

FAITH

By Lee Osorio

FAITH: mid-thirties, female, Black

THEO: late thirties, early forties, male, Black

ENSEMBLE ONE: mid-fifties to early sixties, female, Black

ENSEMBLE TWO: early twenties, male, Black

GRANDMOTHER: mid-sixties to early seventies, female, Black

Note on setting/set: The play is set in Eatonton, Georgia. The single set is a playground. The action is remembered/relived in the mind of Faith. All locations other than the playground should be indicated through costumes and behavior...though miming should be minimal.

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(It is around midnight. We are in a small town park. Slightly left of centerstage there is a bench and a large outdoor trashcan. Downstage right- a swing set with two rubber swings. In the shadows we see trees. Downstage left there is a pool of light emanating from a streetlight too high to see. At the base of the streetlight we see an impromptu shrine: many stuffed animals, wilted flowers, Missing person fliers, and melted down candles. It has been there a while. Faith enters.)

FAITH

A woman stands in the shadows of the park.

It's late.

...

Still she checks to make sure she's alone.

...

...

...

She is.

Even so, she hesitates.

For a moment she watches the moths
as they fly in and out of the yellow pool of light
from the street lamp above.

She thinks of lying in bed,
as a girl,
and hearing the insects fly into the electric blue bug zapper
that her mother had hung outside her bedroom window.

Eyes shut tight,
Trying to will herself to sleep,
She remembers wondering-

What was the secret that the zapper promised to whisper to the bugs
If they only got close enough to hear?

Couldn't they see that only bad things happened to those
that flew towards the light?

(long beat)

She thinks about leaving.

She thinks about going home...

(Static fills the space, starting low, growing louder until...)

She steps into the light.

(Static cuts out)

It is not a flattering light.

In the shadows the woman almost could have passed for a nervous preteen-

maybe one dared by her friends at a sleepover to walk through the park,
alone,
in the middle of the night-

But in the pool of yellow light she looks much older,
sallow.
and sickly.

The woman that stands in the yellow light-
She is what polite company would call "curvy" or "thick,"
And what less polite society would refer to as:
"a little on the heavy side,"
or
"a big girl."

At her last physical, Doctor Harrell told her she could stand to lose some weight,
To which she responded,
"Well, you didn't have to go to Medical College of Georgia to figure that out..."

Doctor Harrell did not find that amusing.

But then again, this is the same Doctor Harrell that stood by with his thumb up his butt
while he watched her mother shrivel up like a grape that rolled under the couch,
So Doctor Harrell could go fuck himself.

(beat)

This woman was given the name "Faith" long before she could object.

Only God knows why her mother chose to call her Faith.

Though she may have scared the devil out of many a person in town,
Faith's mother was *not* what anyone in Eatonton would call "a spiritual person."

And yet, Faith was the name she had chosen for her only child,

who now stands in the middle of a park,
in the middle of the night,
still dressed in her work clothes.

Faith works at the Ingles on the other side of Eatonton.
In the deli department.
With the hens.
Well, that's what she calls them.

(The Hens appear from the dark recesses of the playground, a memory so strong that Faith manifests it)

HEN 1

You going to the vigil?

HEN 2

I got better things to do than go cry over dead girl I never met.

HEN 1

Like what? Sit at home stroking your tiny dick?

HEN 2

Exactly.

HEN 1

You don't know she's dead.

HEN 2

Martha, please.

HEN 1

You don't!

HEN 2

Woman, if that little girl turns up alive I'll take you and her on an all paid vacation to Disney World!

HEN 1

Uh-hunh-

HEN 2

We'll ride those fucking teacups till we puke.

HEN 1

Deal.

HEN 2

However, if they find her body all cut up-

HEN 1

Joey, shut your mouth!

HEN 2

I'm just sayin' if they find that girl in pieces in a black trash bag somewhere.

HEN 1

You are going straight to hell!

HEN 2

I'll save you a seat. But if they find her less than alive, then *yooooou...*

HEN 1

I what?

HEN 2

You have to-You have to let me borrow your car for a night.

HEN 1

No, ma'am.

HEN 2

Cause you know she's dead!

HEN 1

No, cause I know you can't drive for shit when you're sober, I don't want to find out how you drive when you've been drinking with your little friends in Athens.

HEN 2

So you going tonight, then? To the vigil?

HEN 1

Yeah. We're going.

HEN 2

What about you, Faith? You goin' or are you with me in thinking she's in a ditch somewhere?

(beat)

FAITH

Faith hadn't gone to the vigil.

(The Hens recede into the darkness)

Instead, that was that night she'd started driving again.

FASTFOOD 1

(Recorded voice, through a drive thru speaker)

Welcome to Hardee's, order when you're ready.

FAITH

The drives *first* started after her mother died.

The day after the poorly attended memorial service, Faith got dressed, went to work.

But driving home that night,

her stomach churned at the idea of walking into the sky blue single wide they'd shared.

She couldn't bear the thought of walking into

a trailer that still reeked of her mother's black and milds,

a trailer now filled with the quiet and the stillness that Faith had prayed for-

prayed for for so long,

and now couldn't bring herself to face.

So Faith sat in her car

for thirty minutes

looking at the pale blue paint,

faded and chipped,

tinged green with mildew,

And thought how weird it was that this trailer,

This mobile home,

Was *her* mobile home.

Faith sat in the car,

And thought how cruel it was to call this thing,

a mobile home.

There was nothing mobile about it.

Prying the hunk of metal

Off the cinder blocks it had rusted to

Without the whole thing collapsing in on itself

would require a miracle that Faith was confident not even God could perform.

And couldn't the same be said of the woman that lived there?

Staring at the trailer
Faith saw her future clearly,
In the way that only a visit from Death allows.
She saw herself,
just like this metal cage she lived in-
Rusted stuck to this place,
Mobile in name only,
Doomed to slowly deteriorate day after day after day
until she collapsed in on herself,
Alone and unloved,
Another heap of trash to be hauled to the landfill-

. . .

Faith threw the car in reverse,
Nearly running over one of the innumerable stray cats that called the trailer park home,
And Faith drove,
Suddenly filled with a desperate need to be in motion.

Faith drove.

And Faith kept driving-
Without purpose,
With no destination in mind,
She drove past the Waffle House out by the city limit sign.
She drove past cow pastures with their sour sweet manure smell.
Faith drove the fifteen miles to Milledgeville and found herself-

FASTFOOD 1

(Recorded voice, through a drive thru speaker)

Drive around to the second window.

FAITH

In a Hardee's drive thru.

FASTFOOD 1

(Hen 1 enters now wearing an ugly visor or hat covered in stupid pins, joking, but kindly)

Hey- I like your hat.

(Faith touches her head and realizes she's still wearing her hairnet. Faith smiles)

FAITH

I like yours too.

FASTFOOD 1

Have a good night, honey.

(They share a smile. Faith takes off her hairnet as Ensemble One fades into the darkness)

FAITH

And that was all it took.

A small kindness,

A joke,

A smile

To teach Faith

that grief is a sneaky son of a bitch.

You can be doing something as mundane as picking up burgers in a drive thru-
and one thing.

One sentence, or word, or inflection,
is enough to-

Faith took her food,
pulled away from the Hardee's,
parked her old Honda at the back of a strip mall parking lot,

And the dam broke.

Faith bawled like-

Like she hadn't allowed herself to in years.

Faith had long known that parking lots are really good for crying.

And for screaming profane things.

Really loud.

Mostly empty parking lots, that is-

She'd learned not to try it in full ones.

Faith had discovered this as soon as she was able to save up enough to get her own car.

And that night Faith cried and screamed profanities like it was her job.

