

# ACT OR'S EXPRESS

*cullud wattah*

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## **Scenes**

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# Marion and Plum

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**marion**

reese was only joing about you peein in thuh bed

**plum**

i didn't pee in thuh bed!

*plum aimlessly flips through the television channels.*

**marion**

i know you didn't honey/ i believe you/ you been doin such a good job/but yr treatment was intense/& with thuh medicine sometimes you might have an accident or find yrself walkin in yr sleep/ i can get you one of them charm bracelets with thuh lil bells on em/ you wanted one last chris—/

**plum**

am i gone die?

**marion**

plum hold still so i can make sure thuh wig is on straight

**plum**

am i/ mama?

**marion**

hold still i said!/ we cant be late for yr first day back to school/ it's exciting/ you know miss moore really missed you in her math class

**plum**

mama/ am i gonna die?

**marion**

i dont know!/ doctors say you did real good with yr chemotherapy/ real real good/ they say you might gotta shot at full remission but—/

**plum**

my lead levels iz real high & they dont kno how long thuh lead been in my system/ so they dont kno

**marion**

they dont know

*(pulse)*

**marion**

but wanna know what i do know?

**marion** tickles plum.

**marion**

i know you too smart for yr own good/ i know that god loves you & aint through with you yet/ i know that yr daddy lookin down from heavn's staircase & he real proud of you for bein so strong & smart/ if he were here you know what he'd say?

**plum**

**plum**

**plum**

**marion**

do you?

*(pulse)*

**plum**

i dont remember what he sound like/  
i dont even remember what he look like

**marion**

yes you do/ you do just close yr eyes & listen real hard/  
yr daddy be thuh velvety still voice down on thuh inside sayin/  
babygirl you a fighter/ you my plum/ you a fighter/ you hear him plum?

**plum**

**plum**

**plum**

**plum**

i dont hear nothin mama

**marion**

here/ look at it good/  
you remember why i put a picture of our family in every room in this house?

**plum**

so we nevuh forget daddy/ what he look like/ who our family iz/ wuz

**marion**

you wont ever forget what he look like/ you got reminders all around you

**plum**

i aint got my own memories/ i just be borrowin yrs & gluin em on these pictures in my mind/ but i dont remember him mama/ i really want to but i cant/ im sorry

**marion**

it's okay/ you were only two years old when he—/ you thuh memory plum/  
you thuh spittin image of yr daddy/ them deep-set brown eyes are his/ them shaggy  
brows too/ them dimples bucklin into yr cheeks at thuh mere prospect of a smile are  
his/ & that pitch-blk skin be a slick oil spill across yr whole body

**plum**

it be his too?

**marion**

it's like everything about him washed ovah you before he left this world for heavn's  
shore

*(pulse)*

**plum**

will i get to see daddy in heavn?

**marion**

**marion**

**marion**

one day/ a long long looooooooooong time from now/ you got alotta livin to do plum

**plum**

alotta years of livin?

**marion**

too many to count/

**marion** *(cont'd.)*

now gone get yr bookbag/ i'll pull thuh car round front/  
& cut that tv off/ runnin up my light bill & aint got no light bill money

# Reesee and Ainee

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**reesee**

she'll be yr rainbow baby

**ainee**

more like a prism/ when i look at her she bend thuh light back on all thuh babies i lost

**reesee**

seven a good number

**ainee**

why come

**reesee**

it's thuh number of completion/ it's seven chakras/ seven african powers/ seven days of thuh week/ seven/ it's yemoja 's number/ when she went into labor her birth wattah flooded thuh world/ creatin thuh seven seas

a kick: **ainee** strokes  
her belly.

**ainee**

she thuh only one ever kick/ im spose to be excited/ issa reminder that somethin in you alive/ it scare me when she kick like that/ she aint even here yet & every time she thrust her lil feet forward it's like she learnin to walk away from me/ & thuh only souvenirs i get are her footprints cross my stomach/ & this picture/ lettin me know i aint just dream her up/ she was real

**reesee**

she is real/ she a right now not a yesterday

another kick: **ainee** clutches her belly.

**ainee**

she a tomorrow too?

**reesee**

a tomorrow too

*(pulse)*

**reesee**

you got a name for her

**ainee**

**ainee**

**reese**

in yoruba culture it matters what you call a thing/ if she gone be a tomorrow you gotta start namin her today/ you gotta start callin her somethin as big as her survival

**ainee**

i aint thought that far ahead/ namin is so real

**reese**

she is/ real ainee

perhaps a watery-eyed **ainee** snatches a possible tear, hiding it in a fist.

**ainee** dont you got school?/ aint you late? how you gone be a doula without a high school diploma?

**reese**

i dont need no diploma to be a doula

**ainee**

**reese**

**ainee**

**reese** tcha/  
im goin!

**reese** shoves a stack of disheveled books & papers into her backpack & moves to exit.

**reese**

ainee?

**ainee**

what?

**reese**

she real

**reese** exits. **ainee** runs her fingers through her hair. a clump of hair comes out in her hand. startled, she gains her balance against the countertop, finds a plastic bag, throws the hair inside & places the bag in a nearby gargabe can. **ainee** takes the teacup & exits.

# Big Ma and Reesee

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**big ma**

whut happened tuh  
you?

**reesee**

what happens to anyone?/  
people change/ grow up/ see  
shit

**big ma** tries to hit **reesee** with her cane but **reesee** successfully dodges her.

**big ma**

clariese/  
language!

**reesee**

my name is reesee

**big ma**

yr name clariese/ i named you myself

**reesee**

i hate that name/ sound like somebody white old country/ & half dead

**big ma**

it was my mama's name

**reesee**

well i got three outta four right

**big ma**

**reesee**

**reesee**

**big ma**

**reesee** & **big ma** burst into laughter, momentarily piercing the tension.

**reesee**

what happened to  
you?

**big ma**

whut you  
mean?

**reese**

same thing you meant/  
you different too

**big ma**  
**big ma**

**reese**

remember when you usta take me to thuh  
planetarium?

**big ma**

mmmhmm/ made you believe thuh big dipper was gawd's

**big ma & reese**

cast-iron skillet

**reese**

cuz even god had a taste for a fried chicken wing every now & then/  
& when plum got old enuf to come with us you even made her believe thuh big dipper  
was thuh sky's rendition of her dot-to-dot math worksheets

**big ma**

n she'd ask/ but big ma who connects thuh dots in thuh  
sky?

**reese**

& you'd say god was walkin round in a high place with stars under his feet/  
draggin his footprints across thuh heavns

**reese & big ma**

connectin thuh dots

*(pulse)*

**reese**

you dont talk like that no more

**big ma**

like whut?

**reese**

big/ about high places/ god/  
it's like heavn collapsed when big daddy died/ then  
that lady you lived with/ before you moved here—/



**big ma** starts toward **reese** & **plum's** room.

**big ma**

i promised plum i'd say her prayers wit her tonite since yr mama out

**reese's** words halt **big ma**.

**reese**

in yoruba culture it matters what you call a thing/  
how you remember it/ what you name it/ a kid  
inanimate object a spirit/ a hurt

**big ma**

ev'ry high place is made low at one time or another

**big ma**

**reese**

**big ma**

**big ma** exits.