

GAMBIT

Voodoo Vows: A Dramedy in One Act
Tommie Sorrell

CHARACTERS

MERLE: (*Pronounced Mer-lay*) *White female, early to mid-thirties. Short brown hair, average height and weight. Wears a masculine plaid polo shirt, jeans, and brown loafers. She has a slight Southern accent. She is a tom-boy and the sister of Zoie.*

ZOIE: *White female, mid to late twenties. Long blonde hair, average height and weight. Wears a white blouse, slacks, women's sleep shorts, and pumps. During the duration of the production, she is clumsily dressing in a sleek yet simple wedding gown. She is very feminine and attractive. She is the sister of Merle.*

RAMONE: *White male, early forties. Perfectly styled thick dark hair, average height but heavyset. Wears a fuchsia shirt that has a "Spank Me" logo, white polyester pants that are too-tight, and drag queen "high heels." He carries a pastel blue ladies handbag. He is a flamboyant hairstylist who is extremely vain and generally offers unsolicited advice. He has a slow Southern drawl that is intentionally very pronounced.*

TIME

The present.

THE PLACE

Merle's apartment in the French Quarter, New Orleans, Louisiana.

GAMBIT

THE SET

An intimate one bedroom New Orleans apartment simply decorated. There are scarce Creole-style decorations on the walls, including some vintage Louisiana festival posters. The furnishings should include a bed, a dresser with a large mirror, a wooden armchair near the dresser, a clothing rack, a couch, and a small table.

PROPS

*Cellular telephones
Thirty-two-ounce plastic draft beer cup
Brown paper bag with french fries
Makeup case with makeup
Miscellaneous hair care accessories
Camera
Empty Hurricane glass
Lipstick
Coffee tray with three coffees
Dress bag and wedding dress
Photo album
Newspaper clipping*

A wedding march is played briefly, fading as the lights come up on stage. Zoie is sleeping on the floor. A loud knocking on the apartment door awakens her. She appears extremely hung over. She is dressed in a disheveled blouse, her slacks are missing, and she is wearing a pair of sleep shorts. She crawls on the floor but fails to reach the door. More knocking sounds are heard.

ZOIE: I'm coming. I'm coming. Just a minute for Pete's sake.

The door opens, and Ramone enters carrying a makeup case.

ZOIE: (*cont.*) Who the hell are you?

RAMONE: (*Smiling*) Well, good morning to you too, Buttercup.

ZOIE: Who . . .

RAMONE: (*Interrupting*) I'm your savior, baby. Your sister hired me.

Ramone offers his hand to her to kiss, but she does not take it. He pulls his hand back.

ZOIE: You're . . .

RAMONE: Ramone, Sugar. I am Ramone. Haven't you heard of me? I know. You'll know me by my stage name. Ravishing Ramone.

Ramone throws his hands up and poses a model type stance.

ZOIE: No.

RAMONE: Oh, come on. Ravishing Ramone of Ravishing Ramone's Hair Salon and Foot Massage. Never mind. (*Beat*) Oh my, my, my. This is going to be harder than I thought. Hangover, right?

Ramone picks up empty alcohol cups.

RAMONE: (*cont.*) All you tourists comin' down here trying out our local flavors. Seems Merle would ah warned you. Let me guess. Hurricanes or Hand Grenades? Never ya mind. I'll take care of everything.

ZOIE: Where's my sister?

RAMONE: Don't know. She hired me days ago. I guess she figured you'd need me. (*Laughs*) And boy was she right. Anyhow . . . wasn't she with you last night?

ZOIE: No. I mean yeah. She was there, but she doesn't drink anymore. She left around the time I went karaokeing. Cat's Meow . . . I think that's the bar where we were.

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Zoie holds her hand to her mouth and rushes toward the bathroom.

RAMONE: Uh-oh. Looks like someone could use a little hair of the dog.

Zoie returns from the bathroom and stops to look at herself in the mirror.

ZOIE: Oh, what am I going to do? I can't get married like this.

RAMONE: Don't worry, Sugar. Sister Ramone will take care of everything.

Merle opens the door and walks in carrying coffee.

MERLE: Hey, Sis. I see you met Ramone.

ZOIE: You could have told me you hired . . .

MERLE: What? A hairdresser?

RAMONE: I'm a stylist.

MERLE: Oh, I stand corrected. I hired a stylist. It's not like I hired a stripper.

RAMONE: For twenty more dollars, I'll be game.

ZOIE: Is he serious?

MERLE: No.

Merle walks to Ramone, and they kiss cheek to cheek.

MERLE: (*cont.*) Damn, Zoie. You look like s—t. Good thing for you I did hire him.

RAMONE: Sugar, you know I'm no miracle worker, but I'll do my best for ya little sister.

MERLE: Hurricanes?

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RAMONE: I think so. Among other things.

MERLE: (*Studying Zoie*) Uh-oh. I've been there before. Days like this I'm glad I turned the old bottle in.

ZOIE: You should've stopped me last night.

MERLE: Yeah right! When have I ever been able to stop you from doing anything? And why should last night have been any different? There was no stopping you. I tried to tell you to limit yourself, but like always, you didn't listen. (*Sarcastically*) I'd probably get drunk too if I was marrying Bob.

ZOIE: Don't start your s—t today.

MERLE: You can do so much better.

ZOIE: Like you.

MERLE: Nice. Drag me up in the middle of this. You'd better be glad I'm even going.

ZOIE: I . . . I gotta get dressed.

Zoie takes the dress bag and walks off stage.

RAMONE: Oh, my. She's sure a little testy.

MERLE: his is going to be a long day. With her good and hung over, just means she's gonna be nice and b—hy.

RAMONE: Sugar, I know what to do.

