

Revelations

A short play
By JuCoby Johnson

jucoby.johnson@gmail.com
(904)861-5224



“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death; neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” – Revelation 21:4

Characters

Mahalia- 20's-30's, Black, Trans Woman, She/Her/Hers

Curtis- 50's-60's, Black, Cis Man, He/Him/His

Valerie- 50's-60's, Black, Cis Woman, She/Her/Hers

Setting

Minneapolis, MN

June 2020

SCENE

Late evening

We hear the wind as it blows through

Distant chatter

And the occasional car passing by

A burnt-out building

Burned beyond recognition or memory of its former purpose

Mahalia stands before it

She takes a deep breath

In

And out

We hear wood banging against wood

Glass crunching under footsteps

And a man emerges from the rubble carrying a small box

He tries to step over the carnage that was once an entrance

He trips

Mahalia catches him

MAHALIA

Careful!

She helps him up

MAHALIA

What are you doing??

CURTIS

I'm fine.

MAHALIA

You shouldn't be in there.

CURTIS

I'm fine.

MAHALIA

It's dangerous in there!

Anything could happen.

Especially with your back-

CURTIS

My back is fine.

I'm fine.

Could you please just...

He gestures for her to give him some space

She does

MAHALIA

Yeah, sorry.

You sure you're okay?

CURTIS

(re: the wreckage) Well...all things considered.

Here, take this.

He hands her the box

And brushes ash from his shirt and pants

They make eye contact for the first time

MAHALIA

Hey, Daddy.

CURTIS

Hey, sweetheart.

They take each other in

It's been a long time

CURTIS

Didn't expect to see you here.

MAHALIA

What do you mean?

Of course, I'm here.

CURTIS

"Of course", huh?

So, it only takes a burning building for you to come around?

MAHALIA
Daddy...

CURTIS
Nah, I'm just asking.
Been a long time, hasn't it?

MAHALIA
Can we not?
I just got here.
Ain't been here ten minutes and you already wanna start.

CURTIS
I ain't tryna start nothing.
I'm asking a question.

MAHALIA
Do you want me to go?
'Cause I'll go if you want me to.
I came here for you.

CURTIS
I didn't ask for that.

MAHALIA
Fine.

*She places the box on the ground
And begins to leave*

CURTIS
Wait!
Wait.
I'm sorry.
I'm sorry,
I just...
Please.
Don't go.

MAHALIA
You gon' behave?

CURTIS
Yeah.

MAHALIA
You promise?

CURTIS
I promise.

MAHALIA
Pinky promise?

Mahalia smiles
Curtis laughs

CURTIS
Get over here, girl.

MAHALIA
Answer the question.

CURTIS
Come on, now.

MAHALIA
Answer!

CURTIS
Pinky promise!
No come here.

Mahalia goes to him
They lock pinkys
Curtis presses his mouth to his hand and blows
Mahalia does not

CURTIS
You have to blow.

MAHALIA
I don't know if that's a good idea.

CURTIS
Why not?

MAHALIA
There *is* still a pandemic going on.
Covid's a bad bitch.

CURTIS
Is she now?

MAHALIA
You damn straight.

CURTIS
Well, it don't count if you don't blow.

MAHALIA
Can't you make an exception?

CURTIS
Never.

*Mahalia relents
And blows*

CURTIS
Now, it's a deal.
Where you livin' now?
Everything quiet by you?

MAHALIA
Yeah, it's been alright.
I'm in St. Paul now.
In the artist lofts near Midway.

There's activity a couple blocks in either direction.
But my stretch has been quiet.
I'd ask how things are over here,
But that seems like a dumb question.

CURTIS
There are no dumb questions.

MAHALIA
I'm sorry, what?

CURTIS
You heard me.

MAHALIA
Wow.
It really has been a long time.
(beat)
Where's Mom?

CURTIS
Last time I checked, she was down the block helping Tonya clean.

MAHALIA
They got Tonya's place too?

CURTIS
Not as bad as this.
A few smashed windows.
She'll be okay.

MAHALIA
Good.
Do you think she'll text you when she's coming back?

CURTIS
Tonya?
Probably not.
She ain't never even pretended to like me.

MAHALIA
I meant Mom.

CURTIS
It was a joke.
Couldn't you tell from my tone?