Faith hadn't cried at her mother's funeral-

Which did not surprise the few people that actually showed up.

Faith's mother was what polite company would call "a difficult woman" and what not so
polite company would call-

Well, the list was long.

Faith hadn't wept for her mother then,

And the truth was that she didn't weep for her now.

At least not her mother as she was in life.
But Faith cried for the mother that could have been,
perhaps,
under different circumstances-
and now never would.
A friendly face,
offering her a warm smile,
offering her warm food,
offering her something that would make her feel
seen,
loved,
worthy...
enough-

Like that lady from the drive thru-
Who Faith blamed for turning her nose into a snot faucet.

Faith knew how stupid it was to compare the two: Drive Thru Lady and her mother.

It was Drive Thru Lady's job to be nice and serve food,
but when a woman making minimum wage can smile and joke, but the woman you are
taking to doctor's appointment after doctor's appointment, cooking for, eventually
bathing- refuses- even on her deathbed- to offer one, one gentle word or say thank you
for taking care of her better than she ever-

(long beat. Faith screams:)

FUUUUUUUUCK!

FUCK.

FUCK.

FUCK.

FUUUCK.

FUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUCKKKKKKKKK!

Faith screamed.

Faith screamed because she had wished for so long for her mother to pass.

And she screamed because she got what she wished.

FAITH

(singing slowly, quietly, it is both processing and remembering)
I made it through the wilderness
Somehow I made it through
Didn't know how lost I was
Until I found you

FASTFOOD 2

I thought that was you- haven't seen ya in a while. Here you go- I put some extra napkins and ketchup in the bag, like you like.

FAITH

Thank you-Have a good night.

FASTFOOD 2

Yes, ma'am- you too. Stay safe out there!

FAITH

The night of the vigil was the first time in a long time Faith had gone for one of her drives.
They had been routine for so long.

FASTFOOD 1

(a recorded voice) That'll be two quarter pounders with cheese, a large fries, large Hi-C Orange, anything else for you today?

FAITH

Sometimes Faith would stop in Milledgeville, grab food, and keep driving on to Madison and order more there- shoving the empty bags under the passenger seat, hiding the evidence-
not so much out of shame,
She wasn't ashamed,
But because she didn't want to see the looks,
Judging her,
Pitying her,
The looks of others who took it upon themselves to be ashamed on her behalf.
Faith didn't have patience for that.
Fuck them for trying to rob her of her joy,
Rob her of these precious hours of freedom,
Nowhere to be,
No one waiting for her to come home,
Infinite roads to explore,
And-

FASTFOOD 2

(a recorded voice) Two Whoppers, a medium fries, and a cookies and cream shake, drive round to the second window.

FAITH

Faith would turn up the radio and sing.

(gaining strength until it's upbeat and happy)

I was beat

Incomplete

I'd been had, I was sad and blue

But you made me feel

Yeah, you made me feel

Shiny and new

These after work drives became what Faith lived for.

These hours on her own when she felt like she could just keep driving.

These few hours when escape felt possible.

These hours when she felt like maybe she could be made to feel full, feel whole, feel -

Enough.

(singing)

Hoo, like a virgin

Touched for the very first time

Oooo

Like a virgin

When your heart beats

Next to mine

She didn't escape.

Or ever feel quite full.

But almost.

And that was almost good enough.

And then...

the drives stopped.

HEN 1

Something about his eyes. Don't you think he looks a little crazy?

HEN 2

Definitely.
Crazy sexy.

HEN 1

You always go for the ones that ain't right in the head. Says he's lived all over- I bet he's running from child support bills or some shit-

HEN 2

I bet he's got a big dick.

HEN 1

Joseph!

HEN 2

What? He's just got that look about him.

HEN 1

What look is that?

HEN 2

You know exactly what look, Martha...

FAITH

Theo.
The newest hire at the Ingle's Supermarket.
A mystery man.
And the subject of much clucking of hens.

HEN 2

Tasty.

FAITH

And for good reason.
Or good reasons.
At least two that were visible with all his clothes on.

His eyes.
And his smile.

Both kind.
Both sad.
Both a little hungry.

HEN 1

What's he reading today?

HEN 2

I don't give a fuck what he's reading. I don't even care if he really is reading. Just the sight of a man holding a book is. . .moistening. Is that a word? I am moist.

HEN 1

Okay, you need professional help.

(beat)

FAITH

Poetry.

(Beat as the Hens take in A) that Faith has spoken- a rare occurrence, and B) has said a word that makes no sense in the context of their conversation)

FAITH

He reads poetry.

(Long beat as the Hens process that quiet Faith has noticed what the new guy is reading and that the new guy reads...poetry...)

HEN 2

Poetry?

FAITH

(Faith nods) Amiri Baraka this week.

(beat)

HEN 2

Poetry? Like. . . Poetry? Oh, that's not a moistening. That's a motherfucking tidal wave.

(The Hens and Faith share a laugh. Really the first that Faith has been a part of)

FAITH

Faith fell.

Hard.

(Theo walks in carrying a plate with two corndogs smothered in French's yellow mustard, a book tucked under his arm. Faith, unseen by Theo watches him take a seat on the

bench. She's about to say something. Thinks better about it. Then suddenly a little too loudly)

FAITH

Is that all you eat?

THEO

Fuck!

FAITH

Sorry.

THEO

You scared the shit out of me.

FAITH

Sorry.

(Pause as Theo takes Faith in as he wipes mustard off his shirt)

THEO

I thought you were mute.

FAITH

What?

THEO

You never talk. I thought you must be, you know, a little Helen Keller.

FAITH

No. I am not a little...Helen Keller.

THEO

What did you say?

FAITH

When?

THEO

When you scared the shit out of me.

FAITH

Doesn't matter.

THEO

What did you say?

FAITH

...I said, is that all you eat? ...Corn Dogs with French's yellow mustard?

(He looks at her again. She blushes. He enjoys her blushing)

FAITH

Our lunches have overlapped (*about to say the exact number of times cause she knows it*)- a few times since you started and you always...

(beat)

THEO

I always...?

FAITH

No, it's just-

...

I've only ever seen you eat microwaved corn dogs covered in French's.

THEO

...

FAITH

I mean, I noticed.

...

It's...noteworthy.

...

So, I wondered if that's all you eat.

(beat)

THEO

(smiling) You're awkward.

(small beat)

FAITH

You're rude.

THEO

No, it's- It's endearing- your awkwardness. And my rudeness. Eventually.

FAITH

I'm sure.

(beat as Theo looks at Faith, enjoying how nervous he makes her as she tries to hide it)

FAITH

What?

THEO

Can I ask you a question?

(small beat)

FAITH

You just did.

(small beat)

THEO

Can I ask you another?

FAITH

You just did.

THEO

You know what I mean.

FAITH

What?

THEO

When is the last time you had a conversation with another human being?

(beat)

FAITH

I have them every day.

THEO

Not at work.

(small pause)

FAITH

Are you offering?

THEO

What?

FAITH

Are you offering to have a conversation with me?

Not at work?

(small beat)

THEO

Maybe.

(beat)

FAITH

Okay.

Answer my question.

THEO

Is this all I eat?

No.

I have blueberry pop tarts for breakfast and Stouffer's lasagna for dinner...

Occasionally a Marie Callendar chicken pot pie...

When I'm feeling wild.

FAITH

When's the last time you had food that didn't come out a box?

(small pause)

THEO

Are you offering?

FAITH

Maybe.

THEO

Maybe we can work out a deal then.

(small beat)

FAITH

Why do I feel like one of us is getting the better end of this deal?

THEO

Don't worry, you can make it up to me somehow.

