providing food and drink for five hundred people, but when I saw your father standing at that altar with you on his left and Countee on the right, and I saw the pride bursting from your father's face as he looked out over the church full of Negro artists, politicians, businessmen, and dignitaries from all across the country, I realized that your father would have gladly spent twice as much for that moment. That moment, for him, will always be frozen in time. *(Finishes the arrangement.)* There. That's very nice, don't you think? Yolande? You okay? Would you like me to make you some tea?

YOLANDE: When did you say Daddy was gonna be home?

NINA: Not for another week. He's in Philadelphia, I think. Yes, Philadelphia.

Either that or Washington, I'm not quite sure. I get a little confused every now and then. And where did you say Countee was?

YOLANDE: He's in Boston, Mother.

NINA: Boston? Did I already ask you that?

YOLANDE: Yes, you did.

NINA: I'm sorry. Would you like me to make up a cup of tea?

YOLANDE: No, Mother. Thank you.

NINA: Miss Otis said that green tea will help ease your morning sickness.
YOLANDE: I don't have morning sickness.
NINA: Who do you think you're kidding, Yolande. I heard you having difficulties this morning.
YOLANDE: Difficulties?
NINA: In the bathroom. Of course, not that I was listening.
YOLANDE: It was the flowers, Mother.
NINA: The flowers?
YOLANDE: The smell of the flowers made me sick.
NINA: Sounds like morning sickness to me.
YOLANDE: I'm sick of smelling them, I'm sick of looking at them, I'm sick of thinking about them . . .
NINA: Let me make you a cup of tea.
YOLANDE: Didn't I tell you I didn't want any of your damned tea?
NINA: I hope this attitude of yours is not indicative of the next nine months, 'cause if so, we're gonna be in for a very long and bumpy ride.
YOLANDE: What is it with you? Why do you always see things that are not there?
NINA: I don't know, Yolande. Why do you have such a problem seeing things that are standing right in front of you?
YOLANDE: This is useless.
NINA: You know what I think?
YOLANDE: No, but I'm sure you're gonna tell me.
NINA: I think it's high time you and I had a talk.
YOLANDE: A talk?
NINA: A heart to heart.
YOLANDE: With you?
NINA: I am your mother.
YOLANDE: Please, don't remind me.
NINA: Have I done something to you, Yolande?
YOLANDE: I'm sorry.
NINA: Something to hurt you?
YOLANDE: I'm sorry, Mother. It's just . . .
NINA: You wanna talk about it?
YOLANDE: What makes you think I have something I wanna talk about?
NINA: You went on your honeymoon . . .
YOLANDE: Yes.
NINA: To Niagara Falls. And the Falls are very romantic, Yolande.
YOLANDE: Yes, very romantic.

NINA: But you left. You came home almost a week early.
YOLANDE: Because of my job, Mother. I had to come home to prepare for my job.
NINA: I hope you're not still considering accepting that job.
YOLANDE: I've already accepted it.
NINA: You don't need a job. You already have a job. You're married, for God's sake.
YOLANDE: I don't plan to give up my professional vocation just because I got married.
NINA: What vocation? You don't have a vocation.
YOLANDE: Not yet, but I plan to have one. I plan to have a life, Mother.
NINA: You have a life.
YOLANDE: Being married is a life?
NINA: And what's wrong with that?
YOLANDE: It's not enough for me.
NINA: It was enough for me.
YOLANDE: Well, I don't plan on ending up like you.
NINA: I see. Yes, that would be the worst thing that could ever happen to you, wouldn't it?
YOLANDE: I didn't mean it like that.
NINA: I know how you meant it. I know exactly how you meant it. You don't want to end up like me for good reason. But, I was not always like this. I used to be like you, you know. I used to be a soldier. I marched right into battle. Right after Burghardt was born, your father moved us to Atlanta and Atlanta was not a pretty place for Negroes to live. Everything was segregated. The parks, the theaters, public transportation, the restaurants, train stations, even the public library was segregated. And the schools and hospitals, Negroes weren't even allowed into the schools and hospitals. Even back then, I refused to patronize any system of segregation, which meant I had to walk every place I went, and since Negroes were lawfully prohibited from using any park, water fountain, or even stopping to rest on a public bench; whenever I left the house, I could not stop walking, not to rest, not to get a drink of water, not for one moment, not until I had reached my destination. I pictured myself as that woman who I heard speak the other day. Gertrude Ederle. She swam from France to Great Britain, across the entire English Channel, without stopping once. That's how I felt every time I left that house in Atlanta. Like Gertrude Ederle, I had to continue to press on, I could not stop, I could not rest, not for one moment lest I drown in a sea of hate.