MAHALIA
How many times do I have to tell you?
You're not funny.

CURTIS
Funnier than you.

MAHALIA
You wish.

CURTIS
Whatever you have to tell yourself to go to sleep at night.

Mahalia chuckles

CURTIS
What?

MAHALIA
Sleep?
Who's she?

Curtis smiles
And takes in the wreckage once more

CURTIS
You can say that again.

MAHALIA
Sleep?
Who's she?

*They look at each other
And share a smile*

CURTIS
You look good.
Yellow's a good color on you.

MAHALIA
Every color is a good color on me.

CURTIS
You ain't never lied.

*A series of small beeps come from Mahalia's pocket
An alert
She retrieves her phone and checks the message*

CURTIS
What's that?

MAHALIA
Curfew alert.
I should head home soon.

CURTIS
What time is it?

MAHALIA
Eight forty-five

CURTIS
Curfew's not 'til Ten.
Stay a little while longer.
Play a game with me.

MAHALIA
A game?

CURTIS
Yeah!

It's called "Revelations or 2020?"

MAHALIA

What is that??

CURTIS

I'll give you a scenario

And you tell me whether it happened in the book of Revelations

Or in the year 2020.

MAHALIA

How did you come up with this?

CURTIS

I heard it on a podcast!

MAHALIA

A podcast?

CURTIS

Yeah!

It's called "Daddy Issues".

These two comedians talk about fatherhood and pop culture.

MAHALIA

When did you start listening to podcasts?

CURTIS

Like I said, been a long time.

Now,

You gon' play with me or not?

MAHALIA

(beat)

Ten minutes.

Then I gotta go.

CURTIS

That's all I need.

You ready?

MAHALIA
(amused)
Yeah, let's go.

CURTIS
Alright!
Number one:
"A lone man shall ride through the marketplace on a horse of black and white."

MAHALIA
What??

CURTIS
"A lone man shall-

MAHALIA
No, I heard you.
I'm just so confused.

CURTIS
Revelations or 2020?

MAHALIA
Okay, okay!
Gimme a second to think.

Silence
Cars pass by
Curtis begins to sing the waiting music from "Jeopardy"

MAHALIA
Don't rush me!

CURTIS
You're the one who said you only have ten minutes!

MAHALIA
Fine!
Revelations!

CURTIS
(makes a buzzer sound)
Wrong!
2020.

MAHALIA
Are you kidding me?!

CURTIS
The dread head cowboy out in Chicago.
It was in the news!

MAHALIA
I heard he stole a police horse.

CURTIS
Nope, it was his horse.
Brothas ride horses too.
On to number two:
“Unleashed is a white horse whose crowned rider equipped with a bow goes out to conquer.”

MAHALIA
This is absurd.

CURTIS
Revelations or 2020?

MAHALIA
I don't even believe in God, Dad.
I wouldn't know Revelations from Harry Potter.

CURTIS
All those years of Bible study and you don't know Revelations??
It's the most exciting part!

MAHALIA
All those years of Bible study taught me two things:
God don't like me
And I don't need God.

CURTIS

(gently, void of preaching)

I think everyone needs God.

Which one or *ones* you choose?

Well, that's up to you.

But we all need God in some form.

MAHALIA

(slightly annoyed, but not offended)

Okay, Dad.

CURTIS

Now...

Revelations or 2020??

MAHALIA

Don't you have some other podcast game we could play?

CURTIS

Oh come on, David!

We're having fun!

Silence

He realizes his mistake

CURTIS

I mean Mahalia.

Silence

CURTIS

I'm sorry, sweetheart.

I...

MAHALIA

My name isn't David.

CURTIS

I know.

MAHALIA
Do you?

CURTIS
I do.
Your name is Mahalia.
Mahalia after the street your grandmother lived on.
Mahalia, my daughter.
You've been Mahalia for three years now.

MAHALIA
I've always been Mahalia.

CURTIS
Yes.
Right.
I'm sorry.

MAHALIA
I think I should go.

CURTIS
Sweetheart, please.

MAHALIA
I'm not your sweetheart!
Stop!

CURTIS
I'm sorry.

MAHALIA
Tell Mom I said hi.
Or don't.
Who cares?