(Theo stands from the bench and walks back into the darkness of the park. Faith stands and tries to follow him. Static swells as she approaches the threshold of the streetlight. We see her try to drown out the static, trying to leave. The effort is painful, nauseating. The static grows louder and she fights to hold back tears. Finally, she turns back towards the park, exhausted, a tear streaming down her face. She reaches inside her pocket for tissue, but pulls out a small pink bundle of fabric instead. She stares at it for a moment. Carries it to the shrine)

FAITH

Faith searches the pile of offerings brought to the shrine of the little girl.

Janaiyah.

Faith is searching for something specific-

The kind of specific thing she will know when she sees it-

...

But not before.

She looks through the pile of stuffed animals.

Lions and tigers and teddy bears, oh my.

Faith wonders why so much time and money are invested in getting children to cuddle things that will bite their faces off.

(By this time Theo is sitting at the swing set. Faith shoves the pink ball of fabric back into her pocket)

THEO

What else?

(Faith turns to face him)

FAITH

Faith had spent hours cleaning the trailer.

Trying to get rid of the smell of mold.

Tring to bring a little beauty into it.

And Faith spent hours more cooking.

Roast Chicken Breast.

Broccoli Casserole.

Garlic Mashed Potatoes.

And a fudge cake.

And then there he was.
In her cramped kitchen.

Theo.

This stranger.
This cluck-worthy stranger.

(Faith joins him on the swingset)

FAITH
What else?

THEO
Yeah. What else?

FAITH
That man.
With those eyes.
With that look.
Was sitting at Faith's table.
Eating seconds.
Then thirds.
And asking her all about her life.
Till she had told him just about everything.

THEO
Come on.

FAITH
There's nothing else.

THEO
There's always something else.

FAITH
There's not.

(pause)

THEO
What have you never told anybody?

(beat)

FAITH

I don't know.

THEO

Think about it.

(long pause)

FAITH

You just want me to, to tell you some big secret.

THEO

Sure, why not?

FAITH

Cause it's embarrassing.

THEO

Why?

FAITH

Cause it is!

THEO

Try it.

(pause)

FAITH

Something I've never told anyone...?

THEO

Right.

(long, long pause...like really)

FAITH

I'm lonely. . .

I guess that's not, like a secret.

I mean everyone probably knows. . . . Do people- ?

Not that I care. . .

Is that-

. . .

. . .

was that what you wanted?

(pause)

THEO

Thank you.

FAITH

For what?

THEO

Being real.

(pause)

FAITH

Thank you...for being real.

Theo thanked her for being real.

Not "Thank you for being honest."

Which would have meant something different.

Honesty is so often cheap.

Honesty is so often cruel.

You can be honest without being real.

Faith's Mother was always honest.

But Faith's mother wasn't real.

Because being real costs.

Because being real hurts.

It takes courage to be real.

And this stranger-

Sitting in the chair where Faith's mother once sat-

He made her want to be real.

And not only that,

Thanked her for being real.

THEO

Thank you.

(long beat)

FAITH

What about you? I don't know anything about you.

(pause)

THEO

There's not much to know.

FAITH

I don't believe that. Maybe there's not much you want me to know.

THEO

Maybe that's true.

FAITH

Maybe there's a good reason for that.

THEO

Maybe.

FAITH

And maybe there isn't.

(pause)

FAITH (ctd)

Tell me something you've never told anyone.

(Theo looks down, thinking.

Another long pause.

He looks up.

Faith meets his gaze

And holds it.)

THEO

I...I, um- I don't know...*(long pause)* I...want a home. I mean- it's similar to yours right. I've moved around so much. I'm not young anymore. But, I guess what I mean is that I want a...home. A place that's...home. I don't know how else to say it.

(beat)

FAITH

I know what you mean.

(pause)

THEO

And I don't know if that's possible. For me to find that.

FAITH

Why do you say that?

(a beat, Theo shrugs)

THEO

Inertia. *(off of Faith's look)* Things in motion stay in motion until...

FAITH

Until?

THEO

Until something stops them.

(beat)

FAITH

Something like?

(beat)

THEO

I don't know. Nothing's stopped me yet.

(beat)

FAITH

Sounds tiring.

THEO

Yeah.

(pause)

FAITH

Thank you.

THEO

For what?

FAITH

For being real.

(beat. Are they going to kiss? Not yet. The stands and walks towards the bench.)

FAITH (ctd)

Theo came over for dinner again two nights later.

THEO

(laughing) What do you mean why?

(Calling to Faith as if she is still in the kitchen. Faith joins him on the bench with a post-dinner, sitting on her couch very close to Theo energy)

FAITH

What's the draw?

THEO

Have you read any?

FAITH

I think in high school, probably.

THEO

Recently? And I mean the good stuff? Not like the greeting card, church lady bullshit.

(Faith shakes her head no)

THEO

It's like,
have you ever had the feeling
of looking at something, and...

...

...

...

it doesn't add up.

But it does.

Does that make sense?

FAITH

...Kinda? I mean...no?

THEO

It's not-

...

it's not like a problem you have to solve,

...

and it's not a puzzle-

not exactly-

It's these broken words you're trying to fit together,
make some meaning of-

...

but when it's good it's-

you never really solve it,

you never really figure out.

It just is.

...

It just speaks to you.

It's this broken thing that shouldn't be beautiful,
but it is.

It doesn't make sense, but it does.

FAITH

...I think I know what you mean...

(pause)

THEO

I don't know if I believe in God.

...

Church is-

it's not a place I've ever felt at home in.

And I think maybe poetry might be

...

the closest thing that I have to prayer.

(Faith waits for more)

THEO

Sometimes there's a phrase

or a stanza

or verse that sticks with me-

...

...

and if I chant it,

...

or if I walk to it,
brush my teeth to it.

...

If I breathe it in enough,
then sometimes I can find a truth through it
that's bigger than me.
You know?

...

bigger than my-
I don't know.

...

...

...

...

Bigger than any desire.

...

It'll keep me grounded.
Keep me on track for the day.

(Long pause)

FAITH

Do you have one for today?

(beat. Theo nods.)

FAITH

Will you tell me?

(even longer pause)

THEO

*In a package of minutes there is this We.
How beautiful.*

(long pause)

FAITH

Say it again.

THEO

*(slower) In a package of minutes there is this We.
How beautiful.*

(long pause)

FAITH

Who's that?

THEO

Gwendolyn Brooks.

FAITH

It's. . .

FAITH

. . .

THEO

. . .

FAITH

yeah.

THEO

Yeah.

(long beat as see each other and let each other in)

FAITH

And then two nights after that...

(Theo stands from the bench, but the quiet fullness of the moment continues)

THEO

It's late.

(Faith also rises from the bench. This moment is like waking on a cold morning in a warm bed. You know you have work to do, but you can't bring yourself to open your eyes and let the dream of last night slip away just yet)

FAITH

Yeah.

THEO

I...I should let you sleep.

FAITH

Okay.

(Long beat)

THEO

Good night.

FAITH

Good night.

(They pause. They kiss. Softly. Unsure. Then intensely. Beat. Theo starts to walk into the darkness. Stops. Looks back at Faith. An invitation.)

FAITH

Theo spent the night.

(Theo recedes fully into the darkness)

FAITH

Faith gave thanks to Theo, again and again, for being real.

It was her silent mantra over the next two weeks.

“Thank you for being real” was her first thought when she would wake and hear him snoring on the other side of the bed.

Those were the words that flashed in her mind when she caught herself smiling while working just thinking of him.

And “Thank you for being real” was her final prayer every time he spent the night.

And Theo spent the night often.