MERLE: What . . . find her a new man?

RAMONE: No, Sugar. (*Laughing*) If anyone here is going to get a new man, it'll be me.

MERLE: Same old Ramone. So what are you going to do?

RAMONE: You'll see.

Ramone removes his pink razor cellular phone from his pocket and makes a phone call.

RAMONE: (*cont.*) Hello. This is Ramone. (*Laughing*) Yeah. Ravishing Ramone. No, not the usual today. (*Laughing*) You so bad. Uh-huh. No. No. Not today. Now, listen. I need an emergency large order of french fries. Yeah. Extra greasy. Uh-huh. That's right. It works every time. Thanks, Sugar.

MERLE: That's your plan? To eat?

RAMONE: It's not for me. It's for Zoie. Besides, the fries are cooked in special grease.

MERLE: Special grease?

RAMONE: Yeah, special. You know. Like a queen with new implants. Special.

MERLE: You do have a way with words.

RAMONE: Trust me. Zoie needs this. Hadn't seen a hangover yet it ain't cured. Now Sugar, could you run over to Ralph's Deli for me? Know where it's at? Round the corner and two blocks down.

ZOIE: (*Yelling from off stage*) Damn shoes! Leave it to me to pick some Paris Hilton rejects. S—t!

A shoe is thrown on stage from off stage.

RAMONE: Well . . . on second thought . . . never mind, Sugar. Stay here and tend to ya sister. I best go get the fries.

MERLE: (*Mumbles*) Thoughtful as ever.

RAMONE: I try. (*Chuckles*) Besides, this will give you two a chance to talk. Did you tell her?

GAMBIT

MERLE: No! And I don't plan to.

RAMONE: Why not?

MERLE: It's my decision.

RAMONE: You need to tell her. She'd want to know.

MERLE: No. I can't.

RAMONE: You can and should.

Ramone and Merle kiss cheeks; then, Ramone exits the apartment. Zoie returns to the stage. She's wearing her white pantyhose and one white high heel.

ZOIE: Where'd your friend go?

MERLE: He went to get a cure for your hang over.

ZOIE: What?

MERLE: Fries. Not just any fries. Special greasy fries.

ZOIE: Oh g—d—t! Don't even mention food.

MERLE: (*Laughing*) With a milk shake.

ZOIE: Shut up. (*Gagging*)

Zoie sits on the bed, and Merle joins her. Zoie fumbles around with her other shoe.

MERLE: I can't believe you're doing it. Tying the knot. It's not too late to . . .

ZOIE: (*Interrupts*) Merle.

MERLE: Okay. Just for today. I'll try to give it a rest.

ZOIE: Good.

MERLE: It's just hard. You're like my kid.

ZOIE: You're over-protective.

MERLE: I want what's best for you. Is Bob really what's best for you?

ZOIE: Bob is good for me.

MERLE: (*Stands*) He hit you!

ZOIE: Just once and he's sorry for it. He's been trying and trying to make up for it ever since.

MERLE: He's just like Dad!

ZOIE: (*Stands*) S—t! Here we go. And with me good and hung over. (*Beat*) No, he's not.

MERLE: Come on Zoie . . . wake up. Just break the g—d— spell.

ZOIE: Merle, I can't do this anymore. I know what this is really about. Let's just get it out in the open.

MERLE: Don't.

ZOIE: You know what Dad did wasn't your fault.

MERLE: Dammit, Zoie! Don't do this. And don't make this about me either.

ZOIE: We've never really talked about it.

Merle turns away from her.

MERLE: And, we're not. Not now.

ZOIE: If not now, when? Forgot that I live in Colorado Springs? Here just until tomorrow. Remember?

MERLE: When the time is right, I can come up.

ZOIE: No, you won't. You hate flying and you hate Bob. Even if you liked him, I don't see you flying from New Orleans to the Springs for three hours.

MERLE: I could drive.

ZOIE: (*Sarcastically*) Now, you're a comedian.

MERLE: Why do you want to dredge all this up? It was a long time ago.

ZOIE: You're the one who mentioned Dad. I need to say this to you. (*Pause*) Other brides have their daddies to give them away, and their moms are crying in the front aisle. But not me. Mom . . .

MERLE: (*Interrupts*) Mom's dead and Dad's in prison. Don't expect either to come.

ZOIE: I know where they are! It still doesn't change the fact that I wish we had a normal set of parents. I wish our daddy would have . . .

MERLE: Been a real daddy?

ZOIE: Yes.

MERLE: (*Interrupts*) Stop, Zoie. Stop.

ZOIE: No. I can't. I've come to terms with it. But you . . . have you dealt with it?

MERLE: There's nothing left to deal with. It's over.

ZOIE: Is it over for you?

Merle sits, rummages her fingers in her hair, and takes a deep breath.

MERLE: (*There is a pause.*) I wouldn't know where to begin.

GAMBIT

Zoie sits next to Merle.

ZOIE: Let me help you.

MERLE: How?

ZOIE: *(Pause)* You're not alone in this. You couldn't have stopped him.

Merle stands. She is emotionally charged and speaks recklessly and loudly.

MERLE: I did nothing! I didn't do a f—g thing! It's all my fault.

Zoie walks to her and attempts to comfort her.

ZOIE: No. It's not your fault. You were just a kid.

MERLE: No, I wasn't. I was seventeen.

ZOIE: But, stuck playing Mommy and Daddy to me.

MERLE: I never complained.

ZOIE: No, you didn't; but, it still wasn't fair.

MERLE: Dammit! Why didn't I f—g say something? Maybe both of us would have been taken and put in foster care.

ZOIE: A foster home wouldn't have erased it.

MERLE: It might not have happened to you.