CURTIS
Let me drive you.

MAHALIA
I have a car.

CURTIS
When'd you get a car?

MAHALIA
Long time, remember?

*Mahalia begins to leave
Curtis digs deep
And finds the words he's never had*

CURTIS
I WOKE UP THIS MORNING IN TERROR

Mahalia stops

CURTIS
"Trans woman attacked in Minneapolis"
That's all I saw on Facebook.
I scrolled and scrolled.
No name.
No location.
No picture.
Just:
"Trans woman attacked in Minneapolis"
My heart leapt into my throat.
The ground opened up and swallowed me whole.
The sky unleashed a downpour
That reduced my existence to nothing but tears.
And I wanted to text you
To call you
But I was too afraid.
Too afraid of the black hole that would grow
And grow
If you didn't respond.
So, I chose not to know.
I swallowed my emotions and choked them down until I knew for sure.
I couldn't talk to your Mother about it.

Even the word “trans” leads to an argument.
A hurling of insults.
A declaration of divorce.
So, I kept quiet and went on about the day.
Cleaning up.
Moving forward.
Then I saw you here.
I saw you before you saw me.
I grabbed that box
That box being the last memory of what this place was.
I walked out
And I tripped.
On purpose.
Because I knew that if I did
You would catch me.
 (beat)
I’m sorry, Mahalia.
I’m sorry.
I-

*Mahalia goes to him
He wraps her in an embrace*

MAHALIA
Shhhhh.
Okay.
Okay.
Breathe.

He does

MAHALIA
Let’s just...
Reset.

*They come out of the hug
But stay close*

CURTIS
It’s good to see you.

MAHALIA

It's good to see you too.

CURTIS

Do you know her?

MAHALIA

Not all trans people know each other.

CURTIS

I know

But

Do you?

MAHALIA

I do.

I can't visit her because of Covid.

But I got a text from her roommate saying she's stable.

CURTIS

Good.

That's good.

MAHALIA

She'll pull through.

She's been through worse.

CURTIS

I'm scared for you all the time.

MAHALIA

I'm scared for you too.

All the time.

(beat)

Since everything's been happening

I've thought about protesting every day.

Keywords: "thought about".

I wake up and I say

"Today's the day.

The day I get involved.

The days I scream
And march
And revolt
For my existence.
Mine *and* yours.”
 (beat)
And then I just lay there.
Frozen.
Paralyzed.
Because the truth is,
For people like me,
If the police don't get us
Someone else will.
Possibly one of our own.
And I can't risk it.
I should.
I know I should.
But I want to live so bad.
All I want is to be alive.
 (beat)
Am I bad?

CURTIS

No.
No, you're not bad.
You're afraid.
And that's okay.
But,
If you don't mind my advice,
Don't stay frozen for too long.
We need you.
Because, you may be afraid now,
But I know for a fact that you're the bravest person I know.
Much, much braver than I am.

MAHALIA

 (beat)
I'm sorry about the store.

CURTIS

Oh, it's okay.

The store can be rebuilt.

I can rebuild this.

Breathe new life into this.

And that's what I'll do.

Rebuild.

Survive.

Endure.

MAHALIA

Not thrive?

CURTIS

Eh,

Well...

We'll see.

A moment

They stand and gaze at the wreckage before them

A new beginning

MAHALIA

Daddy?

CURTIS

Yes, sweetheart?

MAHALIA

When did you get a Facebook?

They share a laugh

CURTIS

Girl, I been had a Facebook.

I'm out here.

I may be old but I'm out here.

In fact, there should be friend request from me waiting for you.

MAHALIA

I'm not accepting that.

CURTIS

What?

MAHALIA

You heard me.

I'm not accepting it.

CURTIS

Why not?

MAHALIA

You wanna see twerk videos?

And me dancing in cages?

CURTIS

I most certainly do not.

MAHALIA

Didn't think so.

CURTIS

(beat)

In cages?

MAHALIA

Don't kink shame me.

CURTIS

I would never!

I don't even know what that means.

Mahalia laughs

Silence

A woman approaches

It's Valerie

They don't see her

VALERIE

Hey.

*They turn and see her
Mahalia freezes*

MAHALIA
Hey, Mom.

*Cars pass by
Chatter in the distance*

End of play