

**Simply Selma**  
**By Jonathan Joy**

Scene 1

*(Living room, dining room, and front porch of a quaint Southern home.)*

**SELMA:** *(offstage)* Mama...mama...mama!

*(MAMA enters through the front door.)*

**MAMA:** Honey, I'm right here.

*(SELMA enters into the living room.)*

**SELMA:** Don't do that!

**MAMA:** Do what?

**SELMA:** Don't run off like that. You had me worried sick.

**MAMA:** Oh, honey, calm down. You worry about me too much.

**SELMA:** Where have you been?

**MAMA:** I went for a walk.

**SELMA:** Where?

**MAMA:** I went down to the edge of the main road and back. It must be almost a mile. The doctor says I need to get more exercise.

**SELMA:** Good. It sure is a beautiful day, isn't it?

**MAMA:** Yes, it sure is.

**SELMA:** I have to get ready for work. Now don't wonder off again.

**MAMA:** It smells wonderful in here.

**SELMA:** I've fixed your favorite for lunch. Look.

**MAMA:** Oh dear, you shouldn't have.

**SELMA:** Fried green tomatoes, sweet potatoes, with apple sauce and cottage cheese.

**MAMA:** You have to mix the applesauce and cottage cheese together.

**SELMA:** I know.

**MAMA:** It's delicious.

**SELMA:** You're welcome.

**MAMA:** Do you remember Helen Hurst? She lived down the street from that old house Aunt Bernice had on Colley.

**SELMA:** I can't think of her.

**MAMA:** That's been so long ago. You probably don't remember her.

**SELMA:** No, I don't.

**MAMA:** She died.

**SELMA:** She did?

**MAMA:** And Harold Keeney?

**SELMA:** Now that name does sound...

**MAMA:** Dead.

**SELMA:** I'm sorry, Mama.

**MAMA:** It seems like everybody's dying.

**SELMA:** Well, you are a spry young woman and you don't have to worry about that for a long time. Do you hear?

**MAMA:** Yes, honey. It's nice of you to humor me.

**SELMA:** Now, eat your lunch.

**MAMA:** Okay. Thank you so much.

**SELMA:** I'm going to go get ready for work.

**MAMA:** Oh no, don't. Sit down here and have a bite with me. It has been such a long time since we have had a late lunch together.

**SELMA:** Mama, we'll have lunch together tomorrow. Right now, I have to get ready for work.

**MAMA:** Could you turn the air conditioning up? It's blue blazes in here.

**SELMA:** The reason it is blue blazes in here is because you insist on leaving that damn door open.

**MAMA:** I like the fresh air.

**SELMA:** Let me get your drink.

**MAMA:** What's that?

**SELMA:** Carrot juice.

**MAMA:** Oh, honey. No.

**SELMA:** It's good for you, and it's colorful. Drink up.

**MAMA:** Do you have time to take me to the store tomorrow, Selma? If you're busy that's okay, but I would really like to get out tomorrow.

**SELMA:** I'd love to.

**MAMA:** I don't like to have to ask you. It reminds me of the times when I had to drive my mother around to the store, the bank, and the post office. It reminds me of that, and I don't like it one bit.

**SELMA:** Don't be silly. I love to take you out.

**MAMA:** It's going to be a nice day tomorrow.

**SELMA:** It might rain.

**MAMA:** No, I was watching the weather channel. It's going to be nice.

**SELMA:** How is your lunch?

**MAMA:** What?

**SELMA:** I said, how is your lunch?

**MAMA:** Oh, it's delicious. Are you getting ready for work?

**SELMA:** Yes, I'm trying. Do you need anything?

**MAMA:** Maybe you could stay home today. Or maybe you could be a little late. It's only a bit after two now. You could be just a little late, couldn't you?

**SELMA:** I can't be late, Mama. I was late the other day, remember?

**MAMA:** When?

**SELMA:** The hospital?

**MAMA:** Oh, yes. Did I make you late that day?

**SELMA:** Don't worry about it. But, I can't be late again. Danny gets so mad when I'm late. I know I put him in a tight spot. He makes me stay over. Do you remember that night when I got home so late?

**MAMA:** Oh God, yes I remember. You didn't get home until after three in the morning and I was so worried about you. I sat up in my bed, sure that you had been killed.

**SELMA:** Oh, mama.

**MAMA:** I mean it. I worry about you working in a place like that. It's no place for a nice young lady like you.

**SELMA:** Stop right there.

**MAMA:** It's no kind of honest work. You are such a smart young lady.

**SELMA:** Mama, we are not going to have this conversation again. As soon as you can show me some other line of work that pays me over two hundred dollars a night I'll jump at it. But, until then, I'm comfortable right where I am.

**MAMA:** If it's the money, honey, I don't think it's worth it.

**SELMA:** Of course, it's the money. You think I want to wait tables in some dive, and bust my ass for half of what I make now?

**MAMA:** No, but I wish you could...

**SELMA:** No, that wouldn't do either of us any good, would it? Someone has to keep you living in the lap of luxury, and that's my job.

**MAMA:** The lap of luxury for sure. Fit for a queen, this place is.

**SELMA:** It is your highness.

**MAMA:** It's a bit fancy for an old woman like me. Maybe we should sell this place.

**SELMA:** Don't even think about it.

**MAMA:** I said, maybe we should sell this place.

**SELMA:** And move where? You've been in this house for over forty years. All of your memories are right here. I grew up in this house. I used to crawl around in that yard, when I wasn't old enough to walk. Do you remember that?

**MAMA:** Of all the things I don't remember, I thank God I remember that. You were such an adorable baby. I'm so lucky to have a daughter like you, Selma.

**SELMA:** Thank you, Mama.

**MAMA:** That's why I worry so much about you. When I think about you working in a place like that. Every day when you walk out that door I start worrying and I don't stop until you get back. And you always get home so late.

**SELMA:** Mama...

**MAMA:** Maybe you could call off today. Tell your boss you had to take me to the hospital again.

**SELMA:** And have him force me to stay past three again? No way.

**MAMA:** Oh, stay. You know, I'm going to have a visitor today.

**SELMA:** You are?

**MAMA:** I think that nice young man who moved in down the hill is going to come to visit again today. He came up last week when the yard needed mowing. Do you remember that? I told you about him.

**SELMA:** I'm sure you did.

**MAMA:** It was beginning to look like a jungle out there, and lord knows I can't mow it anymore, and you...well you're too busy.

**SELMA:** Yes, I remember. It was very nice of him to do that.

**MAMA:** And the grass is getting high again. He said he would be back before it got out of control. He said he would mow it again. He was such a nice young man. I took him an iced tea, and we sat on the back porch and talked for over an hour. It's been awhile since I've had company. Besides my wonderful daughter, of course. Yes, he certainly is a nice young man.

**SELMA:** I'm sure he is.

**MAMA:** And single.

**SELMA:** Yes, mama, I believe you mentioned that more than once.

**MAMA:** Oh, did I?

**SELMA:** You did.

**MAMA:** Oh, I don't recall that.

**SELMA:** You old liar, sure you do.

**MAMA:** Well, I just thought if you met a nice young man like that...established as he is...he runs his own business, you know?