The door opens and Ramone enters with the extra greasy french fries and a cheap thirty-two-ounce plastic cup of draft beer.

RAMONE: Hey, Sugars. Extra greasy fries and New Orleans finest on tap. Guaranteed to cure any . . .

Ramone gasps, pauses and stares at the two sisters. It is obvious he interrupted an intense moment.

GAMBIT

RAMONE: (*cont.*) Uh-oh. Bad timing?

Merle wipes a tear from her cheek.

MERLE: Not at all. Get over here and do your magic on her.

RAMONE: Sure thing.

Ramone tries to hand Zoie the cheap beer and greasy fries, but she does not take them.

ZOIE: Oh, no! I can't.

RAMONE: Girl, I walked two blocks in these shoes. Don't make the b—h in me come out. Take it.

MERLE: Try it. What can it hurt?

ZOIE: S—t.

Zoie takes the fries and beer.

RAMONE: About fifteen minutes and you'll be fine.

Ramone turns to Merle.

RAMONE: (*cont.*) Are you alright?

MERLE: Yes.

RAMONE: Feel better now that you've told?

MERLE: Hush.

RAMONE: You did tell?

MERLE: Shut up.

ZOIE: I might be hung over, but I know you two are in cahoots about something. What's going on?

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MERLE: Nothing. I was just asking how much the food was.

RAMONE: Yeah, Sugar. Money don't grow on trees you know. I'll be looking to collect my five dollars and fifty-seven cents.

ZOIE: You never could lie Merle. What's going on?

MERLE: I've done told you. Nothing but food talk.

ZOIE: Ramone.

RAMONE: Yeah.

ZOIE: I need a few more minutes with my sister. Do you mind?

RAMONE: Oh, yassum Missy Scarlett. Anything for you.

ZOIE: Ramone, I'm sorry . . .

RAMONE: (*Interrupts*) Sugar, I'm getting paid by the hour. What the hell!

Ramone holds his hand out to Merle until she gives him some money.

RAMONE: (*cont.*) I'm gonna run over to the Starbucks for a Peppermint Latte. (*Chuckling*) I think Pete Peters is working today. Ta-ta.

As Ramone leaves he holds his hand up to his ear mouthing the phrase, "Call me" to Merle.

ZOIE: (*Long pause*) Merle. About what you were saying before Ramone came in . . . it's not your fault. He was our daddy. You didn't know it was happening to me.

MERLE: He was good at hiding things.

ZOIE: Yes, he was.

MERLE: I thought if I could keep him satisfied (*Zoie stands*), he'd leave you alone. Oh God. I'm so sorry.

ZOIE: You couldn't have stopped him.

MERLE: Yes, I could have.

ZOIE: No. There was no stopping him. (*Pause*) Who could you have told? Mom? She didn't believe it when I told her. She wouldn't have believed you either.

MERLE: (*Stands*) I hope she's burning in hell! She knew. She knew and ignored it. She just took her pills and ignored it.

Merle takes a pill.

MERLE: (*cont.*) You're the strong one.

ZOIE: No. You are.

MERLE: (*Pause*) I have to ask. Why Bob?

ZOIE: Merle.

MERLE: That's how it started with them. Remember? Mom came home from Winn Dixie, and she was unloading groceries. As usual, he was drinking and got pissed. Probably over something stupid like mom buying the wrong brand of bologna. He knocked the s—t out of her. That was the first time I remember him hitting her. Hell, that's when he broke her nose. Do you remember, or were you too young? You've got to remember all the fighting.

Zoie walks to the dresser and studies herself in the mirror. She speaks slowly and methodically as if she's the only one in the room.

ZOIE: (*Near whisper*) I remember the stale whiskey.

MERLE: Whiskey?

ZOIE: Every night he came into my room. He tasted like whiskey. I don't remember all the fighting. I just remember the whiskey.

MERLE: That bastard!

Zoie turns to face Merle.

ZOIE: I wasn't his only victim.

MERLE: No. You weren't.

ZOIE: He still has a hold on you.

MERLE: Don't worry about me.

ZOIE: Since you've moved here, and I'm getting married . . .

MERLE: I'll see you twice a year: Thanksgiving and Christmas.

ZOIE: *(Beat)* What else is going on?

MERLE: Nothing.

ZOIE: What was that with Ramone?

MERLE: Nothing.

ZOIE: Merle. Don't forget who you're talking to. I know you, probably better than you know yourself. Something is going on with you.

There is a long pause. Merle walks across stage and stares past the audience. She sees something and motions for Zoie to join her.

MERLE: Zoie. Come here. Look.

ZOIE: Stop trying to change the subject. I'm not letting you off that easy.

MERLE: No. Really. Come look. *(Merle points)*

ZOIE: Something better be going on down . . . (*Gasps*) People really do that?

MERLE: Yeah. Now you know why it's called the Big Easy.

ZOIE: They wouldn't be doing that in the Rockies.

MERLE: Just think. All she's getting for that is a pair of ten-cent beads.

ZOIE: Unbelievable. Wait! She's not going to . . . Oh my God, she is!

MERLE: If you think that's something, you have to come for Mardi Gras. Did I ever show you the picture of the man with the chaps, Zulu coconut, and a Chihuahua?

ZOIE: No.

MERLE: A picture is worth a thousand words.

Merle looks in a photo album and locates a picture. She then shows it to Zoie.

MERLE: (*cont.*) Here it is.

Zoie takes the picture and examines it.

ZOIE: He was doing this in the street? Where were the police?

MERLE: (*Laughs*) Probably videoing.

ZOIE: That's just sick.

Zoie gives the picture back.

MERLE: Thought you'd like it.

ZOIE: Come on. I'm not that big of a freak.

