

I Dreamed the Last Diamond Darter

A twenty-first century dream play
in Three Movements

By

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(Excerpt)

Endangered States of America Play #8

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This play is for my mother and my daughter, Sophia Lily.
Also, for my sister and her daughter, Celina.

With thanks to Ann Boyd and Zoe Strecker
And their daughters.

For all our daughters.

Characters

Martine AKA Malice Walker, 18ish, African American Chemical Valley roller derby girl wannabe. An environmental Science dropout.

Amanda Blankenship, 18ish, white daughter of a coal company CEO. Friends with Martine since middle school.

Nasreen, 17, a Yazidi refugee crossing water towards Europe. She speaks beautiful English.

Nobodyhastoberealnomorebcwhorealonthewww AKA

Night Watchman, a security guard

Colonel T Kopp, a white man, 40s, who pretends to be in his 20s

Rob, Amanda's fiancé, a UVA grad student in international studies

Time: Before the spill/After the spill - 2014

Setting: A fork in the Elk River, just downstream from Freedom Industries coal plant, South Charleston, West Virginia.

From off-stage amber and blue industrial light. Elsewhere the dark of mountains and forest. Everything is suggested, no realistic representation at all.

Notes:

In this play, a dream is an active state. Martine is perfectly alert- as if she is learning something amazing.

In the internet sequences there should be no devices at all, only a very quick flat pace of the language.

If you want to understand a culture, listen to their stories. If you want to change a culture, change the stories.

Achenyo Idachaba

“while the tale of how we suffer, and how we are delighted, and how may triumph is never new, it always must be heard. There isn’t any other tale to tell, it’s the only light we’ve got in all this darkness.”

James Baldwin (Sonny’s Blues)

“We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. What affects one directly affects all indirectly.”

Martin Luther King

Movement 1 Before the Spill

Scene 1

NASREEN enters. She moves slowly across the space in shadow or silhouette. For most of the play she makes her way across the space in “her own world” but will transition easily, with her sense of humor, into the scenes.

MARTINE enters with a bunch of lumber in her arms. She speaks to the audience.

MARTINE

To build a bench
You need lumber that will
maintain its integrity in the out of doors.
If your bench is for the out of doors. Mine is.

Integrity is key. You don't want a broken
Or sagging bench. You want one that will weather well.
Teak is the best option. It ages a beautiful silver.
Most Teak comes from Indonesia
where the world has been burning all year---
It's so expensive you might have to sell your body to get it.
Don't.
Eucalyptus is the poor man's teak.
It turns a soft grey in time.

I am building my bench from “reclaimed” pallets
from the loading dock of
our local chemical coal cleaning plant: Freedom Industries.
You can break into freedom on a lark.
You just hop the barbed wire fence,
The security lights'll come on and the sirens will go off
But by the time security comes, you'll be gone.
As the song says:
Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose

Sirens, and red security lights, turning.

Now is the time to pray. But prayer wasn't on my vocab list.
Do you think the dead care if you build their memorials
From the best materials
Or steal them from your local coal cleaning plant?

She starts to run. Right into the NIGHT WATCHMAN

O. Shit.

NIGHT WATCHMAN

You legal here?

He rolls a cigarette.

MARTINE

No. Are you?

NIGHT WATCHMAN

What are you doing with those pallets?

MARTINE

A DIY project.

NIGHT WATCHMAN

DIY?

MARTINE

Do it yourself. Recycling scrap is good for the planet.

NIGHT WATCHMAN

Freedom's property is not crap and it has a hefty price tag.
But I'll make you a bargain.

MARTINE

Scrap. Not crap. Why are you bargaining for Freedom?

NIGHT WATCHMAN

That's what Americans do. Bargain for freedom. You're Un-American, aren't you.
You're MIA. Looked you up on the police blotter, young lady.

MARTINE

You did not. You don't even know my name. I'm not a young lady.

NIGHT WATCHMAN

I am just out for a smoke.

MARTINE

You getting high?