**SELMA:** Yes, you mentioned that, too.

**MAMA:** He'd be able to take good care of you. You wouldn't have to go to that awful place, anymore. You could get married and have babies.

**SELMA:** Oh, stop!

**MAMA:** What?

**SELMA:** I don't need any man to take care of me, Mama. I've been taking fine care of myself for a while now, haven't I? I take care of both of us, and we don't need a man coming in here and screwing everything up. We have a nice arrangement, you and I. I like things the way they are. And I like my job. It is not an awful place, as you call it. Get married, and have babies. You say that like it's a woman's job. Like that's my only purpose here on Earth is to get married and have babies. Well, what about my own life, Mama? What about

what I want to do? I want to go back to school and run my own business. Do I need a man for that?

**MAMA:** I just want you to be happy, dear. I'm not going to be around forever, you know, and I hate the thought of you being alone.

**SELMA:** There are many things more frightening than being alone.

**MAMA:** Things are so different today. When I was your age, I didn't have the choices or the freedom that you have.

**SELMA:** I know, mama. You did well for yourself, I'd say. I mean look at me. You ended up with a wonderful and vivacious daughter.

**MAMA:** I certainly did. I'm so proud of you, Selma.

**SELMA:** Do you mean that, Mama?

**MAMA:** Yes. I love you.

**SELMA:** Oh, I love you so much.

**MAMA:** Be careful at work.

**SELMA:** I will. Do you need anything before I go?

**MAMA:** Other than grandchildren?

**SELMA:** Ha, ha! Very funny!

**MAMA:** No, dear, I'm fine.

**SELMA:** I'm going to get a bottle of water to take with me. Do you want one?

**MAMA:** No, I've still got plenty of my carrot juice.

**SELMA:** It's not bad after all, is it?

**MAMA:** Oh dear. I don't think you've escaped in time, Selma. Look who's coming up the walk.

**SELMA:** What?

**MAMA:** Speak of the devil and he appears, and my, look at him. I told you he'd be here today. The grass is getting a bit long again. He's earlier today, though.

**SELMA:** What are you talking about?

**MAMA:** Michael.

**SELMA:** Who?

**MAMA:** His name is Michael.

**SELMA:** Mama, it's not polite to stare. He can see us from here.

**MAMA:** Look at him.

**SELMA:** Yes, I'm looking. And yes, he is a fine looking young gentleman. Are you happy now?

**MAMA:** You'll get to meet him.

**SELMA:** Well, it appears that I will, doesn't it? You are just hell bent on making me late.

**MAMA:** Watch your language.

**SELMA:** Oh, mama, please.

*(MICHAEL enters onto the front porch and crosses to the front door. He is a handsome, rugged man, age 32.)*

**MICHAEL:** Hello, in there.

**SELMA:** Hello. Come on in.

**MICHAEL:** I'm Michael. I'm your new neighbor.

**SELMA:** Yes, I've heard all about you.

**MICHAEL:** You have.

**SELMA:** Yes, my mama, you see, she was telling me...I'm sorry, how rude of me. My name is Selma.

**MICHAEL:** It's nice to meet you.

**SELMA:** And you.

**MAMA:** Would you like something to drink?

**MICHAEL:** No, thank you, ma'am.

**MAMA:** Selma, get the young man something to drink. It's hot outside.

**MICHAEL:** Oh no, ma'am, I'm fine, thank you.

**SELMA:** She told me that you helped with the lawn last week. I'm very grateful. And a bit embarrassed. The lawn had gotten completely out of hand.

**MICHAEL:** Oh, it was nothing. Don't worry about it. It looks as if the grass is beginning to get a little high again. I thought I might go over it once more.

**SELMA:** You don't have to do that. I was planning to mow it tomorrow.

**MAMA:** You were, were you?

**SELMA:** Yes, I was.

**MICHAEL:** It's no trouble.

**MAMA:** Listen to the man, Selma. It's no trouble. He wants to help. Let him help.

**SELMA:** We don't need any help.

**MICHAEL:** I'd like to help. Today is my day off, and I get anxious not having anything to do.

**SELMA:** Well, okay, but this is the last time. We are not going to take advantage of you every week like this, do you understand? What are you laughing at?

**MICHAEL:** Your mother told me a lot about you. She went on and on.

**SELMA:** Did she?

**MAMA:** I'll just leave the two of you alone.

**SELMA:** Don't bother. I have to be leaving.

**MICHAEL:** She said your were headstrong. I believe her.

**SELMA:** What's that supposed to mean?

**MICHAEL:** Oh, nothing. I didn't mean anything bad by it, Selma. I'm sorry. I'd hate get off on the wrong foot.

**SELMA:** You would. Well, no reason to apologize. I suppose I get a bit touchy sometimes.

**MAMA:** Yes, you do.

**SELMA:** Mama.

**MICHAEL:** Where do you work?

**SELMA:** What?

**MICHAEL:** You said you had to be leaving. I just assumed you're on your way to work. Your mother told me you worked all the time but I couldn't pry any specifics out of her. What do you do?

**SELMA:** Well...

**MAMA:** It's not important...

**SELMA:** I guess you could say I'm in the entertainment industry.

**MICHAEL:** Really?

**MAMA:** Really?

**SELMA:** Yes. That is how I would put it, anyway.

**MICHAEL:** Well...

**SELMA:** Well what?

**MICHAEL:** The entertainment industry? That's exciting isn't it?

**SELMA:** Yes it is. Sometimes.

**MICHAEL:** I don't believe I've ever met anyone in the entertainment industry.

**SELMA:** Well, I like my job, but it's not something I like to go on about. What do you do?

**MICHAEL:** Well, it's not quite as glamorous as working in the entertainment industry. I run my own business. Landscaping, maintenance, construction. I have my hands in a lot of projects.

**SELMA:** Really?

**MICHAEL:** I keep myself busy.

**SELMA:** How do you like it here in Glenroy Acres?

**MICHAEL:** Oh, I like it a lot. It's nice and quiet. I lived closer to the city for years, but I like it out here much better. It's peaceful, and the people sure are a lot nicer.

**SELMA:** Well, I should be moving along. It was nice to meet you, mister?

**MICHAEL:** Oh, just Michael. Call me Michael. Or Mike. Some people call me Mike, but I prefer Michael. If you ever need anything, anything at all, I'm right down the hill. I'm usually home by eight.

**SELMA:** Well that's a very nice gesture. Thank you.

**MAMA:** Are you sure you can't stay a little longer dear? I'm afraid I won't be as interesting company for Michael as you are.

**MICHAEL:** Don't be silly, ma'am. I've been looking forward to our little talk this week. It was quite a lot of fun last week, wasn't it?

**MAMA:** Why, yes it was. I'm going to get you a glass of iced tea. We can have a seat on the backporch.

**MICHAEL:** I should probably get started on the lawn first.

**MAMA:** Oh, nonsense. You need a little kick before you get started. I'll put some whiskey in it, but just a little bit. It's early yet.