MERLE: You used to be. Remember Kenny?

GAMBIT

ZOIE: Oh, gross. Kenny. Don't dredge him up.

MERLE: Don't worry. I'm not. Besides, I don't have any extra panties.

ZOIE: God. I used to really pick 'em.

MERLE: (*Mumbles*) Still do.

ZOIE: Merle.

MERLE: Well, I guess Bob's not that bad compared to Kenny. At least Bob wasn't arrested for shoplifting panties at K-Mart.

ZOIE: You know, Kenny swore those were for me.

MERLE: (*Laughs*) I never pegged you for a Kate Jackson granny panties type.

ZOIE: I'm not. Nothing but Victoria's Secret touches this body.

MERLE: Wish you took as much pride with what goes in it as what goes on it.

ZOIE: I'm going to pretend you didn't just say that.

MERLE: You miss my sarcasm.

ZOIE: (*Smiles*) Maybe. (*Beat*) I can't believe I'm about to tell you this.

MERLE: Tell me what?

ZOIE: He's got my name tattooed on him.

MERLE: Who? Kenny?

ZOIE: Yeah.

MERLE: Where?

ZOIE: On his . . . well, it's on him.

MERLE: Not on his . . .

ZOIE: Yep.

MERLE: That's just nasty.

ZOIE: He was so stupid. We had only dated three weeks when he branded little Elvis.

MERLE: (*Laughs*) Little Elvis?

ZOIE: Shut up already. That's what he called it.

MERLE: (*Laughing*) Let me guess, you were his "Hard Headed Woman."

ZOIE: Go ahead. Have your fun.

MERLE: I'll stop. (*Pause*) If it'll make you feel any better, last time I saw Kenny he was (*she sings*) "In the Ghetto."

ZOIE: You're such a b—h.

MERLE: But, you love me.

ZOIE: True. And, that's why I want to know what's going on with you.

MERLE: You're not going to give it a rest. Are you?

ZOIE: Not a chance.

MERLE: There's nothing to tell, really.

ZOIE: Still seeing Dr. Benton?

MERLE: That quack! No.

ZOIE: Why not?

MERLE: He's more worried about my co-pay and curing me with drugs. Lexapro is not the answer.

ZOIE: Know what we need?

MERLE: (*Jokingly*) Let me guess. Greasy fries?

ZOIE: No. Although, I must say, I'm feeling better.

MERLE: Ramone will be thrilled to know he was right.

ZOIE: Weed.

MERLE: What?

ZOIE: That's what we need. We need to blow a joint.

MERLE: We can't do that. (*Laughs*) It's not like you're sixteen again.

ZOIE: And how old would that have made you, my responsible adult?

MERLE: (*Smiling*) It wasn't all bad.

ZOIE: No. Sometimes, I miss those days.

MERLE: Just you and me . . .

ZOIE: And Kenny with a dime bag.

MERLE: That's all he was good for.

ZOIE: Yeah, free Mary Jane.

MERLE: And free panties. Don't forget the panties.

ZOIE: Laughing at me always did cheer you up. (*Beat*) Merle, I'm doing the right thing.

MERLE: If you say so.

ZOIE: Look, Bob loves me. He comes from a large Catholic family. He owns his own home. Let's see . . . what else? He has a great job. Umm . . . he'll be a good provider. And, he adores me.

MERLE: He controls you! He beats you! He isolates you!

ZOIE: He's not Dad.

MERLE: I've always heard that if a man will raise his hand to a woman once, he'll do it again.

ZOIE: He made a mistake. I've made mistakes. *(Pause)* Merle, I'm pregnant.

MERLE: What did you say?

ZOIE: I'm pregnant.

MERLE: Oh my God. How did this happen?

ZOIE: Come on now. It hasn't been that long since you dated a man. You really want the grungy little details?

MERLE: You know what I mean. Is it Bob's?

ZOIE: No matter how much you wish it wasn't, he's the father.

MERLE: Is this why you're marrying him? Women raise babies alone every day.

ZOIE: I'm marrying him because it's the right thing to do.

Zoie picks up the cup of beer Ramone brought her, and she sips.

MERLE: *(Scolding)* What the hell are you thinking? Give me that.

Merle takes the cup away from her.

MERLE: *(cont.)* J— C—! You can't think about just yourself. Not now. You got to think about the little one.

ZOIE: Bob doesn't know.

MERLE: Isn't this the reason for the wedding?

ZOIE: No. He doesn't know, and I don't want you to mention anything to him about it. Understand?

MERLE: (*Sarcastically*) Like we talk all the time. But why? Why don't you want him to know?

ZOIE: I'm having an abortion.

MERLE: (*Angry response*) Are you smoking f—g crack? What the hell . . .

ZOIE: I didn't want to tell you, and you know why.

MERLE: Yes. Oh God, yes.

Merle turns and looks away. There is a brief pause.

ZOIE: Look. I know it wasn't a choice for you, but it is for me. This is different. It's my decision.

MERLE: You know how I feel about abortions.

ZOIE: I'm sorry Dad convinced Mom to bring you to that butcher.

MERLE: He told mom I was a whore. Told her I was knocked up by Sherman.

ZOIE: It wasn't Sherman's baby?

MERLE: No. It wasn't (*Long pause*).

ZOIE: I didn't know. I . . .

MERLE: Zoie, just tell me. Why are you going to kill your baby?

ZOIE: Please, don't judge me because of what happened to you.

MERLE: This is not about me. It's about your baby.

ZOIE: Fetus. It's not a baby. It's just a fetus.

GAMBIT

MERLE: Call it whatever you need to, but this is not right. (*Pause*) Is it your health?

ZOIE: It's not my health.