Often enough that Faith made him move the clothes and toiletries he’d been keeping at the moldy furnished apartment he was renting on the west side of town-
Into Faith’s place.

No photos,

Dozens of books of poetry,

Some t-shirts and deodorant transformed the light blue single wide

Into their

home.

(Theo enters, walks into and out of the light saying-)

THEO

(yawning) Bed time. . .

FAITH

Faith's drives stopped,
And she realized,
That when she was sitting in her car the night after her mother's funeral,
Thinking about the immobility of mobile homes-

. . .
. . .
. . .

She'd forgotten about tornados.

She hadn't considered the whirlwinds so powerful
it can unstick the rustiest of double-wides
And plop them down in the middle of a cow pasture...or on top of a witch.
Those cyclones so tempestuous
They can suck up saddest of girls and transport them over the rainbow
Into a magical technicolor world they never imagined existed.

That twister was Theo.

He turned her world on its head in the most unexpectedly beautiful ways
and left her. . .
Breathless.

HEN 2

Okay, Miss Thang, how low does it hang?

HEN 1

Joey, will you at least pretend that you read the Employee Handbook?

HEN 2

I am simply asking about a co-worker's health, what's unprofessional about that?

HEN 1

Her health? Really?

HEN 2

Yes! Faith's skin has been practically glowing for the past few weeks. I just wanna know
if she's been taking supplements. Have you?

FAITH

No...

HEN 2

Oh, cause word on the street is that you are getting extra vitamin D these days!!!

HEN 1

When HR comes, I will not be able to help you.

HEN 2

And if you are taking that vitamin D, I was just curious how many milligrams you take...like six milligrams or like ten milligrams or are we talking *twelve* milligrams?

HEN 1

Jesus, help this child.

HEN 2

And do you like to take it orally, cause I personally have found it difficult to choke down sometimes, or do you take it-

HEN 1

ALRIGHT! Thank you, sir.

HEN 2

Damn, woman, I'm just trying to get some medical advice from my friend, Faith.

HEN 1

How bout this, if you would like to keep your medical benefits, I suggest we find a new topic of conversation.

HEN 2

Okay. (*sotto voce, but just loud enough for Martha to hear*) Whatever regimen you've got going on, I think Martha could benefit from it.

HEN 1

No, ma'am, I get my annual booster shot of Vitamin D on Mike's birthday and that is more than enough for me, thank you very much!

HEN 2

I'm dead. But for real, Faith, Theo got a little brother?

FAITH

Faith realized she didn't know.

HEN 2

(*without waiting for an answer*) Or a big brother? I don't mind a daddy. Hell, at this point I'd settle for his actual Daddy- he alive?

FAITH

(shaking her head no)

Faith shook her head no,
but the truth was
she didn't know.

And there was a moment of panic.

What did she know about the man that had just moved into her house?

HEN 2

Damn! If you got any tips on how to catch a good-looking unmarried man with a job and less than four kids, I'm all ears, cause Lord knows what I'm doing ain't working.

FAITH

The question hung with her:

What did Faith know?

And the answer that came back again and again was

Faith knew she was happy.

Faith knew real happiness.

Simple,

Challenging,

Humbling happiness.

And Faith knew Theo-

(correcting slightly) Faith knew that Theo was-

Someone to come home to.

Someone to get out of bed for.

And to stay in bed for.

Theo was the first person to ever tell Faith that she was beautiful,

Even though she knew she wasn't.

Theo was the first person to tell Faith that she was smart.

Which she knew she was, but didn't know what good it did her.

And one time, Theo told Faith she was funny,

And she farted.

As she could do on cue.

A big, wet fart.

And they laughed so hard she made herself fart unintentionally.

Even bigger and wetter.

So wet she had to change her pants.

Which only made them laugh harder.

And when Theo told her that she was meant for something more than the Ingle's deli department and this small town...

Faith knew that she almost believed him.

(beat. Static swells. Faith shakes it away)

FAITH

Faith wonders what Janaiyah dreamt of.
Did she also dream of escaping Eatonton?

Maybe she had.
Maybe she wasn't missing.
Maybe she'd just run away.

(beat)

(singing)

*Hey, little girl, is your daddy home?
Did he go and leave you all alone?
I got a bad desire,
Oh-oh-oh, I'm on fire*

THEO

I'm going for a walk.

FAITH

What time is it?

THEO

Go back to sleep.

FAITH

(singing)

*Sometimes it's like someone took a knife, baby, edgy and dull,
And a cut six-inch valley through the middle of my skull*

*At night I wake with the sheets soaking wet
And a freight train running through the middle of my head.
Only you can cool my desire
Oh-oh-oh, I'm on fire.*

Faith remembers lying in bed,

even at Janaiyah's age,
and dreaming of getting away.

Faith had wanted to be a singer.
Not one that played on the radio, really.
Just a small-time singer,
that played in coffee shops and dive bars,
Maybe somewhere in the desert,
but the high desert,
like Flagstaff, Arizona.
Faith had never been,
But she imagined she could be happy there.
A place where the burning sun of the day would give way to freezing moonlit nights.
A place where no one knew her, and she could reinvent herself.
A place to heal.

Faith thinks,
Maybe it isn't too late.
Faith thinks maybe she could still go there.
Or maybe they could.

Or maybe just her.

(pause)

(singing)

Oh-oh-oh, I'm on fire.

Oh-oh-oh, I'm on fire.

(Theo walks behind Faith making a circle around the stage.)

They say love is blind.
But that doesn't mean that lovers don't see.
Rather that they see past.
They see the cracks, the missing pieces,
But they choose to stand far enough away so that the fissures aren't apparent.
They squint so that they see only the seemingly intact whole.

Faith noticed the cracks.

In Theo's refusal to talk about his past-

THEO

(trying to laugh it off)
There's nothing to tell.

FAITH

Just tell me *something*...

THEO

It was- I don't know. It was just your basic shitty childhood.

FAITH

What does that mean?

THEO

It means I don't want to talk about it. What difference does it make now?

FAITH

Faith saw the cracks in the way he was with her in bed.

Hungry, but...

He tasted every part of Faith.

With his hands.

His mouth.

His teeth.

His tongue.

Theo devoured Faith.

Theo entered Faith,

And searched deep inside of her,

As if he was looking in the darkest recesses of Faith for that...

That thing...

That-

That would satiate his hunger.

Theo never found it.

He finished.

Sweaty.

Tired.

Unfulfilled.

THEO

I'm gonna shower.

FAITH

Faith noticed the cracks.
But she chose to squint until she couldn't.

Because Faith was certain-
Certain that she could fill the cracks with her love.

HEN 2

How was the vigil?

HEN 1

A laugh riot.

HEN 2

I'm sure.

HEN 1

Mike agrees with you. Said there's no way she's alive.

HEN 2

Told you.

HEN 1

But I'm like- think how many stories you hear about girls trapped in basements for decades and finally escaping? Jesus, you gotta have a little hope or what the heck are you living for?

HEN 2

I'm just living for the weekend.

HEN 1

Mike said the guy who did it was probably there.

HEN 2

At the vigil?

HEN 1

He said they like to return to the scene of the crime.

HEN 2

Y'all watch too many of those True Crime shows.

HEN 1

He kept pointing at people, being like, could be him, could be him.

HEN 2

Could be Mike.

HEN 1

Right, that man gets winded taking out the trash, there's no way he's chasing down a little girl.

HEN 2

You never know.

HEN 1

Gave me the heebeegeebies thinking we might be standing right next to the guy who did it.

FAITH

Faith picks up a letter from between the stuffed animals.

"Dear Janiya, I am sad you're--"

The note hard to read.