**SELMA:** Thank you again for the lawn. It was a pleasure, Michael. You two have fun.

**MAMA:** Oh, we will. Won't we?

**MICHAEL:** I believe so, ma'am.

**MAMA:** Call me Gladys.

**SELMA:** Goodbye, mama. I'll see you later, okay?

**MAMA:** I love you, dear.

**SELMA:** I love you, too. I'll call home on my break to make sure everything is okay. All right?

**MAMA:** I'll be fine.

**SELMA:** I'll be back late.

**MAMA:** Not too late.

**SELMA:** No, not too late. Goodbye. Later, Michael.

*(SELMA exits.)*

**MICHAEL:** Goodbye.

**MAMA:** Be careful, dear. Oh, I worry about her.

**MICHAEL:** It seems like she can take pretty good care of herself.

**MAMA:** You're beginning to sound like her.

**MICHAEL:** Am I?

**MAMA:** Here is your tea.

**MICHAEL:** Thank you very much, Gladys. She's just like you described her.

**MAMA:** You are exactly what she needs.

**MICHAEL:** Excuse me?

**MAMA:** Oh, I've said too much. I do that. Forget I said anything. I'm always butting in where I don't belong. None of my business. Shall we?

**MICHAEL:** Lead the way.

*(MAMA and MICHAEL exit. Blackout.)*

Scene 2.  
Two weeks later.

*(It is early afternoon. SELMA enters. MAMA is seated in her favorite chair in the living room.)*

**SELMA:** Mama!

**MAMA:** Yes.

**SELMA:** Oh, there you are.

**MAMA:** I'm right here, watching my stories. Where else would I be?

**SELMA:** Good morning.

**MAMA:** It's one o'clock in the afternoon.

**SELMA:** Is it?

**MAMA:** Yes, it is. One o'clock. That's early for you, isn't it?

**SELMA:** I suppose so. On some days, anyhow.

**MAMA:** You didn't get in until after five. I was waking up and getting ready for breakfast and my morning walk and I heard you coming in.

**SELMA:** Yes, I had a long night.

**MAMA:** Yes. So did I.

**SELMA:** Oh, don't be so crabby.

**MAMA:** Well, its hard not to be when you're out all night and I'm here worried sick.

**SELMA:** I know what will cheer you up. Look at this!

**MAMA:** My...my...look at all that money.

**SELMA:** I know, isn't it great?

**MAMA:** You haven't started sleeping with them all, have you?

**SELMA:** What?

**MAMA:** Nothing.

**SELMA:** How could you say something like that? Even if you were joking, it wouldn't be a bit funny.

**MAMA:** I don't like you being out all hours of the night. It's not proper behavior for a young lady.

**SELMA:** Apologize to me!

**MAMA:** No.

**SELMA:** And don't speak to me about proper behavior.

**MAMA:** I'll speak to you anyway I want. I am your mother.

**SELMA:** What would you have me do? Tell me that.

**MAMA:** I don't want to talk about it.

**SELMA:** You always bring it up and then you never want to talk about it. Well, I do want to talk about it.

**MAMA:** Oh...

**SELMA:** Yes, you know damn well what I do for a living, don't you? Isn't it scandalous to have a daughter who takes off her clothes in front of complete strangers and then dances naked for them? And they give me money for it. They give me lots of money, Mama. You've seen it.

**MAMA:** No!

**SELMA:** And anyway, what if I did sell myself?

**MAMA:** Oh, Selma, stop it! I don't want to hear, anymore.

**SELMA:** No, I don't suppose you do. I don't understand how something that is perfectly legal to give away can be illegal to sell. It doesn't make sense, does it?

**MAMA:** Stop talking like that.

**SELMA:** Some of the girls do, you know, but I don't think any less of them for it. I mean, hell, you do what you can to get by, right?

**MAMA:** I don't like to think of you, doing that, and I'm afraid you're going to get hurt.

**SELMA:** I can...

**MAMA:** I know...I know...you can take care of yourself.

**SELMA:** I don't expect you to understand, but I'm not going to stand for you judging me. Do you hear that?

**MAMA:** I'm sorry.

**SELMA:** Do you?

**MAMA:** I said I was sorry.

*(Long Pause.)*

**SELMA:** Have you had lunch yet?

**MAMA:** No, I'm not hungry.

**SELMA:** You haven't been eating enough.

**MAMA:** I'm just not hungry.

**SELMA:** I thought you would be excited.

**MAMA:** Why?

**SELMA:** Today is a big day, isn't it? Thursday is the day your special friend comes, right?

**MAMA:** Yes, it is. I forgot all about that.

**SELMA:** Four weeks in a row now. The two of you are quite a pair.

**MAMA:** I think he only comes by to see you. The past couple of weeks you've been gone, though, by the time he gets here. He always asks about you.

**SELMA:** He does.

**MAMA:** Yes. I think he's taken a shine to you. The two of you really hit it off that day, didn't you?

**SELMA:** I wouldn't go so far as to say that.

**MAMA:** He just goes on and on about you.

**SELMA:** Really?

**MAMA:** Michael has been a big help around here. I hope he comes back today.

**SELMA:** Oh, I'm sure he will. Why wouldn't he?

**MAMA:** You're right. I'm sure he will. It'll be that time before long.

**SELMA:** Yes.

**MAMA:** That's why you're up early.

**SELMA:** What are you talking about?

**MAMA:** Well, look at you. You don't get in until after five o'clock in the morning, and here you are, out of bed at one o'clock in the afternoon, and already you've got your hair fixed, and you're dressed up.

**SELMA:** I am not fixed up for Michael if that's what you're implying. I have to go downtown today.

**MAMA:** What for?

**SELMA:** I have to run some errands.

**MAMA:** Can I come with you?

**SELMA:** What about Michael?

**MAMA:** Well, Michael might not come today. I mean, who knows? He might have to work today.

**SELMA:** Thursday is his day off. He's been coming to see you and mow the lawn on Thursdays for four straight weeks now.

**MAMA:** Yes, he has. He is such a nice young man, isn't he?

**SELMA:** I'm sure he is.

**MAMA:** What are you doing, honey?

**SELMA:** I'm making you a sandwich.

**MAMA:** I said I'm not hungry.

**SELMA:** Well, I'm going to make it and put it in the fridge. That way, when you get hungry you'll have something to eat. I see you've made some fresh iced tea.

**MAMA:** Yes. I made it for Michael.

**SELMA:** I'm sorry I yelled at you.

**MAMA:** Don't be sorry. I should never have said that about you.

**SELMA:** It's okay.

**MAMA:** I understand everything you do for me, and I appreciate it. I want you to know that. I want you to know how much you mean to me and how much I appreciate how you take care of me.

**SELMA:** You take pretty good care of me, too.

**MAMA:** I love you.

**SELMA:** I love you, too. Mama, I have something to tell you.

**MAMA:** What is it?

**SELMA:** I'm not going downtown to run errands. I'm going by school, to register for night classes next semester.

**MAMA:** You are?

**SELMA:** I've been saving for over a year now, and I'm able to make the down payment. I'm going back to school.

**MAMA:** Oh, darling, that's wonderful. I know how much you've wanted this.

**SELMA:** It's exciting, isn't it?

**MAMA:** It's very exciting. I'm so happy for you.

**SELMA:** I can't believe I'm really going to go through with this.

**MAMA:** What about work?

**SELMA:** Well, I can't dance forever now, can I? I can still work on the Fridays and Saturdays, while I'm in school, and make enough to get by.