MERLE: Tell me why. I don't understand.

ZOIE: I don't want to be responsible for a kid. I have no desire to have children.

MERLE: Does Bob know how you feel about this?

ZOIE: Yes. He's fine with it.

MERLE: Just tell him about the baby.

ZOIE: No!

MERLE: Why not? Or better yet, let me tell you why not. Catholics don't believe in abortions, right? He wouldn't be cool or fine with this choice of yours.

ZOIE: I doubt it. I don't know.

MERLE: You're starting a life together based on a lie.

ZOIE: It's not a lie. I'm just not telling him.

MERLE: You're being dishonest with him and yourself. If you don't want kids, then have the baby and give it to me.

ZOIE: Bob would never go for that.

MERLE: Then leave him and have the baby.

ZOIE: I'm marrying him today.

MERLE: Do you love him?

ZOIE: We've been together for three years.

GAMBIT

MERLE: Do you love him?

ZOIE: Of course I love him.

MERLE: No. Are you in love with him? Does he make your heart skip beats? Do you anticipate his touch? Do you dream about him?

ZOIE: Merle.

MERLE: Dammit, Zoie. You should want to have his kids.

ZOIE: Like you're going to have Sharon's kids.

MERLE: I should've known. Here it comes. You never had a problem with my sexuality until you got with Bob.

ZOIE: I don't have a problem with it.

MERLE: Then why'd you bring it up?

ZOIE: I'm not going to lie . . . Bob has a problem with it.

MERLE: Let me guess, he believes God never meant for there to be an Adam and a Steve.

ZOIE: More like a Sharon and Merle.

MERLE: Oh, Bob's soooooo strong in his faith.

ZOIE: Yes, he believes homosexuality is an abomination.

MERLE: Abomination, huh? Surprised he even knows the meaning of big words. Where does it say in the Bible thou shall beat the s—t out of thy wife?

ZOIE: He hit me because of you.

MERLE: Me?

ZOIE: We were fighting because of you . . . and Sharon . . . and all that other rainbow s—t that goes with it.

MERLE: I don't need . . .

ZOIE: (*Interrupts*) Need me to fight your battles.

MERLE: No. I am who I am. I am not going to crawl back in some closet to make him or anyone else comfortable.

ZOIE: He just lost control. He didn't mean it.

MERLE: Let me guess, he made a mistake.

ZOIE: Yes, and he's still apologizing for it. He's just convicted about the whole gay thing. I tried to explain to him that you're just this way because of things that happened . . .

MERLE: (*Interrupts*) What! You really don't know me. Do you? I'm this way because this is how God made me. Not because our dad molested me, or my dog died when I was four, or because our mom breast-fed. This is not a choice. It's genetic. This is who I am. Tell Bob about my genetic theory.

ZOIE: I'm not going to tell him anything like that.

MERLE: Scared you'll spawn him a little f—t? Is that why you're going to kill him?

ZOIE: Him. How do you know it's a boy?

MERLE: I just do.

ZOIE: (*Beat*) I can't . . . I'm not telling him.

MERLE: You're impossible. (*Beat*) And, you think I'm broken.

ZOIE: Broken is not the word I would use.

MERLE: Then what word would you use?

ZOIE: I'm . . . not sure. (*Pause*) Confused. I don't know. Maybe confused.

MERLE: I like content. I am content in who I am, which has nothing to do with my childhood.

ZOIE: You used to date men. It is hard for me to understand how you can just flip-flop. Wasn't it your choice to date men?

Merle approaches Zoie and stares.

MERLE: Who are you? It's got to be Bob. Damn him! He's turned you into his obedient little stooge. This is scary. It's like déjà vu.

ZOIE: (*Agitatedly*) He's not Dad, and I'm not Mom!

MERLE: Funny. You're the one that just made that comparison.

ZOIE: You implied it!

Merle's cellular phone rings, and she answers it.

MERLE: Hey, Ramone. Yeah, I know what time it is. Okay. You're right. Get yourself back over here. No. Everything's fine. Thanks. See you in a few. Bye.

Zoie looks at her watch.

ZOIE: Damn. It is getting late.

MERLE: Yes, it is. Ramone is on his way back over here. He does amazing work. Don't worry. He's not confused.

ZOIE: God, I hate fighting with you.

MERLE: This is supposed to be your special day.

ZOIE: Sharon get her invitation?

MERLE: Only because you knew she couldn't come.

ZOIE: That's not true. I like Sharon and wanted her here.

MERLE: Even though she's one of the . . . how did you say it? Confused.

GAMBIT

ZOIE: Confused was the wrong word. *(Beat)* Let's stop this. I'm sorry I hurt your feelings.

MERLE: *(Pause)* Sorry, too. I just don't want what happened to Mom to happen to you.

ZOIE: It's not. You just need to get to know him.

MERLE: Before or after the divorce?

ZOIE: Merle!

MERLE: I'm teasing.

Ramone opens the door and sticks his head inside.

RAMONE: Hey, Sugars.

ZOIE: Get in here Ramone and make me a princess. Time's a wastin'.

MERLE: Zoie, we're not finished talking about . . .

ZOIE: *(Interrupts)* Yes, we are.

MERLE: In that case, you heard her, Ramone. Make her into a supermodel.

RAMONE: Tyra Banks or Cindy Crawford?

MERLE: Whichever one didn't pose for Playboy.

RAMONE: You sure know how to take the fun out of being a supermodel.

ZOIE: Where do you want me?

RAMONE: I think that's the first time in my whole life a woman's asked me that. *(He pats the chair inviting her to sit)* Right here will be fine.

Zoie sits and stares into the mirror. She fumbles around and puts her garter on.

GAMBIT

ZOIE: Thanks for the hangover cure.

