

Tent City: A One-Act Play
Alysia Catanzaro

CHARACTERS

TRINA is a light skinned African American woman in her midtwenties. She speaks with a thick, New Orleans accent and often has an attitude with Devon. She has short black curly hair. She wears a light gray sweater jacket, a light pink cami with no bra, a dark pair of men's sweat pants, and lime green flip-flops. Underneath her sweatpants, she wears tight pink shorts. She has a boyish figure, but she is still pleasant to look at. Devon's girlfriend.

DEVON is an African American man in his late twenties. He speaks with a thick, New Orleans accent. He has shoulder length braided hair that is partially covered by a white du-rag, and he is growing a moustache and goatee. He wears a baggy, white Saints jersey, black athletic pants, and Nike shoes. Trina's boyfriend.

EARL is a white man in his sixties. He is a Vietnam Veteran. He wears an old, torn up hunter green jacket, khaki pants, and brown boots. He speaks with an accent, but is not from the South. He is a heavy drinker, always searching for more.

JACK is an African American man in his thirties. He has a shaved head and wears a loose pair of dirty jeans and a red shirt. He speaks with a Southern accent, but he is not from New Orleans. He spends a majority of his day passed out from excessive drinking. He is always seen with his Jack Daniel's bottle.

TERRENCE is a white man in his forties. He wears a white under-

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shirt and a pair of holey blue jeans, and he is barefoot. He is mentally ill, often wandering around the stage and acting like an animal.

SETTING

The stage is designed as the underside of a New Orleans overpass. Under the overpass, there are three tents (red, black, and blue), which can vary in size depending on the stage. Around the tents, there are various pieces of litter, particularly beer bottles and cans, crumpled paper bags of fast food, and discarded clothing. The backdrop consists of the New Orleans Superdome, various city buildings, and dark clouds.

PROPS

*Trina's bag containing feather boa and pink high heels
Jack Daniel's bottle
Three aluminum cans
Empty Vodka bottle
Quarter empty Bourbon bottle
Various empty beer bottles and cans
Joint
Wallet
Bottle of Southern Comfort
Five bags of fast food (containing fries and hamburger)
Audio of traffic noise (cars honking, cars traveling over overpass, shouting, etc.)*

NOTES

During blackouts, audio of traffic noise should be played until the lights come back on stage for the next scene. The blackouts should be brief, allowing the actor just enough time to prepare for the next scene.

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White lights come up on the front of the stage. Colored lights shine off the background, changing for each scene.

Unless specified, the actor for Terrence should move freely around the stage.

SCENE I

AT RISE: *Spotlight comes on Trina, sitting on the left corner of the stage. Her head hangs, not looking at the audience. Meanwhile, the audience hears traffic noise to indicate the set is under an overpass.*

Trina lifts her head, staring out at the audience. The traffic noise fades out as she speaks.

TRINA: (*attitude*) What ya lookin' at? (*Beat*) I asked ya a question? What ya lookin' at? (*Beat*). Ya think ya betta than me, drivin' ya fancy Lexus and s—t. (*Beat*) Yeah, I'm talkin' to ya. Who else be here? (*Beat*) I know ya kind. Don't give a damn about me, or no one else. Ya think y'all betta dan everyone, but dat's cool. I don't need ya none. Not ya dollars. Not ya food. Not you.

Trina looks back down, and the white lights come on the rest of the stage, revealing the three tents. Orange lights shine on the background. On the right side of the stage, Jack is passed out by the blue tent with a half empty bottle of Jack Daniel's. Devon immerses from the red tent, covering his eyes as he walks over to Trina. He is not wearing his shoes. Terrence walks around aimlessly, laughing and clapping.

DEVON: Damn woman. Can't ya shut ya mouth fa one G—d— hour?

TRINA: Dose damn people done lookin' at me again. Like dey so much betta. I'm . . .

DEVON: (*Interrupting*) Everyone looks at ya when ya open ya damn mouth.

Devon walks back to the tent, digging for his shoes.

TRINA: Dey look all dah time.

DEVON: Cuz Trina, ya don't shut ya mouth.

Trina shakes her head as Devon places his shoes on.

DEVON: Ya gonna go out and make some money tonight.

TRINA: I made money dah other night. More dan usual too. Ya ain't used all of it for a fix, did ya?

DEVON: No.

TRINA: Damn, Devon.

Trina stands up and paces around, complaining.

TRINA: (*cont.*) I done told ya; we supposed to save it and get an apartment. I can't spend much more time like dis.

DEVON: It was just a little fix. Ya know I just need a little.