**MAMA:** Congratulations.

**SELMA:** There's something else.

**MAMA:** What?

**SELMA:** To be honest, maybe Michael does have something to do with my appearance today.

**MAMA:** I knew it.

**SELMA:** I've been thinking about him ever since that day I met him.

**MAMA:** You can't get anything by your old mother.

**SELMA:** Oh, mama, he's not anything like the men down at the club.

**MAMA:** I bet.

**SELMA:** I mean, he seems different.

**MAMA:** I think he is.

**SELMA:** I'm going to go to school, but I should be back well before he leaves. If I'm not, stall him.

**MAMA:** He should be here anytime. Why don't you wait with me?

**SELMA:** Oh, I don't know. I'm nervous. Isn't that crazy?

**MAMA:** How long has it been now?

**SELMA:** Mama!

**MAMA:** Since you were on a date?

**SELMA:** Oh. About ten, no eleven months. Christ, almost a year.

**MAMA:** Watch your mouth.

**SELMA:** Almost a year. I didn't realize it had been that long. That's about the same time I started working at the club. It's no wonder I haven't met any men that are worth my time down there. Although, that's not really fair. Some of them are nice enough. Some men only need somebody to talk to them and pay attention to them. I'm more like a therapist that way. That's how I look at it. Yes, some of them are nice enough, the dating sort even. I don't want to mix business with pleasure. That's the deal.

**MAMA:** You've grown up so fast. It seems like just the other day, I was watching you doll yourself up and getting ready for your first date.

**SELMA:** Jimmy Melon.

**MAMA:** Oh, honey, he was not your type.

**SELMA:** He was gay.

**MAMA:** Well, there was that, too.

**SELMA:** But, oh, do you remember Alex?

**MAMA:** Oh, yes. He was a looker.

**SELMA:** Yes, he was.

**MAMA:** What ever happened to him?

**SELMA:** He went away to college, remember? Besides he thought we were too different. He said we both wanted different things out of life. I guess that's what they all say when they want out. He said he felt trapped. I remember I was sixteen and I felt like it was the end of the world.

**MAMA:** Your father and I were so concerned. You wouldn't eat for a week.

**SELMA:** I know. He broke my heart.

**MAMA:** You locked yourself up in your room and we couldn't get you out for anything. It made your father so mad.

**SELMA:** You know, that's the first time you've mentioned him in a long time.

**MAMA:** Who? Alex? Well, I don't have no reason to...

**SELMA:** No, not Alex.

**MAMA:** Oh!

**SELMA:** Yes. Daddy.

*(Long pause.)*

**MAMA:** It's a funny thing, life. You know, I don't have any regrets. Not one. If I had it to do all over again, I wouldn't change anything. Not one thing.

**SELMA:** I think that's great. I feel the same way. I think that's rare. It's very special and rare.

**MAMA:** Special.

**SELMA:** Yes.

**MAMA:** Like mothers and daughters are special.

**SELMA:** I think that's the most special bond of all. It is to me, anyway.

**MAMA:** Thank you, dear.

**SELMA:** Thank you.

*(Pause.)*

**MAMA:** Where is my new boyfriend?

**SELMA:** Mama.

**MAMA:** He is. He's my new boyfriend and he's late. That ain't no way to court a lady.

**SELMA:** Are you sure you don't want that sandwich?

**MAMA:** No. I may offer it to Michael. You know what we should do. We should invite him to dinner one night.

**SELMA:** I don't know.

**MAMA:** You could cook for him on one of your nights off. He's a bachelor. I bet he hasn't had a home cooked meal for a long time. It would give the two of you a chance to be together. I could retire early.

**SELMA:** We'll see.

**MAMA:** Okay, but it's a good idea.

**SELMA:** Yes, it is.

**MAMA:** I'll invite him then.

**SELMA:** I'm going to go now.

**MAMA:** No. Wait a few more minutes. I'm sure he'll be here anytime.

**SELMA:** You wait around for him, Mama. Do me a favor. Tell him I said hi.

**MAMA:** I'll do that. I'll invite him to dinner on Sunday. You don't work on Sunday, do you?

**SELMA:** No, I don't work on Sundays, you know that.

**MAMA:** Then Sunday will be perfect.

**SELMA:** Do you need anything while I'm out?

**MAMA:** Bring a bottle of wine, for Sunday.

**SELMA:** Let's not get carried away.

**MAMA:** All right, just bring one for me then.

**SELMA:** That sounds more like it.

**MAMA:** Hurry back! If you don't hurry back, you might miss him. But don't worry, I'll invite him to dinner Sunday night, whether you're here or not.

**SELMA:** Goodbye, Mama.

*(SELMA exits.)*

**MAMA:** It would be nice, though, for him to see you all dressed up and pretty like you are right now. You have your father's face. Every time I look at you, I see a little bit of him in your eyes. They're the same, the eyes. I'll invite him to dinner Sunday...Michael, that is, not your father. Sunday will be perfect. I just want you to be happy. I know you can take care of yourself...but...oh dear, I'm talking to myself again, aren't I? I hope I'm not going crazy. That reminds me, I've got to put Betty Lou Mullins on the prayer list. She's turned up drunk again. Yep, I don't regret anything, not one single thing. Michael might not come today.

He may have to work. Sunday will be perfect. Oh, it's getting cooler. Autumn is coming. I think I'll go inside and get a sweater. My gentleman caller should be here any minute.

*(Blackout.)*

Scene 3.  
Three days later.

*(SELMA setting the table. MAMA enters.)*

**SELMA:** Mama...mama...the table is set.

**MAMA:** I'm coming.

**SELMA:** Dinner is almost ready.

**MAMA:** Oh, Selma, it smells wonderful in here. You've really outdone yourself this time.

**SELMA:** Thank you.

**MAMA:** Michael is going to love this. He is...he is going to be blown away.

**SELMA:** He should be here any minute.

**MAMA:** Absolutely blown away...and why wouldn't he be? Look at you. You look beautiful.

**SELMA:** Oh, stop.

**MAMA:** My beautiful baby girl.

**SELMA:** I believe you're making too much out of this night, Mama.

**MAMA:** Oh, am I?

**SELMA:** Yes. It is just a nice dinner between neighbors. I don't want to build this up in our heads any more than necessary. God knows we've been down that road before.

**MAMA:** Have we?

**SELMA:** Oh, forget it. It's an expression.

**MAMA:** I don't get it. Well, anyway, I am going to go freshen up. That way, when he gets here the two of you can have some time alone together.

**SELMA:** Oh, no you don't.

**MAMA:** Why not?

**SELMA:** Don't you dare leave me alone in this room with that man.

**MAMA:** Why, it's only Michael.

**SELMA:** I hardly know the man. You've spent four straight weeks hanging out with him every Thursday.

**MAMA:** You could have talked with us last Thursday, if you had made it back in time.

**SELMA:** You have to keep the conversation going. What if I don't have anything in common...oh, listen to me, I sound like I'm in the eighth grade.