It was written by a child,

maybe a classmate,

and the note is already faded from the rain-

"I am sad you're..."

Something.

Faith picks up others.

"Mom keeps telling me..."

Everything happens for a reason--"

"We miss you. We love you. We're praying for you. The Johnston's"

"Come Home Safe! Love...."

Uncle"

Greg? George?

"You sat next to me in Mrs. Marshall's class and I liked you and you were nice. Where..."

Where you..."

"Beautiful girl, you were a light that was taken away from us too soon."

Shortly after Theo had moved in, Faith got sick.

Her stomach.

And Faith's first thought was of her mother.

Angrily shriveling away.

So she didn't go to Doctor Harrell.

And she didn't get better.

One day-

Slicing Swiss cheese for a customer-

Faith got so nauseated she had to run to the backroom.
Faith didn't make it to the employee restroom-
She puked in the break room trashcan.
Right in front of one of the hens.

HEN 2

Honey, you better hightail it over to the pharmacy aisle and pick up a coupla tests.

FAITH

Tests?

HEN 2

Tests, honey. And not the kind you take with a number two pencil.

FAITH

Faith never ran so fast.
Faith's heart was about to pound out of her chest.
Faith grabbed two boxes.
Just to be sure.
She tore them open in the claustrophobic employee toilet,
Held the stick between her thighs
And aimed a stream of urine at it.
As best she could.
It was messy.

Clenching and unclenching as she positioned the next stick.
And the next.
And the fourth just to be extra sure one way or another.
And then Faith waited.
She didn't have to wait long-

And then Faith waited.
And waited.
Three minutes can be a fucking eternity.

HEN 2

What does it say?

FAITH

Nothing yet!

HEN 2

Let me see.

FAITH

It doesn't say anything.

HEN 2

Maybe you're not reading it right!

FAITH

I'm looking at the instructions- What do you know about these things?!

HEN 2

More than you'd expect-

FAITH

Oh my God.

HEN 2

What?

FAITH

Oh my God. I'm pregnant.

HEN 2

Woooooo! Wait, is that a good thing?

FAITH

Yes! Of course!

HEN 2

Okay. I'm just saying, not everyone is so happy t-

FAITH

I'm happy!

HEN 2

Then yay!

FAITH

Hen Two told Hen One,

And Martha told Faith to take the rest of the day off.

Theo had worked an overnight, so Faith was ordered to go home and tell him the good news.

But not before-

HEN 1

Ladies and Gentleman, this is a special announcement to share with you that our very own Diva of the Deli Department has a little bun in her oven! Congrats to Faith and Theo!

FAITH

Faith knew it was bad luck, but she couldn't be angry at the Hens. They were happy for her.

And Faith was-

She had assumed she was dying and found out she was creating a life- Faith was...

She bought a yellow cake mix and everything she needed to make chocolate icing from scratch.

Two thick steaks.

Broccoli.

Bacon, Cheese, and Sour cream for twice baked potatoes.

And a bottle of pink champagne.

Pink because she hoped it was a girl.

She had never felt this much... *(can't find the word)*

She had never felt this much.

(beat. overwhelmed with joy)

(Faith sings slowly)

I want to love you

Pretty Young Thing

You need some lovin'

Tender love and care

And I'll take you there

(long pause)

THEO

I can't have children.

FAITH

What do you mean?

(beat)

THEO

I can't be a father.

FAITH

Obviously you can.

THEO

No.

(beat)

FAITH

Are you trying to say-

(long beat)

Cause it's yours.

You know it's yours.

THEO

No, not...

FAITH

What?

(long pause)

THEO

I can't be around children.

FAITH

I don't understand what you're saying, just explain what you mean!

THEO

I'm trying!

(pause)

I'm saying I can't be around children. I...

FAITH

(gently) What?

(beat)

THEO

I might-

FAITH

You might...? What?

THEO

...Drop the baby, or-

FAITH

(relieved) You won't!

THEO

What if I hurt it?

FAITH

You're not going to hurt it. If I could survive my mother, our baby will be fine.

THEO

You don't know that.

FAITH

I know you!

(beat)

THEO

What if you don't?

(pause)

FAITH

What are you talking /about-

THEO

I can't be around kids!

(beat)

FAITH

Okay, I don't understand.

(pause)

THEO

I avoid them.

FAITH

What does that mean-

THEO

I don't walk by schools.

...

I don't go to parks.

...

I just...

(long beat)

I stay away from them as much as possible.

(long pause)

FAITH

Because...you're afraid you'll hurt them.

THEO

Yes.

(long pause)

FAITH

Have you...have you hurt a child before?

(long beat)

THEO

No.

(pause)

FAITH

Then why...

...

...

Do you want,
have you

...

wanted to?

(long pause)

Did someone hurt you?

(silence)

FAITH

If it was your own child...

...

...

...

If it was your own child

You wouldn't...?

(long silence)

They drove to the clinic in silence.

Theo offered to be in the room with Faith,

But she asked him to stay in the waiting area.

There was pain.

But it was so brief.

Clinical.

Almost routine.

Almost like having a cavity filled.

But not.

(singing)

I want to love you

Pretty Young Thing

You need some lovin'

Tender love and care

And I'll take you. . .

(beat)

FAITH

They didn't speak on the drive home.

They didn't speak at home.

Faith went to bed and stayed there for twenty four hours,
leaving only

...

leaving only when she was forced to.

...

...

When she passed. . .

...

...

She stayed in bed

closing her eyes tight as she had as a little girl

and trying desperately to conjure sleep that wouldn't come.
She stayed in bed until the next afternoon
when Theo sat beside her
for what seemed like an hour
and finally broke the silence by saying
the only thing he could think to say.

(beat)

THEO

You want ice cream?

(small beat. Faith nods. Fastfood 1 enters with two cups of ice cream.)

FASTFOOD 1

Oreo blizzard and a Heath Bar blizzard?

(She turns them both upside down to prove how thick they are and hands them to Faith and Theo)

(silence)

THEO

We should probably get married.

(long silence)

FAITH

What did you say?

THEO

I...I said,
We should-
We should probably get married.

(long pause)

FAITH

So...
So, I just-
...
So.
I just...

...

How am I supposed to respond to that?

Am I supposed to laugh?

Or cry?

Or push you into traffic and watch you get hit by a truck.

Preferably a very large truck?

An 18-wheeler going about eighty?

Cause right now I'm definitely leaning towards that option,

Cause I'm not crying.

A, I don't cry in public,

And B, if I start crying now I-

I'm not going to...

I mean.

...

...

I mean.

...

...

...

Is that supposed to be a proposal?

THEO

Yes.

...

No.

...

...

I don't know.

...

Yes?

FAITH

Okay...

THEO

Okay, yes?

FAITH

No!

No, Theo.

Not okay like yes.

(long pause)

THEO

So, is that a no?

FAITH

Theo.

...

We're in a Dairy Queen.

...

I mean-

You ever see the list of 100 most romantic places in Eatonton?

THEO

No.

FAITH

That because it doesn't fucking exist,

But if it did exist,

The Dairy Queen would not be on it!

Not even at the bottom.

And Jesus Christ, I just had-

...

I don't think now is the time or here is the place for that question.

THEO

So, that's not a no?

FAITH

...

...

...

It's a I think maybe we should have this conversation another day.

THEO

...

Got it.

FAITH

Miscarriage.

That's what she told the hens.

To which they replied-

HEN 2

Well, that just means you have a good excuse to try again.

FAITH

And

HEN 1

You're young. You got plenty of time.

FAITH

Time.

"Time heals all wounds"

Was a phrase Faith's mother had loved to use,
As if that were an excuse for wounding.