TRINA: Little my ass. Ya eyes be all red. Damn it, ya spent all of it.

DEVON: I'm cuttin' back.

TRINA: I ain't no fool. You ain't cuttin' nothin'. Don't know why I put up wit ya.

DEVON: Ya know why.

Terrence urinates in the background. Frustrated, Trina climbs into the red tent.

DEVON: Trina. Come on baby. Baby.

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Earl enters the scene, walking sideways with an empty vodka bottle.

EARL: Problems? (*Chuckling*) Women always got problems?

DEVON: Whatcha know 'bout women, ol' man?

EARL: More than you. (*Searching for another bottle*) I've been married before and to a pretty woman too. Turned out to be a b—h. You know during the war . . .

DEVON: (*Interrupting*) You and dat damn war again.

EARL: It was the Vietnam War. I got drafted . . .

DEVON: (*Interrupting*) Yeah, yeah, yeah. Ya acting like ya Rambo or something.

Devon ignores Earl as he rambles on.

EARL: I got drafted, and when I came back, she said I wasn't the same person no more.

*Earl finds a quarter empty bottle of Bourbon and begins drinking.
Trina immerses from the tent with a large, pink feathery bag.*

DEVON: When you done, I'll be waitin'.

TRINA: Shut ya mouth. This is the last time I'm goin' out makin' money. Damn lazy ass.

Trina exits the stage as Earl chuckles.

Blackout.

SCENE 2

AT RISE: *Yellow lights illuminate the background; white lights shine on the stage. Sitting by his tent, Earl finishes off a bottle of Bourbon, while Jack is still passed out with his half-empty bottle of*

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Jack Daniels. Terrence plays with three cans on the left of the stage. Devon sits in front of the red tent, rolling a joint. Earl stares at Jack.

EARL: You think he's dead?

DEVON: Who's dead?

EARL: Jack.

DEVON: Nah, he ain't dead.

EARL: Ain't seen him move yet.

DEVON: He ain't dead. (*Pointing*) Look. He's still breathin'. Betcha he had too much to drink.

EARL: Nah. I think he's dead.

TRINA: Devon! Devon!

Trina rushes to center stage, wearing high heels, a pink cami, short pink shorts, and a pink boa. Devon is rolling a joint.

DEVON: What ya doin' back so soon, woman?

TRINA: Come here. (*Motioning him to come to her*) Hurry up.

Devon joins Trina, feeling the joint in his hand.

DEVON: What woman? Ya know I don't time fa bulls—t.

TRINA: Look.

Trina pulls a wallet from her bag and waves it in front of him. Devon drops the joint and takes the wallet from her hand. He flips through it, finding a wad of money and fans it out. Earl pulls a pipe out of his tent and pokes Jack.

DEVON: Where'd ya get this?

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TRINA: I was dancin', and I stole it from some guy at a bachelor party.

DEVON: Ya stole it. Damn Trina. Ya tryin' ta git de cops out here. Ya know I ain't clean.

TRINA: Dey ain't gonna have no cops come out here. Dat guy was so drunk, he probably ain't realized it's gone yet.

DEVON: Ya betta hope so.

TRINA: Dey ain't comin'.

Trina leans over the money, watching Devon flip through the bills.

TRINA: (cont.) So, how much is it?

DEVON: Damn woman. Shut ya mouth.

TRINA: What?

DEVON: Ya want dem ta know 'bout dis.

Devon and Trina look to the right, seeing Earl poke Jack with a pipe. Jack doesn't move, so Earl leans over and grabs the bottle. The bottle slides slowly, but before the bottle is free, Jack jumps up.

JACK: What the f—k you doin', man?

Earl raises his arms in defense, backing up. Jack hugs his Jack Daniel's bottle.

EARL: Nothin', man.

JACK: I ain't stupid, you ol' fool.

Jack climbs in his tent.

JACK: (cont.) Crazy ol' fool.

Devon turns back to Trina.

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DEVON: So, ya want dem ta know?

TRINA: OK. No.

DEVON: Den, we need ta keep dis ta ourselves.

Terrence laughs and claps as Devon and Trina try to hide evidence of the wallet. Earl gets up, walking over to Devon and Trina.

EARL: What ya'll got?

DEVON: Nothin' ol' man. Mind ya business

Earl walks off grabs his bottle. Trina and Devon exit.

Blackout.

SCENE 3

AT RISE: Green lights shine on the background as white lights come up on stage. Devon and Trina enter on the right of the stage, holding bags of fast food. Terrence crawls around the ground, acting like he's a dog. Earl sits in his tent, pulling out empty bottles. Jack is still in his tent.