**MAMA:** I think you were afraid to come back Thursday. You stayed away on purpose.

**SELMA:** I told you I was caught up at school.

**MAMA:** Yeah, right.

**SELMA:** The lines were a mile long. I told you that.

**MAMA:** I stalled. I kept him here until dark, but you never came. I believe he was becoming suspicious.

**SELMA:** Oh, great.

*(During the previous exchange, MICHAEL has appeared at the front door.)*

**MICHAEL:** Hello!

**MAMA:** Oh, Michael. Get the door, Selma.

**SELMA:** I'm coming. Hello.

**MICHAEL:** Good evening.

**SELMA:** Same to you. Please, come on in.

**MICHAEL:** I brought you something.

**SELMA:** Oh, how nice. Look, mama. Michael brought us flowers.

**MICHAEL:** It's the least I could do.

**SELMA:** Well, I certainly appreciate it.

**MICHAEL:** Wow, dinner smells wonderful!

**SELMA:** Thank you. You're here just in time. It's almost ready.

**MICHAEL:** You must be some cook, Selma. Your mother told me you're quite the cook.

**SELMA:** She brags on me too much.

**MICHAEL:** She said you would be modest, too.

**MAMA:** Now, it's true, Selma. You don't give yourself enough credit. She's a fine cook.

**MICHAEL:** I brought a bottle of wine, too, but I see you already have one.

**MAMA:** Oh, you can never have too much wine. Thank you, I'll take that.

**SELMA:** Mama...

**MICHAEL:** She likes wine.

**SELMA:** You could say that.

**MICHAEL:** It might be an understatement.

**SELMA:** Yes, I think it most certainly is. Oh, excuse me. I have to check on dinner.

**MICHAEL:** There's nothing I like better than good old-fashioned country cooking. I haven't had a home cooked meal in quite a while. I'm usually out on the road, and I drive through somewhere or I end up eating in a restaurant. There's nothing like a home cooked meal, though, that's for sure.

**SELMA:** I hope you like it. We're having chicken and mashed potatoes with gravy, green beans, and homemade bread.

**MICHAEL:** It looks great to me.

**MAMA:** Michael's never been married.

**SELMA:** Mama.

**MICHAEL:** No, I haven't. I guess in a way I'm married to my work.

**MAMA:** That must get lonely. Selma's never been married, either.

**SELMA:** No.

**MAMA:** Although, she was close a couple of times. They were nice boys, but not exactly...

**SELMA:** Dinner is served.

**MICHAEL:** Wonderful.

**MAMA:** Not exactly...now, I can't remember what I was saying...what was I going on about this time?

**SELMA:** Have a seat, Michael. And you, Mama, your normal spot. Is iced tea good for everyone?

**MICHAEL:** Iced tea will be just fine.

**SELMA:** We can have the wine later, with dessert. Or is wine best as an appetizer?

**MICHAEL:** I don't think it matters.

**MAMA:** Michael, would you like to say grace?

**MICHAEL:** Um...I don't know...

**SELMA:** Michael doesn't want to say grace. We can skip grace for tonight, okay.

**MAMA:** But it's Sunday.

**SELMA:** I think the Lord will forgive us just this one time.

**MAMA:** Do you hear that, Michael? That's my daughter, for sure.

**SELMA:** Could you pass the potatoes?

**MICHAEL:** Your mother has told me so much about you. I feel like I know you already.

**SELMA:** I know the feeling.

**MICHAEL:** It's nice for us to finally have some time like this, to sit down and get to know one another.

**SELMA:** Yes, so many people don't even know their neighbors nowadays, much less get together for a nice Sunday dinner.

*(There is a long pause as the three begin their dinner.)*

**MICHAEL:** Everything is really good.

**SELMA:** Thank you.

**MAMA:** I told you she was some cook. It is delicious, honey.

**SELMA:** And thank you, too.

**MICHAEL:** It certainly is delicious. It's simple, but it tastes real good. I haven't had food like this for some time.

**MAMA:** I am so lucky to have such a good cook living under the same roof.

**SELMA:** To listen to both of you, I should go into business for myself.

**MICHAEL:** Yeah, your own down home cooking restaurant. People would come from miles around...

**SELMA:** ...to 'Simply Selma's'.

**MICHAEL:** I like that.

**SELMA:** Well, you never know what I might do.

**MAMA:** That's for sure.

**MICHAEL:** I would eat there everyday.

**SELMA:** Oh, stop, you're laying it on a bit thick.

**MICHAEL:** No, I mean it, this is the best meal I've ever had.

**SELMA:** Stop!

**MAMA:** You have to learn how to take a compliment, dear.

**SELMA:** Mama usually doesn't say a word while she's eating, but you're here, so she's making a special exception.

**MAMA:** That's not true. You have to stop gabbing and eat up.

**SELMA:** I'm not that hungry.

**MICHAEL:** It's a shame, because this is...

**MAMA:** ...the best dinner he's ever had.

**SELMA:** That's enough out of the both of you. Pipe down and eat up.

*(Long pause.)*

**MICHAEL:** I heard this joke the other day...

**MAMA:** Oh, good.

**SELMA:** Is it dirty?

**MICHAEL:** A bit dirty, I guess.

**SELMA:** Well, good, because Mama doesn't like any joke that's not a bit dirty.

**MICHAEL:** There are these two farmers, and they're neighbors, too. One day farmer John is out hunting and he spots a deer. He lines it up in his crosshairs and fires. Bang! He kills the deer in one shot. The only thing is the shotgun blast is so strong it blows the deer back onto farmer Tom's property. Farmer Tom rushes over and sees the deer, and he stops farmer John from collecting it. "If it's on my property," he says, "it's my deer."

**MAMA:** Oh, dear.

**MICHAEL:** That's not quite the funny part yet, Gladys.

**MAMA:** I'm sorry.

**SELMA:** Go on.

**MICHAEL:** Well, farmer John is furious, he says, "I shot him. It's my deer. I don't care if he happened to land on your property." Well, they both lay claim to the deer, and farmer Tom says, "There's only one way to settle this." "What's that?" says John. Tom says, "We'll play a game. I'm going to rear back and kick you in the balls as hard as I can."

**MAMA:** Oh, my!

**MICHAEL:** "And then you'll do the same to me. We'll go back and forth until one of us just can't take it anymore, and the winner keeps the deer." John says, "Okay, sounds fair. Go ahead." So farmer Tom rears his leg back and he kicks farmer John square between the legs, and it hurts bad. John is rolling around on the ground, wincing in pain. Finally after a few minutes of this, he gets up to his feet, and says, "Okay. It's my turn." Well, then farmer Tom looks John in the eyes and he says, "Oh screw it, you keep the damn deer."

*(Silence.)*

**MICHAEL:** A guy told me that down at the site the other day. You'll have to pardon my language, both of you.

**SELMA:** Oh, don't worry. We are no strangers to vulgarity.

**MAMA:** It was very funny, Michael. You know some good jokes, don't you, Selma?

**SELMA:** Oh, no. I don't believe any of my jokes go well with dinner.

**MICHAEL:** Come on. It's your turn.

**SELMA:** You'll have to get a couple of drinks in me first.

**MAMA:** Well, what are we waiting for?

**SELMA:** Calm down.

*(Pause.)*

**MICHAEL:** I can't remember the last time I had home made bread fresh out the oven.

**SELMA:** I made some apple pie for dessert, if anybody wants it. Let me know as soon as you're ready for it.

**MICHAEL:** I don't know if I'm going to have any room. I may need to give my dinner a while to settle.

**SELMA:** Well, its there if you want any.

**MICHAEL:** I'm sure I will.

*(Pause.)*

**MICHAEL:** You didn't have to work today.

**SELMA:** No. I don't usually work on Sundays. Sundays and Mondays are my days off.

**MICHAEL:** You keep very late hours. Where exactly to you work?

**SELMA:** Where?

**MAMA:** Selma is going back to school. In January, isn't that right?

**MICHAEL:** Oh, really? What are you going to study?

**SELMA:** I'm not sure. I went for one year right out of high school, but I left because I didn't know what I wanted to study. I guess I still don't know exactly what I want, but I know I want to be in school. I miss it. I want to learn everything. I love to read.