And it wasn't true.
Time didn't heal all wounds.
Some wounds get infected-
Turn red then yellow green,
Leak puss that smells like rot.

That's how Faith felt,
Like she was rotting.
Every time she picked up a ham or turkey,
And shaved the clammy mold of meat into thin slices,
She imagined-

Or maybe wished-
that it was her own flesh-

...

...

or on the worst days-
the flesh of her child-
that she was carving,
as if-
as if-
if only they were ground up,
the two of them,
and shaped into a mold,
if only she could shave them
into thin, thin slices,
transparent slices,
that melted in your hand the instant you touched them,
then they could both disappear,
into nothingness,
together.

There may be wounds that time heals.
There may.
But losing a child was not one of them.
Faith knows this.
Some wounds you simply have to live with,
even when they wake you every night
with a pain that burns so deep
you're certain it will kill you.

(Static)

THEO

Hey. Psst. Faith.

FAITH

It was right around the border between late and early.
Must have been two,
Maybe three in the morning.

THEO

Wake up.

FAITH

Theo is standing over her.

THEO

I need you to come with me.

FAITH

What time is it?

THEO

Come on. Get up.

FAITH

Theo, what in the- what's going on?

THEO

Put this on.

(Theo blindfolds Faith)

FAITH

Theo sat Faith on the edge of the bed,
Quickly shoved her feet into a pair of house shoes,
Took her by the hand.
As Theo led her out the front door,
And put her into his truck,
Faith tried to remember what she'd worn to bed,
An oversized t-shirt and sweatpants she thought.

Faith tried not to panic.
She tried not to let fear overtake her completely.
She focused on her breath and tried to keep track of
right turns,
left turns,
how far they were driving,
but she couldn't remember if it was one right, two left
or two right one left,
and she lost all track of time.
She couldn't say if they had been driving for five minutes or fifteen.

THEO

Almost there.

FAITH

Where's there?

(Pause)

Theo, where are we going?

(Pause)

The truck stopped.

Theo turned the engine off.

THEO

One second.

I'll be right back.

FAITH

...

...

Faith listened for clues,

Did she hear cars driving by?

Birds calling?

But she couldn't hear anything...

...

...

She knew she could lift the blindfold,

Peek.

For a moment she had an impulse to tear off the blindfold,
Throw open the door,
And run-
But fear stopped her.
If Faith was honest,
There was a large part of her
That did not want to see what awaited her.
Did not want to know what would happen if she tried to run.
Did not want to know what would happen if Theo caught her.
Did not want to admit that some part of her knew a night like this would come.

...

She waited,
Every part of her body paralyzed
Except for her heart
Which beat against her ribs like it was trying to escape.

...

...

The door opened.
Theo's hands reached for hers.
Faith's feet searched for the ground.

...

She could feel through her slippers that it was solid, hard.
Asphalt or concrete.
A street, or sidewalk, or parking lot.
A good sign.
She had been afraid of uneven rocks and dirt,
Dead leaves crunching beneath her feet
or sinking into mud,
She'd been afraid of woods.

THEO

Okay. I'm going to take the blindfold off.

(long beat)

FAITH

What Faith saw was disorienting-
Which wasn't particularly surprising,
Most things would be disorienting if you were woken from a fitful sleep at two thirty in
the morning,
Blindfolded,

And driven halfway across town-

...

But this was particularly so.

...

Faith first saw

A plastic table cloth,

Purple,

Which happened to be her favorite color,

Two candles,

Lit,

Casting a soft glow on a bouquet of flowers,

Two plastic flutes,

And a bottle of champagne,

All spread over a red metal table,

beneath a red umbrella,

beneath a large unlit sign that read-

DQ.

...

...

...

Theo had brought her to Dairy Queen.

(gets on his knee and pulls out a simple ring)

THEO

Faith, I'm an idiot.

And I'm fucked up.

Beyond fucked up-

I don't trust myself most days, much less anyone else.

But you-

...

You got in.

Somehow.

And I don't want to lose you.

You make me-

You make me...more.

...

...

I'm not good at this, but-

Faith, will you please marry me?

(small beat)

FAITH

That's better.

THEO

Is that a yes?

FAITH

...

...

That's a yes.

(silence.

THEO is emotional. They both are. They take each other in in a way they haven't in a while)

FAITH

*In a package of minutes there is this We.
How beautiful.*

(Silence as THEO tried to hold back tears)

THEO

You know I checked the list.

FAITH

What list?

THEO

The 100 Most Romantic Places in Eatonton.

FAITH

Oh yeah?

THEO

They actually added the Dairy Queen, number 37 even, can you believe it?

FAITH

As they drank champagne,
In the same spot they'd eaten Blizzards two weeks before,
Faith thought,
It's possible.

...

...

What is wrong

can become right.
A tablecloth and some flowers
can transform a tainted place
into sacred ground.
In that moment,
Faith-
Who never believed-
In that moment believed.

. . .
Faith believed
for an instant that
redemption is possible,
that we can be born again,
that a wound-
if properly dressed-
can...
if not heal,
at least hurt less,
at least not become infected.
A wound,
properly dressed,
could be lived with.
She could live with this.

She could live with this.

She could...

WOMAN

For richer, or for poorer,

THEO

For richer or for poorer

WOMAN

In sickness and in health,

THEO

In sickness and in health,

WOMAN

Until death do us part.

THEO

Until death do us part.

WOMAN

You may now kiss the bride.

(They kiss)

FAITH

Faith and Theo were married in the backroom of the Eatonton courthouse. Theo wore a suit from Goodwill that was a size too small. And Faith wore a coral sundress. She even splurged on a new pair of sandals and painted her toenails for the first time in her life.

THEO

How does it feel to be my wife?

(Faith smiles at Theo, unable to answer- overwhelmed with joy? Doubt? Both?)

THEO

You know...
You know you saved me, right?

(silence)

FAITH

The summer after Faith and Theo married was a really long, hot and humid summer. The kind where you step out of the shower and immediately start sweating. It was October before the heat broke, A Thursday. Faith remembers because Theo typically had Thursdays off, but she worked. It was overcast and the first day under eighty degrees since April. Faith decided to walk down to the park, This park, This bench right beside the playground, to eat her turkey sandwich and chips-

And there was Theo.

Sitting on this bench.
Watching.

Faith ate her sandwich in the break room.

And there were other-

Not incidents-

There were other times Faith had questions.

THEO

What are you asking me?

FAITH

Nothing, I-

I don't know.

I'm just saying I saw you come out of the break room today and there was a child with you.

THEO

A boy.

FAITH

Yes.

THEO

I was showing him the bathroom. He was wandering around alone looking for it.

FAITH

Okay.

(beat)

THEO

You don't believe me.

FAITH

No, I do, I just-

THEO

You just what?

FAITH

I just...

THEO

If you have something to ask me stop fucking around and ask me?

FAITH

...

THEO

Ask me.

FAITH

...

THEO

Ask me- Did I take that little boy in the bathroom and-

FAITH

That's not what I'm-

THEO

Bullshit. That's bullshit. Don't accuse me of doing something like that and then treat me like I'm stupid. You either ask or you don't ask, but don't fucking insult me.

FAITH

...

(pause)

THEO

I keep myself in control.

I do.

And having fucking one person in my life that I know is on my side,
one person that sees some good in me,
that trusts me-
makes that easier.

So, so,

...

So, when I find out that person doesn't actually trust me-

FAITH

I do.

THEO

Do you?

FAITH

Yes, I do.

I just...

THEO

What?

FAITH

I just...I want you to be careful.

(pause)

THEO

I'm going for a walk.