DEVON: Terry. Terry. Look what I got.

Devon holds out a bag of McDonalds and shakes it. Trina nudges Devon in the side as Terrence crawls and barks his way over to them.

DEVON: (cont.) What?

TRINA: Don't act like ya don't know.

Devon holds out the bag, and Terrence grabs it with his mouth. Angry, Trina snatches a bag from Devon as Terrence crawls off and digs through the bag.

TRINA: Jack.

Still holding his Jack Daniel's bottle, Jack peeps out, seeing the bag, and then he climbs out of his tent and takes the bag from her. Devon walks over to Earl, who finds a bottle Southern Comfort.

DEVON: Earl, here ya go man.

Devon holds the bag out to Earl. Earl stares at it and then climbs in his tent, leaving Devon shrugging.

DEVON: Come on, Trina.

TRINA: He didn't want any.

DEVON: Nah.

Devon and Trina climb into the red tent. Earl climbs out, sipping his bottle of Southern Comfort as Jack eats fries.

EARL: How much do you think they got? *(Beat)* You know they got money, right?

JACK: Who cares?

EARL: I do. We bin here before they was, and now they got money they don't look like they gonna share.

JACK: Trina's always got money when she dances, and we never get any of it.

EARL: But they got more this time. I don't know how, but they do. And they owe us. They owe us *(thinking)* rent. That's right. They owe us rent.

JACK: How they owe us rent?

EARL: Cuz, I had to clear room for them. Now Terrence ain't got no place.

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Earl and Jack lean over to look at Terrence biting a hamburger and swinging his head.

EARL: Come here, ya crazy bastard.

Terrence crawls over to Earl and Jack with the hamburger in his mouth.

EARL: (*cont.*) The point I'm trying to make is they got money, and I don't know about ya'll, but I don't.

Jack lifts up his bottle of Jack Daniel's and stares at what's left.

JACK: Neither do I.

EARL: Exactly.

Earl stands up and walks over to Devon and Trina's red tent.

EARL: (*cont.*) Just listen to them in there. I bet you they're rolling in it. All that money.

Terrence drops his hamburger, crawling over to the red tent, leaning in to listen. Earl paces around the stage. Jack lowers his bottle, waiting.

JACK: So, what are we supposed to do?

EARL: I'm thinking. (*Beat*) They're gonna leave again and spend more.

JACK: Then, we get them when we leave.

EARL: Get over here you crazy bastard.

Terrence laughs aloud. Earl grabs Terrence by the ear and drags him to Jack.

EARL: Watch him.

Blackout.

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SCENE 4

AT RISE: Red lights shine on the background as the white lights illuminated the front of the stage. Trina and Devon walk out the red tent, stopping in the middle to talk. As they talk, Earl, Jack, and Terrence creep around the background, making their way closer to Trina and Devon who are unaware.

TRINA: Come on, Devon. Let's go find an apartment.

DEVON: We'll do dat.

TRINA: When?

DEVON: After we go to the casino.

TRINA: We don't need to go to no casino. Let's go find an apartment.

DEVON: We need mo' money, Trina.

TRINA: We have enough fa an apartment.

DEVON: Yeah, maybe fa a month. Den what?

TRINA: Ya get a job.

DEVON: Trina, I won't need a job if we go ta da casino. I'll be able to double . . . no triple . . . no quadruple the money. Neither of us will have ta work.

TRINA: What if we lose da money?

DEVON: Y'ain't got nothin' ta worry 'bout baby. I know how ta play tables. In an hour, we'll have so much money dat ya won't ever have ta work at da club again.

TRINA: I don't know, Devon.

DEVON: Baby, I got this. Trust me.

Devon holds out his hand.

DEVON: (*cont.*) Come on, Baby.

Trina and Devon look at the audience. The stage lights flicker as the cast rushes Devon, attacking him and searching for the money. In the process, Trina is knocked on the ground. The lights flash for twenty seconds, the blackout. Trina cries out in the darkness.

TRINA: Devon! Devon!

Red and blue lights flicker on the stage, sending the cast scattering off scene. Devon lays on the ground unconscious. Trina crawls to him, placing his head on her lap.

TRINA: Why? Why, God, why?

Dim lights come back on stage. Red and blue lights still flash, but don't overpower the scene. Trina looks at the audience.

TRINA: (*cont.*) Now ya turn away. (*Shaking her head*) Now ya turn away. Don't give a damn about me. (*Sobbing*) Or no one else.

Trina hangs her head, sobbing loudly. The cars honk and traffic noise drowns her out at the lights fade.