**MAMA:** Oh, love is not the word. Selma eats books up. She reads two a week.

**MICHAEL:** I went to Tech.

**MAMA:** Now that is a good school.

**SELMA:** Yes, it is.

**MICHAEL:** It will be ten years, next summer.

**MAMA:** Michael is thirty-two. Can you believe that?

**SELMA:** Why, you could still pass for twenty-five.

**MICHAEL:** I appreciate you saying so.

*(There is another pause as the three finish dinner.)*

**MAMA:** Do you want some of that apple pie?

**MICHAEL:** No, thank you. I'm stuffed.

**MAMA:** Well, I've got an idea. Why don't the two of you move out on the front porch, and spend a little time together?

**SELMA:** Well, I don't know. Let me clear these dishes.

**MICHAEL:** No, you leave these here. The least I could do is to help clean up.

**SELMA:** No, I insist...

**MAMA:** Now, stop it both of you. I've been clearing the table for fifty years. I can take care of it. You go outside.

**MICHAEL:** Well, shall we?

**SELMA:** Sure.

**MAMA:** Go.

**MICHAEL:** After you, Selma.

**SELMA:** Thanks.

*(The two exit onto the front porch.)*

**MICHAEL:** Thank you again for dinner. Everything was delicious.

**SELMA:** Thank you. I am glad you enjoyed it.

*(As MAMA is clearing the table inside, a plate falls and breaks.)*

**MAMA:** Oh, mama. Could you excuse me for minute?

**MICHAEL:** Of course.

*(SELMA exits the porch and returns into the house.)*

**MAMA:** I've got it, honey.

**SELMA:** Here, let me help you.

**MAMA:** No, you get back out there. I can get it. Oh, Selma, I'm sorry. I've ruined your evening.

**SELMA:** No, mama, it's fine.

**MAMA:** Well, what do you think?

**SELMA:** He's nice enough.

**MAMA:** That's all you have to say about him.

**SELMA:** He's a bit out of my league, don't you think?

**MAMA:** No, I don't at all. I think the two of you make a great couple. What are laughing at?

**SELMA:** That awful joke.

**MAMA:** I haven't seen that smile on your face for a long time.

**SELMA:** I smile all the time. We laugh, play, and have all kinds of fun, don't we?

**MAMA:** Oh, yes, we certainly do. But that smile is different. Yes, that smile on your face means something-different altogether.

**SELMA:** You're being silly.

**MAMA:** Go out there on the porch with him, you fool. I'll get the pie ready.

**SELMA:** Come with me.

**MAMA:** No way. Go.

**SELMA:** All right.

*(SELMA returns to the porch, approaching MICHAEL slowly and with some reservation.)*

**SELMA:** Oh, look at that sky!

**MICHAEL:** I love evenings like this. I'll get home on a cool summer evening, and I'll just fix myself a drink and sit on my front porch for hours and just take it all in. It's so nice out here. It's relaxing, ain't it?

**SELMA:** Yes, it is.

**MICHAEL:** Your mother is quite a lady.

**SELMA:** Yes, she's the best.

**MICHAEL:** It must be a handful, though.

**SELMA:** What?

**MICHAEL:** Taking care of her. It must be hard. I admire you for it, Selma. I see the way you take care of her, and I think it's incredible. You have so much to give, and you ask nothing in return. That's true love.

**SELMA:** I suppose it is hard, from time to time. But, I wouldn't have things any other way. We've had a lot of good times together. Yes, we've been through a lot. We have all kinds of fun, too. Mama loves to play Rummy.

**MICHAEL:** The card game?

**SELMA:** Yes, she could play all day long. I'm surprised she hasn't suckered you in yet. She's probably afraid she'll scare you away.

**MICHAEL:** Oh, I don't think there's any cause to fear for that.

**SELMA:** You're good with her yourself. She has had so much fun with you these last few weeks. She hardly stops talking about you.

**MICHAEL:** Really?

**SELMA:** She gets along just fine by herself. Sometimes, I think she doesn't really need me at all. To take care of her, I mean.

**MICHAEL:** Don't underestimate yourself.

**SELMA:** She's been sick a lot the past couple years. I had a place in town, but it just worked out more convenient for me to move back out here.

**MICHAEL:** I'd say you made the right decision.

**SELMA:** What about your folks?

**MICHAEL:** They live in Sedona. I don't see them that often. I was thinking of planning a trip there next weekend. I have some time off, and it's been months...

**SELMA:** What are you looking at?

**MICHAEL:** You.

**SELMA:** Why?

**MICHAEL:** Because you're pretty.

**SELMA:** No.

**MICHAEL:** Yes, you are. You're beautiful.

**SELMA:** Oh, it's been a while since I've been flattered like this. Go on.

*(Music filters outside from within the house. A radio has been turned on, and a slow, romantic song is heard. MAMA appears in the doorway behind SELMA and MICHAEL on the porch.)*

**MICHAEL:** I think your mother is eavesdropping.

**SELMA:** Yes she is. Mama!

**MAMA:** What? I wasn't eavesdropping or nothing.

**SELMA:** What were you doing, then?

**MAMA:** I just came to tell you I fixed you both some hot apple pie with vanilla ice cream. I've put on some music. Do you like it?

**MICHAEL:** Yes, it's very nice. Thank you, Gladys.

**MAMA:** I'm going to have some apple pie, too, but I feel like having mine in my room. The two of you go ahead.

**SELMA:** Well, what do you think?

**MICHAEL:** I think she's trying to fix us up.

**SELMA:** Do you think so?

**MICHAEL:** She's very determined.

**SELMA:** Well, I meant, what do you think about the pie?

**MICHAEL:** I know. It sounds nice.

**SELMA:** This music is summer to me. My father used to play the oldies station all the time in the summer, back when I was growing up.

**MICHAEL:** It's great.

**SELMA:** What? You're looking at me funny again.

**MICHAEL:** I'd like to dance with you. May I?

**SELMA:** Of course.

*(The two begin a long and slow dance to the song on the radio. As it ends, another slow song begins, but the two separate.)*

**MICHAEL:** That was nice.

**SELMA:** Yes, it was. Thank you.

**MICHAEL:** We should go in.

**SELMA:** Yes, the ice cream is probably melted by now.

**MICHAEL:** Well, that's the best way to eat it, if you ask me.

*(There is an awkward pause, and then a kiss.)*

**MICHAEL:** After you, Selma.

**SELMA:** Thank you. You're such a gentleman.

*(SELMA and MICHAEL enter the house as the lights fade. Blackout.)*

Scene 4.  
One month later.