FAITH

No, you can't walk away every time you get- I'm just trying to understand!

THEO

Understand what?

FAITH

You. This. How it-

...

How I can help you.

...

Please, just stay.

Talk to me.

Please.

THEO

Just believe me.

Believe me.

...

I'll be back.

(Theo starts to walk away. Stops with his back to Faith and hers to him)

FAITH

How will I know?

How will I know?

How will I know if he's thinking of me

I try to phone but I'm too shy, can't speak

Falling in love is so bittersweet

This love is strong, why do I feel weak?

THEO

Believe that you saved me.

FAITH

Faith reaches into her pocket and takes out the small ball of pink fabric.

(She unrolls fabric to reveal a child's pink sock with small ballerinas on it.)

She was doing laundry when she found it.

She always checked Theo's pockets for Kleenex or change or gum.

And Faith found this in the back pocket of a pair of his jeans.

Tiny Dancers.

Little Ballerinas.

NEWS 1

A story out of Eatonton today.

FAITH

Faith was cooking when she first heard Janaiyah's name.

The news was on in the background-

Faith wasn't paying attention, until the words

NEWS 1

"Missing"

FAITH

and

NEWS 1

"girl"

FAITH

caught her ear.

She walked into the living room just in time to see a video of Janaiyah jumping rope.

It was shaky.

Caught on a phone while a woman laughed.

NEWS 2

Thank you, Rebekah. Hopefully she'll return to her family safely soon.

NEWS 1

Authorities still have hope that she will. And if you have any information regarding the location of Janaiyah Davis, please reach out to the Putnam County Sheriffs' Depart-

FAITH

Faith turned off the television and went back to cooking.

(Theo enters)

THEO

Smells good. What's for dinner?

FAITH

Meatloaf. Green beans. Rolls.

THEO

What can I do?

(beat. Faith looks at Theo.)

THEO

What?

FAITH

Kiss me.

THEO

Is that all you need?

FAITH

Yup.

(Theo kisses Faith, and then attacks her with kisses all over. Faith begins to cry.)

THEO

Hey. Hey! What's wrong?

FAITH

Nothing. Nothing's wrong.

(Theo holds her.)

THEO

It's okay. It's all going to be okay.

FAITH

Faith couldn't escape her.

She avoided the news, but Janaiyah's smile haunted her in the missing person signs hung all over town.

Faith tried to steer conversations anywhere but there, but the Hens could talk of nothing else.

HEN 2

Did you hear that a psychic from Atlanta wants to come help the detectives find her?

HEN 1

What the heck good is a psychic going to do?

HEN 2

Well, what good is the Podunk sheriff's office doing? Seems to me they could use all the help they can get.

HEN 1

Hold on. I'm getting an intuition. Stop. Stop. Be still...A vision just came to me. Someone in this store knows where she is...No. Someone in this store kidnapped her! He is tall and skinny. And, and...it's becoming clear now...he took her because, he took her because he couldn't stand that someone in town had a waist that was smaller than his! JOEY! What did you do?!

HEN 2

Uh-hunh. You say I'm sick in the head? You're sick.

HEN 1

We're both sick.

FAITH

Cluck, cluck, clucking all day long.

Janaiyah, Janaiyah, Janaiyah.

The name hung on every lip.

...

...

Except hers.

And except Theo's.

THEO

Dinner is good.

FAITH

Thanks.

THEO

How was work?

FAITH

Good. You?

THEO

Yeah, good.

FAITH

A crack formed between them.

Each day it seemed to widen.

And deepen.

Faith traded shifts so that she would always open.

Using that as an excuse to leave the house before Theo woke up,

And to go to bed early.

To go to bed early and pretend to sleep.

For a week Faith had lain in bed,

eyes closed,

listening to the sounds of the house.

She listened for proof.

She listened afraid she might find it.

She listened afraid she might hear the front door open and close,

She listened afraid she might hear his truck roar to life,

Afraid of where he might be going if he left,

What he might doing...

But he never left.

She only heard the television cycle from sportscasters to laugh tracks,

from pundits to the swelling orchestras of old movie scores.

Never staying on one long.

Changing the channel.

Changing the channel.

Changing the channel.

Was this proof?

Was this proof of something unsettled in him?
Or just proof that there's nothing worth watching on TV?

Eventually the TV was turned off,
And she listened,
counted his steps to the bedroom.
Listened as he gently opened the door.
Listened as he brushed his teeth in the dark not to wake her.
Listened as he eased himself into bed.
Felt his warm breath on her shoulder,
His hands on her waist,
And his lips pressed against the skin of her back.

What else had these hands done?
What else had these lips pressed against?

Faith listened for his breath to deepen and fall into a steady rhythm, which it always did.
So quickly.

Could a man who slept like this do something like that?

Faith listened afraid she would hear him cry in his sleep.
Afraid that in sleep his subconscious would belie him and that the name that was on
everyone else's lips would fall from his.

It never did.

Was that proof?
Of his innocence?
Or of the opposite?
Of a deep-seated and irredeemable coldness?

A week of sleepless nights.

A week of waiting.

A week of inconclusive evidence.

Because a sock...
One sock.
The sock-
It could be anyone's sock.
Theo could have found it.
He could have bought it.

He *could* have.
She wanted more than a sock.

And she lived in fear of getting what she wanted.

And she felt that fear corroding her.

HEN 1

You feeling alright?

FAITH

(nods) Just tired. Sorry.

HEN 1

No need to apologize for being human. Maybe you and Theo should think about taking a vacation. Mike and I went to Helen for Oktoberfest about this time last year. The man decided to take that- 23 and Me- one of those DNA tests things and turns out he's 1/16th German. Said he wanted to connect with his "people". He was one of about three black guys in the whole damn town, and the only one in lederhosen. I didn't think that man could squeeze into a pair, but he proved me wrong.

FAITH

Yeah. Maybe that would be fun.

(beat)

HEN 1

You and Theo doing okay?

FAITH

Yeah. Yeah, of course.

HEN 1

Listen, tell me to shut up at any point, but...marriage is hard. All that puppies and rainbows Lifetime movie white people crap is bull. I couldn't begin to count the number of times I've almost left Mike. I can tell you it's fewer than the times I've almost killed him. But just as I'm about to put the pillow over his stupid face and hold it down until he stops kicking, I think- he's a good man. At his heart. Somewhere down in there. When he remembers. Is a good man. Which isn't saying much cause a man is still a man, but the good ones? Those are rare. And in this town? Really freaking rare. Theo- whatever baggage he's got- he's a good one. You can tell. Whatever y'all got going on, I'm sure Mike and I have been through worse. Don't give up on him.

FAITH

And then...

HEN 2

Jesus H. Christ.

FAITH

Then Faith saw her.

HEN 2

That's her.

FAITH

It was mid-afternoon,
On a Tuesday that Faith saw her.
A slow time at the store during the school year.

Faith didn't know who she was,
And yet, there was something she recognized in her.
The bags under her eyes,
the weight in each step,
the seeing without seeing.
Faith recognized another sleepless woman.

HEN 2

That's who she was living with.

FAITH

Who?

HEN 2

The missing girl. That's her grandmother.

FAITH

Faith watched the girl's grandmother walk past-
Watched the woman with eyes cast down at the floor,
As if she were counting tiles,
As if she were avoiding Medusa's stare,
As if eye contact would turn her to stone,
Or worse,
Release the flood she had dammed up inside of her,
Reduce her to a puddle on the floor.

Faith watched this woman bent over her shopping cart as if her granddaughter's body was wrapped over her shoulders.

And that weight...