RAMONE: It worked?

ZOIE: Yes, thank Jesus.

RAMONE: (*Smiling*) Told ya.

MERLE: I'd better go get dressed.

RAMONE: Bye, Sugar.

Merle exits the stage.

ZOIE: How often do you see Merle?

Ramone styles Zoie's hair.

RAMONE: Just depends on what's going on. Since Sharon's on assignment, I probably see her two or three times a week.

ZOIE: What's eating her?

RAMONE: Not me!

ZOIE: That's a no-brainer. Really. What's going on with her?

RAMONE: Honey, I know you is fishin', but they ain't no little worm on your hook . . . so you ain't of no interest to me.

ZOIE: Come on, Ramone.

RAMONE: Let's just say . . . I know.

ZOIE: Know what?

RAMONE: What ya'll's daddy done and all.

ZOIE: I'm surprised. Merle's never been one to open up. (*Beat*) This has something to do with him?

GAMBIT

RAMONE: Maybe.

ZOIE: You have to tell me. I won't rat you out. I wouldn't be asking if I didn't love her.

RAMONE: I don't know. I really shouldn't.

ZOIE: Ramone, it'll stay just between us girls.

RAMONE: Well, since you put it that way. I never was good at keeping a secret. (*Beat*) She's stronger than you think.

ZOIE: What is it?

RAMONE: Let me see how can I put this. The prison system sucks. Taxpayers shouldn't have to pay for organ transplants. I believe that some people should just suffer on kidney dialysis and die. But . . . some people . . . not to call any names, don't feel that way.

ZOIE: She's giving the old son-of-a-b—h a kidney?

RAMONE: I didn't tell you that.

ZOIE: No, you didn't. When is this happening?

RAMONE: In two weeks.

ZOIE: Damn. I don't know what to say.

RAMONE: Nothing. Don't you say I breathed a word about this to you. For some reason, she's not wanting you to know.

ZOIE: I haven't seen or spoken to him in years. I didn't even know he was sick.

RAMONE: Too bad he ain't dead.

ZOIE: Death. I've wished that on him before.

RAMONE: If you ask me, this is the wrath of God giving him what he deserves.

ZOIE: Why's Merle doing this?

RAMONE: She keeps saying she has her reasons. Don't worry none about her, Sugar. I'm gonna stay with her for a few days after the surgery.

ZOIE: You're a good friend.

RAMONE: Try and keep my name out of this. Okay?

ZOIE: Okay.

Ramone puts both of his hands on Zoie's shoulders and looks at her through the mirror.

RAMONE: Let's talk about you now. I gotta finish gettin' ya all spruced up.

Ramone holds her hair up.

RAMONE: (*cont.*) How do you want this? Up on top or flowing downward?

ZOIE: I was thinking it should go up. You're the expert. What do you think?

RAMONE: Expert. Oh, yes I am. Definitely up. You'll look like Grace Kelly. It'll be wonderful.

ZOIE: Ramone, can I tell you about something?

RAMONE: Sure ya can. I'm a hairstylist, Sugar. That's the next best thing to a therapist.

ZOIE: I've upset her. Damn. She's got all this going on, and I've upset her.

RAMONE: Sugar. She'll get over it.

ZOIE: No. I don't think she will. The thing is . . . I'm pregnant.

RAMONE: (*Playful*) Oh Sweet Jesus. Tell me it's not mine!

ZOIE: Very funny. As if.

RAMONE: (*Chuckling*) Sugar, that would be a nightmare. I don't know the first thing about babies, and I don't wanna know. God knew what She was doing when She blessed women with that task.

ZOIE: I'm aborting it.

RAMONE: (*Hesitantly*) Oh . . . Okay. Now, hold still. I need to spray your hair before you move all around and mess up my masterpiece.

Ramone overly sprays her hair with hair spray causing Zoie to cough.

ZOIE: That's it. That's all you're going to say about my abortion?

RAMONE: Yeah, Sugar. I'm not one to judge. I figure you have your reasons.

ZOIE: I told Merle about the abortion.

RAMONE: What'd she say?

ZOIE: She wasn't happy about it.

RAMONE: Can I ask you a question?

ZOIE: Sure.

RAMONE: Why'd you even tell her?

ZOIE: I don't know. Maybe, I do need someone to judge me.

RAMONE: Sugar, I learned a long time ago that you are usually the hardest judge on yourself. If you're having second thoughts about something, then there's a reason for it. Just take your time and don't make a decision you'll regret for the rest of your life.

ZOIE: Decisions.

RAMONE: Let's lighten this up. Sugar, I know this is your big day. Tell me something fun and exciting. I know. Let's talk about your man. I love talking about men.

ZOIE: (*Smiling*) He's good looking.

RAMONE: Um-huh. Tell me more.

ZOIE: He works in real estate.

Ramone dusts Zoie's nose and cheeks with a makeup brush.

RAMONE: A money man! Go on.

ZOIE: Merle doesn't like him.

RAMONE: Huh. What does she know about men anyway?

ZOIE: (*Laughs*) True. Well, let's see. He's tall dark and handsome. He sports a tight mustache and is what you'd probably call a metro-man.

RAMONE: Oh.

ZOIE: Don't get the wrong idea. He's not fem or anything. He just likes to look and dress nice and neat. He reminds me of a hit man from *The Godfather*. But, he's no gangster or anything.

RAMONE: Too bad, Sugar. Gangsters usually have hot pistols.

ZOIE: You're too much Ramone.

RAMONE: So, I've been told. Well, go on. Tell me more about your man.

ZOIE: Oh, let's see. He's Catholic and very religious. In fact, he's got a large tattoo of the Virgin Mary in the middle of his back. Celtic, I think that's what you call that type design. Of course, he sports something else that's tight – his a—! He'd be just your type.