*(As the lights come up MAMA is seated on the bench on the porch, knitting. SELMA and MICHAEL enter onto the porch.)*

**MAMA:** Back so soon?

**SELMA:** We wanted to get back in time to watch the sunset.

**MICHAEL:** Besides, I have to work early tomorrow.

**MAMA:** I'll go and fix you both a spot on the back porch.

**SELMA:** Oh, don't bother. We can do that.

**MICHAEL:** How has your afternoon been, Gladys?

**MAMA:** Fine. I've barely moved from this chair. The dogs are out again. I took that stick over there and swatted that little ratty one on the nose. I don't think he'll be coming back anytime soon. You, sir, have taken away my rummy partner.

**SELMA:** Oh, he has.

**MICHAEL:** I'm sorry about that. I always return her, though.

**MAMA:** I'm just teasing you. It's getting chilly out here, isn't it?

**SELMA:** Yes, it is.

**MAMA:** Selma, you should put a sweater on. These nights are getting cooler and cooler.

**MICHAEL:** If you'll excuse me, I'm going to run to the restroom.

**MAMA:** Oh, yes of course.

*(MICHAEL crosses into the house.)*

**MAMA:** So?

**SELMA:** So what?

**MAMA:** How did it go?

**SELMA:** We had a great time. We went for a walk down at Millbrook, and...

**MAMA:** You have been seeing a lot of each other, haven't you?

**SELMA:** Mama, it's not like that. We're good friends, that's all.

**MAMA:** I think you both fancy each other quite a bit.

**SELMA:** We do have a lot of fun together. I swear, the time just flies by when we're alone. And he flatters something awful. Sometimes it's too much. Okay, that's a lie. We have been seeing a lot of each other.

**MAMA:** Three times a week for over a month.

**SELMA:** Not that anyone is counting, right Mama?

**MAMA:** No, not at all.

**SELMA:** He's going out to Sedona to see his folks this weekend. He didn't get to go last month, remember?

**MAMA:** No.

**SELMA:** Well, in any event, you'll get your rummy partner back, won't you?

**MAMA:** Oh, good. And you with the weekend off from work.

**SELMA:** Don't get your hopes up. I have to make up for missing last weekend.

**MAMA:** Hasn't he become the least bit suspicious. You never have told him where you work.

**SELMA:** No, he hasn't and why should he?

**MAMA:** God forbid, he should find out.

**SELMA:** What if he would? I'm not the least bit ashamed of what I do. It's not anybody's business, anyhow. If he has a problem with it than he can...

**MAMA:** Here he comes.

*(MICHAEL rejoins them on the porch.)*

**MAMA:** That was quick.

**SELMA:** Mama, please. You're embarrassing.

**MAMA:** I was just saying, if you wash your hands...

**SELMA:** I'm sorry.

**MICHAEL:** It's all right. Can we get you anything, Gladys?

**MAMA:** No, no. You make yourself at home. I'm going to have some grapes and retire to my room to watch Jeopardy. It's getting too cold out here for this old woman. Do you want me to bring you a sweater, Selma?

**SELMA:** No, I'm fine.

**MAMA:** You're going to catch a cold. Then where will you be?

**SELMA:** If I need a sweater, I can get it.

**MAMA:** Well, I know when I'm not wanted. I guess you want to be alone. I'll see you both later. Michael, there are sandwiches in the fridge. I could fry an egg, or open a can of tomato soup.

**MICHAEL:** No, I'm still full from a late lunch. Thank you, though.

**MAMA:** Are you sure?

**SELMA:** Yes.

**MAMA:** All right, well I'll see you both in a little while.

*(MAMA exits the porch and crosses into the house where she retires to her room.)*

**MICHAEL:** I'm having a wonderful time today. Thank you.

**SELMA:** Well, thank you. I'm having a pretty good time, too.

**MICHAEL:** Pretty good?

**SELMA:** Okay. Wonderful. Spectacular. It's the best time I've ever had in all of my life. Is that better?

**MICHAEL:** Come here, you sarcastic little...

*(MICHAEL advances, taking SELMA in his arms.)*

**SELMA:** Now, now, you keep your hands off me. I am a lady, Michael.

*(SELMA jokingly pulls away from him, then grips him closer.)*

**SELMA:** Oh, I'm kidding. Don't you dare stop.

*(They kiss.)*

**MICHAEL:** Have I told you how pretty you look today?

**SELMA:** Only about a hundred times.

**MICHAEL:** Oh...

**SELMA:** I mean, no. You haven't told me at all. What was that?

**MICHAEL:** Oh, Selma, you're something.

*(MICHAEL laughs.)*

**SELMA:** What is it?

**MICHAEL:** Nothing.

**SELMA:** What are you laughing at?

**MICHAEL:** It's nothing, really.

**SELMA:** No, no, you don't get off that easy. What are you laughing at? Tell me.

**MICHAEL:** It's crazy, really.

**SELMA:** I want to know.

**MICHAEL:** It's just a stupid joke the guys played on me today.

**SELMA:** Well, you're gonna tell me.

**MICHAEL:** Oh, all right. You're never going to let me here the end of this, though.

**SELMA:** I might not.

**MICHAEL:** Well, its no secret the two of us have been spending a lot of time together. If you feel anything like I do...what I'm trying to say is that, I really care for you, Selma.

**SELMA:** Thank you.

**MICHAEL:** Anyway, that's beside the point...

**SELMA:** Seems like you were making a good point to me.

**MICHAEL:** Anyway, the two of us have been spending a lot of time together, and I've been talking a lot about you to the guys, and I tell all kinds of things about you. I showed them that picture of us together. The one your mom took of the two of us that first night I was up here for dinner, remember?

**SELMA:** How could I forget?

**MICHAEL:** Well, apparently, some of the guys went down to one of these clubs out on Route 60...

**SELMA:** They did?

**MICHAEL:** You know the kind I'm talking about. The kind where the women take they're clothes off and dance around naked for men. They wanted me to go, Selma, but I didn't want any part of it. It's something guys do I guess.

**SELMA:** I guess it is.

**MICHAEL:** Today they were riding me and giving me hell about this one woman. She looked just like you, apparently. I doubt she looked anything like you, Selma. They were trying to get one over on me, is all. They went on and on. Wasn't I the popular guy? The guy dating the stripper. They said a lot worse things than that, but I'm not going to repeat them.

*(Long pause.)*

**MICHAEL:** What's wrong, Selma? Didn't you think it was funny? Come on...

**SELMA:** No, I didn't think it was funny.

**MICHAEL:** Oh, come on now. Since when does a story like that insult you?

**SELMA:** I think you should go home.

**MICHAEL:** Selma, I didn't mean anything by it.

**SELMA:** I'm not feeling well. I'm going to go inside.

**MICHAEL:** Selma...

**SELMA:** I think you should go home.

**MICHAEL:** You were feeling fine a second ago. Don't go...

**SELMA:** Let me ask you something, Michael.

**MICHAEL:** What's wrong?

**SELMA:** What if I was that girl? The one all of your friends was talking about, and making all kinds of lewd jokes about, I'm sure. What if I was her?