Faith knew that weight-

That all too familiar weight-

It was

Loss, yes,

But the weight was also shame,

The shame of taking in breath,

When the one you were supposed to protect

lies breathless,

motionless...

somewhere unknown,

unreachable.

And the weight was blame,

The weight of all the hours spent thinking up new should haves

And could haves

And would haves

had it not been for this or that.

All those shoulds and woulds and coulds,

The big ones and the small ones,

That should have,

Could have,

Would have

Saved the child.

And the weight was the silence.

...

...

Not being able to speak about any of it.

The unbearable constipation of grief.

...

God, Faith wanted to tell this woman,

I know.

I know the weight you're carrying around.

Me too.

Talk to me.

And as if the woman heard Faith's thoughts

Their eyes met

For a moment.

And Faith watched the woman steer her cart right toward her.

HEN 2

Oh, hell no. I'm not talking to her.

HEN 1

She's not contagious.

FAITH

I got her.

(The Hens back away. GRANDMOTHER appears)

GRANDMOTHER

Afternoon.

FAITH

What can I help you with?

GRANDMOTHER

Ham. Please.

FAITH

Any brand you like?

GRANDMOTHER

Store brand's fine.

FAITH

Honey-baked? Smoked?

GRANDMOTHER

Honey-baked.

FAITH

Okay. How would you like me to slice it?

GRANDMOTHER

(beat as Grandmother is overwhelmed with a memory of Janaiyah rolling thin slices of ham into straws and drink her Coke through them. She holds back the flood.)

...

...

...

Thin sliced.

FAITH

How much?

GRANDMOTHER

A pound.

FAITH

Yes, ma'am.

GRANDMOTHER

Wait- how much did I say?

FAITH

A pound?

GRANDMOTHER

Half that. Sorry, I- *(another beat to hold back the flood)* Half a pound.

FAITH

Yes, ma'am.

(long beat)

GRANDMOTHER

Gimme the whole pound.

(The weight of the grandmother's hope lands on Faith. They are silent for a long time.)

FAITH

(almost a whisper) I know.

GRANDMOTHER

Excuse me?

FAITH

I know. What you're...I- *(long beat)* I lost a child.

(Long beat as the Grandmother contains her rage/decides how much energy she wants to spend on Faith. A quiet rage wins out.)

GRANDMOTHER

I'm certain I don't know what you mean.

FAITH

I...I'm sorry, I thought you-

GRANDMOTHER

You thought I what?

FAITH

I thought you-

GRANDMOTHER

You thought that I was the woman who lost a granddaughter?

FAITH

Yes.

GRANDMOTHER

No. I am not the woman who lost a granddaughter.

FAITH

I'm sorry-

GRANDMOTHER

I've lost things in my life- TV remotes, letters from men I loved, a pair of earrings my mother gave me. But I would have to be a goddamn fool to lose a child. Do I look like a goddamn fool to you?

FAITH

No, ma'am.

GRANDMOTHER

That's right. I didn't lose my baby girl. My baby girl was taken from me. Was your child taken from you? *(long beat)* Was she?

(Pause Faith stands, mouth open, unable to answer)

GRANDMOTHER

That's what I thought. Until you have a baby stolen from you, don't you dare try to tell me you know the first thing about what I am going through. *(long beat)* You understand me?

FAITH

Yes, ma'am.

(long beat)

GRANDMOTHER

Keep the ham.

(Grandmother walks away into the darkness)

FAITH

That night Faith drove.

Drove and drove.

Drove and thought of never coming back,

While the woman's question ricocheted around her head.

Was your child taken?

Was Faith's child taken?

Was her baby girl taken?

And if the answer was yes-

Then who took her?

And...

...

...

Did the same man that took my baby girl take yours?

We don't know.

We don't know.

What we don't know can't hurt us.

Who said that?

For weeks, Faith had been afraid that she would find evidence confirming her worst suspicions about the man that she loved

And in an instant...

That soul-crushing, love-smothering fear was suddenly dwarfed

By a fear infinitely worse:

The fear of not knowing,

of never knowing.

The thought of never knowing-

for certain-

was too awful to consider.

She turned her Honda around,
and drove to the last place that Janaiyah was seen alive.

And so here Faith sits,
in the park,
with the molding stuffed animals,
the fading notes,
the wilting flowers,
and the sock.
She had hoped to find some connection to the sock with tiny ballerinas-
A bear in a tutu,
Ballet slippers,
Pictures from a dance recital.
But there is nothing.

And so Faith reviews what she does know.
For certain.
Which is very little.

Faith knows. . .

Faith knows for certain-

Faith knows that the girl could have wandered off, gotten lost.
Faith knows that she could still turn up unharmed and alive.
Faith knows that to the best of her knowledge, there's no proof that anyone actually
took her.

. . .

Faith knows...
For certain...

It could happen again.

If it happened.

But she doesn't know it happened.
She doesn't know for certain.
There's no proof this sock is Janaiyah's.
There's no proof that Theo...

...

Faith knows for certain that she could ask.

...

(Theo appears from the dark)

Faith could ask Theo.

She could.

And however he answered,

True or not,

She would know if he was lying.

She could know the truth.

And if the truth is that he didn't do anything?

She would have destroyed what they have.

He would leave her.

...

(Grandmother appears from the dark)

Faith could ask the girl's grandmother.

Is this her sock?

Is this Janaiyah's sock?

...

...

Can you tell me, please, that this is not her sock?

And what if she couldn't say conclusively?

What if she wasn't sure?

Her grandmother would go to the police.

They would ask Faith why she hadn't brought it sooner.

They would take one look at Theo and decide he was guilty.

They would dig into Theo's past.

They would find anything they could to use against him.

And if they did that...

If they did that...

she might never know if he did or if he didn't,

because they would use one little sock to say that caught the guy who did it,

whether or not he actually did it-

whether or not there was even an it to begin with-

...

But what if her grandmother says yes.
Conclusively.
It is her sock.
What if-

...

...

...

Faith sits in the park,
with the molding stuffed animals,
the fading notes,
the wilting flowers,
and the sock.
And Faith realizes that what we know,
What we know to be true,
The things we truly know for certain,
We could hold them in the palm of our hands,
Maybe on the pad of our index finger.
Most of what we think we know for certain,
Or maybe what we pretend to think we know for certain,
We actually just believe,
And that's not even accurate-
We make the choice to believe,
No- we make the choice to pretend to believe.
What we think of as real,
our personal reality,
is based on a thousand,
a hundred thousand daily decisions
Of what we choose to pretend to believe is real.

(long beat)

Does Faith choose to pretend to know that Theo is innocent
Or choose to pretend to know that he's not?

*(Faith's cell phone vibrates.
Theo moves closer to Faith with each vibration.
Faith looks at it.
It vibrates again.
It vibrates again.)*

*It vibrates again.
It vibrates again.
Faith does not answer.*

Long pause.

FAITH

The question the girl's grandmother asked rings in her head again-
Was your child taken?

Yes...

Her baby girl was taken.

And she could pretend that her baby was taken by Theo,
But to say that wouldn't be real.

Faith made a choice.

Faith chose...

Faith chose...

Faith chose...

Faith chooses...

(Faith takes the small, pink sock. Gets out her lighter and lights it on fire. It burns slowly. She holds it until it's too hot and then drops it on the ground. Grandmother fades into the darkness.)

FAITH

(singing slowly as Theo stands behind her)

Some boys take a beautiful girl

And hide her away from the rest of the world

I want to be the one to walk in the sun

Oh girls they want to have fun

Oh girls just want to have fun

That's all they really want

Some fun

When the working day is done

Oh girls, they want to have fun

Oh girls just want to have...

END OF PLAY