Ramone drops a tube of lipstick, and it falls to the floor.

RAMONE: (*Serious tone*) What'd you say his name was?

ZOIE: I'm not sure if I did say. It's Robert Capo, but I call him Bob. He's Italian. But, you probably know that.

RAMONE: (*Nervously*) No, I don't! How would I know that?

ZOIE: Because of the name, silly. Capo is an authentic Italian name.

RAMONE: Oh, yeah.

Merle walks back onto stage. She is dressed in a stylish satin blue gown. She has made a Cinderella-type transition.

MERLE: Well . . . what do you two think?

ZOIE: (*Stands*) Oh. I had forgotten how beautiful you look in a dress.

Zoie gets a camera and snaps a couple pictures. Merle moves the bottom of the dress about and smiles.

MERLE: It has been a while since I wore one of these things.

RAMONE: (*Sarcastically*) Who did this to you?

MERLE: What? Are you kidding?

Ramone walks around Merle and thumbs her hair up a couple times.

RAMONE: Don't play stupid with me, Sugar. You didn't do this all by yourself. Who'd you go see?

MERLE: (*Hesitantly*) Trace.

RAMONE: (*Gasps*) Trace! You mean you let Tracy Days . . . that old Goodwill shopping hand-me-down wearing drag queen do your hair?

GAMBIT

MERLE: Yeah. Is something wrong with it?

RAMONE: (*Snappy response*) Yes! (*Pause*) She did it better than I ever dreamed of doing. Get over here.

Merle and Ramone embrace. They share a brief dance move and kiss.

RAMONE: (*cont.*) You stylin', Sugar. You might make me jump the fence.

Ramone slaps Merle on the buttocks.

MERLE: As if.

Ramone takes Merle by the hand and guides her.

RAMONE: Come look at our little bride. What do you think of her hair and makeup?

MERLE: I think my mascara is going to run. She's beautiful.

ZOIE: I look like my sister.

The two sisters embrace.

RAMONE: You two better not ruin a professional's work. Don't even think about crying.

ZOIE: So, are you still my maid-of-honor?

MERLE: Crazy question. Who else would it be?

ZOIE: No one.

RAMONE: I need a drink.

Ramone downs the remaining beer in the plastic cup; then, he looks around for something else to drink.

GAMBIT

MERLE: Zoie, I'm going to respect your decision. You're not a child anymore. I need to trust you.

ZOIE: Are you playing some reverse psychology bulls—t on me?

RAMONE: (*Interrupting*) Got any bourbon?

MERLE: (*Answering Ramone*) No.

ZOIE: What's gotten into him?

MERLE: He's queening out. Now, where was I at, oh yeah . . . I just want you happy, and I'm going to have to accept things the way they are. Now, hurry up! Go get ready.

ZOIE: Okay. Give me a few minutes.

Zoie walks off stage.

MERLE: (*Addressing Ramone*) What's going on with you?

RAMONE: (*Nervously*) Nothing. Well, I have a three o'clock with my masseur. He's French, ya know. Don't want to miss a minute of that hour. Oui! Oui!

MERLE: Hold it. You're sure acting funny. What have you done? Did you tell Zoie about the transplant? Is that what's wrong with you?

RAMONE: Yeah. No. She guessed.

MERLE: (*Agitated*) Nobody just guesses you're donating an organ. Damn. You can't hold your pudding.

RAMONE: I'm sorry.

MERLE: What'd she say?

RAMONE: Nothing really.

MERLE: Nothing?

RAMONE: We mainly just talked about Bob.

MERLE: Bob.

Ramone flips the pages in a photo album.

RAMONE: You got a picture of him?

MERLE: Who?

RAMONE: Bob.

MERLE: Sure, I got one right here in my wallet. Come on Ramone, that's a dumb—s question. *(Pause)* Why do you want to see a picture of him anyway?

RAMONE: No reason, really. Just wanna put a face with the name.

MERLE: She really didn't say much about the transplant?

RAMONE: No. Not really. She's just concerned about you.

MERLE: You're sure acting weird.

RAMONE: Weird? Me? No, Sugar. Well, I best be going.

MERLE: You're still not telling me something.

RAMONE: I don't know if I should say anything.

MERLE: Spill it.

RAMONE: *(Pause)* I think I did something last night I shouldn't have.

MERLE: Told someone else about the transplant?

RAMONE: No. It's not about that.

MERLE: I'm not following you. Spit it out.

RAMONE: I think I had . . . well . . . some relations with someone I shouldn't have.

MERLE: Do I really want to hear this? If it wasn't Clay Aiken or someone else gossip worthy, then spare me the details.

RAMONE: Bob.

MERLE: Bob who?

RAMONE: Bob.

MERLE: Who?

Ramone gives her an intense look, which answers her question.

MERLE: (*cont.*) What!? No f—g way. You don't even know what he looks like. No way.

RAMONE: Listen. I was out last night at the Oz. I was about to leave so I could make drag queen bingo. You know how much I like that bingo. Anyway, I didn't want to leave without a shot of Hot-Damn! You know how much I like my Hot-Damn . . .

MERLE: (*Interrupts*) Ramone, get to the point.

RAMONE: Okay. Now, where was I? Oh, yeah. I was at the bar when I saw him. Get this. No shirt, bare chest, and dancing around by the bar. I hadn't ever seen him around before, so I said, "Hot Damn!"

MERLE: What did he look like?

RAMONE: An Italian stallion mixed with a mafia gangster.

MERLE: Sounds like Bob, but there isn't any way. What'd ya'll talk about?