YOLANDE: You okay, Mother?
NINA: I find it very difficult to believe that Countee has agreed to forsake New York in favor of Baltimore.
YOLANDE: He hasn't.
NINA: Then, how do you plan to teach in Baltimore?
YOLANDE: I plan to live in Baltimore, Mother.
NINA: And what is Countee supposed to do?
YOLANDE: Countee plans to stay in New York.
NINA: That doesn't make any sense.
YOLANDE: We plan to keep two apartments, Mother.
NINA: Two apartments?
YOLANDE: One in New York and one in Baltimore.
NINA: No sense at all.
YOLANDE: We don't plan to surrender to convention. We liked the way our relationship was before we were married, and we plan to keep things the way they were.
NINA: Yolande, baby. Listen to me. It's not such a bad thing, being a wife. Not once you get used to it. That's the hardest part, Yolande, getting used to it. That's the part that takes a while. After your father and I were married, I cried practically every time he touched me for almost a year. But I got used to it. Every woman has a tough time at first. But the trick is, what I've found, is to lay real still. You lay as still as you can, and try to think of something else. Maybe sing a song. Sing with the voice of your mind; sing with the voice that comes to you from somewhere deep down inside. You sing with that voice, you go ahead and let the man do his business, and it'll be over before you know it.
YOLANDE: What're you talkin' about?
NINA: I'm talking about tolerating your duties, Yolande. Your marital duties.
YOLANDE: You talking about sex?
NINA: There's no need for that type of language.
YOLANDE: My mother's talking to me about sex.
NINA: I'm talking about the difficulties of being a wife.
YOLANDE: Ain't this about a clock-stopper.
NINA: I know, we should have had this conversation a long time ago. If we had this conversation, maybe you and your husband wouldn't be in the midst of these difficulties.
YOLANDE: What difficulties? There are no difficulties.
NINA: You ended your honeymoon early.
YOLANDE: I've already explained that to you.

NINA: I know what you said, but you have to understand how it looks.
YOLANDE: Countee and I do not have to be together every single moment of every day. You and Daddy are not together every single moment of every day and nobody talks about how that looks.
NINA: Your father is doing very important work.
YOLANDE: In case you haven't heard, my husband is doing very important work as well. Now, is there anything else you would like to know?
NINA: You're gonna have a baby, Yolande. You cannot live in Baltimore with a child while your husband lives in New York. It makes no sense. Your duty, as a wife, is to be with your husband and to, occasionally at night, tolerate your marital obligations.
YOLANDE: I'm not talking to you about this.
NINA: You're not ready yet. But you will be. And when you are ready to talk about tolerating your obligations, promise me that you'll come to me, your mother, to talk. Okay? Yolande? You promise?

END

SCENE TWO

Countee and Will in Will's study.

WILL: I'm sorry I couldn't get back any sooner. I was detained at a NAACP meeting in Pittsburgh. Now, I want you to tell me. What happened?
COUNTEE: Yolande decided to come home early.
WILL: From your honeymoon?
COUNTEE: She wanted to get back early in order to prepare for her job.
WILL: You ended your honeymoon early for a teaching job in Baltimore?
COUNTEE: She wanted to take time to prepare her lesson plans and to meet with some of the other teachers. You know Yolande. Once she makes up her mind to do something, there's nothing I can do.
WILL: And have the newspapers been notified of this fact?
COUNTEE: I don't know.
WILL: No matter what you do, no matter how you move or what you say, you must be aware of how it will appear to the public.
COUNTEE: I understand that, Dr. Du Bois.
WILL: Apparently your understanding was only marginal because you ended your honeymoon early and failed to notify the newspapers as to the reason why. Do you know what happens when you fail to supply the news-