**MICHAEL:** What are you talking about?

**SELMA:** No, answer me. What if I was? What would you have said then?

**MICHAEL:** This is crazy. What are getting so angry about?

**SELMA:** What I want to know is this. That girl that your guy friends were telling you about...did you stick up for her?

**MICHAEL:** What are you...

**SELMA:** Did you say, 'Hey guys, cut it out. That woman works hard and she needs the money. She earns every penny, and you guys shouldn't be making fun of her.' Did you say something like that?

**MICHAEL:** No, it didn't occur to me...

**SELMA:** No, I can't image you did. I can't imagine the thoughts or feelings of that girl entered your ignorant head even once.

**MICHAEL:** Selma...

**SELMA:** And you, you're supposed to be a gentleman? You probably cracked all kinds of jokes, at her expense, not even considering for a moment that the woman might really be me.

**MICHAEL:** What?

**SELMA:** Of course, it's all right for your friends to go down there, and sure haven't you been a time or two...maybe?

**MICHAEL:** That's different.

**SELMA:** It sure is. Let me tell you something, I do work hard, I do need the money, and it is honorable work. As honorable as anything else.

**MICHAEL:** You...

**SELMA:** I'm my own boss, Michael. I don't have to whore myself out to anybody. I am my own boss. I certainly don't need you and your friends talking about me like I'm some piece of garbage.

*(Long pause.)*

**MICHAEL:** Wait...this is not happening.

**SELMA:** I was thinking the same thing.

**MICHAEL:** So, what you're telling me is...

**SELMA:** Yes, Michael, I'm a stripper. You can say it. It's not as bad as all that.

**MICHAEL:** How the hell...when exactly were you planning to tell me all of this?

**SELMA:** I wasn't because I knew you would react like this. Oh, come on. I work in the entertainment industry. I get home at three in the morning, or later. What did you think I do, play jazz trumpet at the Cotton Club?

**MICHAEL:** You were just gonna let me find out. Were you never going to tell me?

**SELMA:** Would you have reacted any different if I had?

**MICHAEL:** You tricked me.

**SELMA:** What?

**MICHAEL:** You pretended to be this nice Southern girl, who takes care of her mom, and is going back to school, and you cooked dinner for me. You came across as innocent and we've been together a month now and nothing...

**SELMA:** Is that what this is about?

**MICHAEL:** Selma...

**SELMA:** I'm sorry you feel that way, Michael, but I didn't trick you. I wouldn't be able to go back to school, if it wasn't for this job. I wouldn't be able to provide for

Mama the way I do...the way Daddy did. It's as honest work as anything else in the world, and I don't feel any more reason to explain myself, or justify my work.

**MICHAEL:** And now I'm the laughing stock of all my friends.

**SELMA:** Am I a completely different person from the one you just stood here and told you cared about me? Am I?

**MICHAEL:** Yes. In a way, you are. You should have told me right from the beginning. If I'd have known this...

**SELMA:** Michael, you're making way too much out of this...

**MICHAEL:** Goddamnit, Selma, it's wrong. It's disgusting.

**SELMA:** It's not any of that, you narrow minded son of a bitch. If you would listen to what I'm saying...

**MICHAEL:** You think I don't know what goes on in those clubs, what really goes on.

**SELMA:** What the hell is that supposed to mean?

**MICHAEL:** I think you know exactly what it means.

**SELMA:** Get out of here.

**MICHAEL:** Selma, if you don't stop that bullshit...

**SELMA:** What? I'm not going to find anyone who'll take me? I won't have anyone to take care of me? That's bullshit and you know it. You know what this is about? You're only pissed because your friends have seen a lot of more of me than you ever will, that's for damn sure.

**MICHAEL:** Shut up! How can you stand here and tell me that's honorable work? How can you do that? Don't you have any respect for yourself? What about your mother? What does she think of this? Let me ask you something, Selma. How much is it going to cost for me to get a look? All my friends have seen you already. How much is it going to cost for me to get a look...

**SELMA:** Leave! Get of my porch.

*(MICHAEL stops, pauses, and then continues out, exiting SR. SELMA is left alone onstage for a long time. MAMA enters onto the front porch and joins her.)*

**SELMA:** Hi, mama.

**MAMA:** I heard everything. I'm sorry.

**SELMA:** Don't be sorry, mama. You were right the whole time. Everything you said was...

**MAMA:** No.

**SELMA:** Yes, you were. Look at me.

**MAMA:** Selma...

**SELMA:** He's right. I never should have lied to him.

**MAMA:** You couldn't have...

**SELMA:** Everything he said about me is right on. You think I don't feel dirty in that place from time to time. You think it doesn't hurt that I can't tell people where I work because they'll think I'm a whore.

**MAMA:** Stop it!

**SELMA:** No. It's true...

**MAMA:** Selma...

**SELMA:** ...I mean it must be true, right? If even you feel that way? And Michael?

*(Pause.)*

**MAMA:** You know that Vanessa Williams? She got in all kinds of trouble for being in the Playboy. Now she's a big superstar. It didn't matter after all.

**SELMA:** I appreciate you trying to cheer me up with a story about Vanessa Williams, but it's not going to work.

**MAMA:** Things are so different today, Selma. You know, I didn't get to make a lot of choices. Life just happened to me. I don't regret anything, because I have you, and I wouldn't trade that for anything. I want you to make your own choices, Selma. I support you. I know you know how to take care of yourself.

**SELMA:** Thank you.

**MAMA:** What can I do?

**SELMA:** Nothing. It's enough that you're trying to make me feel better. Thank you.

**MAMA:** Do you want to talk about it?

**SELMA:** Not really.

**MAMA:** He'll be back. He was just a little shocked. He's old-fashioned, you know.

**SELMA:** Oh, I know he'll be back. When he realizes what an ignorant ass he's been, he'll be back. I know what's in his heart now, though. I know what he really thinks of me, deep down. He'll probably come back and say he forgives me, as if I'm the one who has done something wrong. I shouldn't have lied to him, but I knew. Why would he be any different? And being old-fashioned is not an excuse for deliberate meanness.

*(Pause.)*

**SELMA:** He almost went with them. That would have some way to find out, huh?

**MAMA:** I'm sorry.

**SELMA:** Why would it make one bit of difference? I don't know.

**MAMA:** You're my baby girl. I love you, Selma.

**SELMA:** I love you, too, Mama.

*(Long pause.)*

**MAMA:** You know, I didn't think much of him, anyway.

**SELMA:** Mama...

**MAMA:** No, he was a bit uppity, if you ask me. And, he was short.

**SELMA:** Oh, Mama.

**MAMA:** Come inside, darling.

**SELMA:** I'm going to sit out here for a while, Mama.

**MAMA:** Okay, dear.

**SELMA:** I'm just going to sit out here.

**MAMA:** All right.

**SELMA:** Oh, mama?

**MAMA:** Yes.

**SELMA:** Could you put a little music on?

**MAMA:** Of course. Oh, Selma, Alice Davenport's son just got divorced. He's from Knoxville. They're broad-minded down there. He wouldn't care about that kind of thing at all.

**SELMA:** Give it a rest.

*(MAMA exits the porch, enters the house, and turns on the radio. SELMA remains outside. Music fades up as the lights slowly dim down. Blackout.)*

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