RAMONE: Talk. (*Chuckles*) Oh, there wasn't much talkin' that went on.

MERLE: This can't be. There has to be some mistake. Wait. I got a wedding announcement I cut out of the newspaper with his picture on it.

Merle gets the announcement and hands it to Ramone.

RAMONE: Oh s—t! Oh Sweet Jesus! It's him!

MERLE: Take another look.

RAMONE: Don't need to. It's him.

MERLE: You sure?

RAMONE: Sugar, I ain't never been so sure about anything in my life. What am I going to do?

MERLE: Do? You've done enough. You aren't going to do anything. Keep your mouth shut!

RAMONE: (*Nervous*) But, Sugar . . . this ain't Vegas. What happens in New Orleans is always the talk of the queens. What if she finds out?

MERLE: Calm down. Don't say anything to Zoie. I've got to think.

RAMONE: Oh, I'm a wedding crasher. A . . . WEDDING . . . CRASHER!

MERLE: Shut up!

Zoie returns from the bathroom. She is wearing her wedding dress and veil.

RAMONE: Oh, my.

MERLE: I see you're almost ready.

RAMONE: (*Emphasis*) Oh, my.

ZOIE: What you think Ramone? Am I ready?

RAMONE: (*More emphasis*) Oh, my.

GAMBIT

Merle walks over to Zoie, dusts some lint off her shoulder, and pushes the zipper up on the dress.

ZOIE: I guess we best be going. Ramone, why don't you come with us?

RAMONE: No! I . . . I . . . have a three o'clock, and then I'm getting drunk.

ZOIE: Are you sure?

RAMONE: Oh yeah, I'm getting drunk.

ZOIE: No. (*Laughs*) Are you sure you don't want to come?

RAMONE: (*Mumbles*) Done did.

ZOIE: What?

RAMONE: Said you're beautiful kid.

ZOIE: Thanks, Ramone. It was so nice meeting you. Thanks for everything.

RAMONE: I don't have you a wedding gift, but I did make a small deposit.

MERLE: Ramone!

RAMONE: Five fifty-seven. Don't worry 'bout the fries and beer. It's my treat.

ZOIE: Oh, Ramone.

Zoie hugs Ramone.

RAMONE: Bye, Sugars.

Ramone exits the stage.

ZOIE: He's a little odd. Is everything okay with him?

GAMBIT

MERLE: Yeah. He just got into something strange last night.

ZOIE: Merle.

MERLE: Yeah.

ZOIE: I got a funny feeling.

MERLE: Like what?

ZOIE: It's hard to explain. Probably just butterflies. I know that in an hour, I'll be Mrs. Robert Capo. It's just scary.

MERLE: You can say that again.

ZOIE: Am I making a mistake?

MERLE: Well, hell yeah! And, I have to tell you something.

ZOIE: You always were brutally honest.

MERLE: How can I put this? Earlier you were trying to sell Bob on me. It didn't work. You were really trying to sell him on yourself. You need to think about this and make the right decision.

ZOIE: Decisions. You've made decisions too. When were you going to tell me about this organ donation thing?

MERLE: No you don't. Don't even think about shifting gears. (*Beat*) I wasn't going to tell you.

ZOIE: Why are you doing it?

MERLE: I've forgiven him, but I'll never forget. This is the only way I can live. Hatred nearly destroyed me. By doing this, I can finally let go completely.

ZOIE: Is it dangerous?

GAMBIT

MERLE: Routine. I'll be fine.

ZOIE: Are you sure?

MERLE: Yes. I'll be fine. Now, back to Bob.

ZOIE: (*Long pause*) Bob's not my Mr. Right.

Zoie removes her veil.

MERLE: Yes, Virginia! There is a Santa Claus. (*Beat*) I'm so glad.

ZOIE: Merle, I'm scared.

MERLE: Don't be.

ZOIE: But what if he's the closest thing to a Mr. Right I'll ever find?

MERLE: You're not broken. You can have your Mr. Right.

Merle touches Zoie's stomach.

ZOIE: I'm scared of f—g up.

MERLE: You won't.

ZOIE: But, what about Bob?

MERLE: Bob's already f—d up, and it has nothing to do with you.

ZOIE: What does that mean?

MERLE: Last night he was at . . . then he went to . . . then they . . .

ZOIE: What are you trying to say?

MERLE: How well do you know him?

ZOIE: Well, he's my baby's Daddy.

MERLE: He . . . (*Long pause*)

ZOIE: What'd he do?

Merle's cellular phone rings.

MERLE: Saved by the bell. (*Answers phone*) Hello. No. No, I didn't. No, we're still at the apartment. Don't worry. No, I don't have any. I'm not checking the sales paper. Just go to Walgreens. I gotta go. Bye.

ZOIE: Ramone?

MERLE: Yeah.

ZOIE: Is everything okay?

MERLE: Yeah, he's just got that not so fresh feeling.

ZOIE: So, tell me what Bob did?

MERLE: Nothing worth mentioning. (*Beat*) It's not fair to either of you to just settle. You'll have your Mr. Right one day.

ZOIE: But . . .

MERLE: (*Interrupts*) There are no "buts." You'll be surprised at how easy Bob will go. Trust me.

There is a long pause before Zoie hugs Merle then kisses her on the cheek.

ZOIE: I do.

MERLE: (*Pause*) So . . . here we are all dressed up with no place to go.

ZOIE: Let's do something crazy.

MERLE: Does it involve Kenny or K-Mart?

ZOIE: (*Laughs*) Not even the tattoo shop on the corner.

MERLE: That's a relief.

GAMBIT

ZOIE: Actually, I'm craving ice cream and pickles.

MERLE: Disgusting. Sounds like a plan.

The two embrace again and lights fade.