NIGHT WATCHMAN

I like to smoke when I'm cutting a deal. I'm not addicted, okay? I just like it.

MARTINE

Am I in trouble?

NIGHT WATCHMAN

I don't know. Are you?

MARTINE

If I'm not, I'm waiting for someone, so please just/leave me

NIGHT WATCHMAN

/Leave you alone?

MARTINE

In peace. Yea.

NIGHT WATCHMAN

You're fresh. By fresh, I mean, rude. How old are you?

MARTINE

Could you at least be original?

NIGHT WATCHMAN

18, I bet.

MARTINE

Bingo. Tell me something I don't know.

NIGHT WATCHMAN

*Strange fits of passion have I known:
And I will dare to tell,
But in the lover's ear alone,
What once to me befell.*

MARTINE

What's that?

NIGHT WATCHMAN

Wordsworth.

MARTINE

O yea. Wordsworth. Read him in 9th grade. Miss B's class.
Tell me something I *don't* know

NIGHT WATCHMAN

Poems of the lost girls. They call them the Lucy Poems.

MARTINE

Who is Lucy?

NIGHT WATCHMAN

Ah. Who is Lucy? No one's quite sure.
Maybe the poet's sister. Maybe his lover.
We don't even know if her name was Lucy.
One thing we know for sure: She's gone.

MARTINE

...

NIGHT WATCHMAN

Dead.

MARTINE

I'm sorry.

NIGHT WATCHMAN

Death happens to everyone. Sometime.
It's the sleep everyone fights.
Sleep needs an army these days. (Beat)

They've got all kinds of pills to keep it away
and bring it on. You know what I say? Just lay back and relax!
Enjoy it! Sleep is the great liberator!

MARTINE

Who are you?

NIGHT WATCHMAN

Nightwatchman. Freedom Industries. At your service.
Who is your Lucy?

MARTINE

I don't know anyone named Lucy.

NIGHT WATCHMAN

I mean, who did you lose? And who do you long for?
You do know longing, don't you, Martine?

MARTINE

How do you know my name?

NIGHT WATCHMAN

What are you going to do about all the things and people you lost?

MARTINE

I said tell me something I don't know and all you do is ask questions.

NIGHT WATCHMAN

What are you going to do about the world, Martine?

MARTINE

Just because you're a dream, doesn't mean you can pry into my personal business.
When I wake up, I won't even remember you.

NIGHT WATCHMAN

So touchy!

MARTINE

Yes. I am. I'm touchy. Okay. So leave me. The fuck. Alone.

NIGHT GUARD

I'll tell you something you don't know:
The one you're waiting for? A woman. I saw her.

MARTINE

You did?

NIGHT WATCHMAN

*When she I loved look'd every day
Fresh as a rose in June,*

MARTINE

Where?

NIGHT WATCHMAN

*I to her cottage bent my way,
Beneath an evening moon.*

MARTINE

Did you see her on not?

NIGHT WATCHMAN

Very elegant. Old school.

MARTINE

Where did you see her?

NIGHT WATCHMAN

Over there. By the storage tanks.

MARTINE

You're high!

NIGHT WATCHMAN

She is wearing black traveling clothes, long leather gloves, pearls. Elegance from another time.

MARTINE

That's my mother!

NIGHT WATCHMAN

Your mother. Is over there, smoking a cigarette with a long cigarette holder from the 1960s, reading Wordsworth.

MARTINE

Thanks!

NIGHT WATCHMAN

Wait: You forgot your deal.

MARTINE

What deal? Let me go.

NIGHT WATCHMAN

If your mother speaks to you first, you can have her,
But if she speaks to me first, I keep her.

MARTINE

No fair. You're... otherworldly.

NIGHT WATCHMAN

You're pretty strange yourself. But I don't bargain
And I set my terms pretty clear. Take it. Or. Take it

MARTINE

No.

Martine starts to run toward her mother- the storage tanks.

NIGHT WATCHMAN

And tell her to watch out, so she don't blow those storage tanks to kingdom come!

Martine wakes. There's no one there.

End Scene