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The Aperture

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More Great Plays Available From OWP

Liberation

by Steve Patterson

5 Males, 4 Females

Synopsis: Set during the heat of the Bosnian conflict, a young Bosnian soldier deserts his company, fleeing with his sister to a Sarajevo newspaper office in hopes of striking a deal. In exchange for safe passage out of Bosnia, he will give eyewitness testimony of his company's participation in the massacres of Muslim men and boys and systematic rapes of Muslim women. But before his testimony can be recorded, the office is surrounded by Serbian infantry. The newspaper editors are given 24 hours to give up the soldier or be stormed by the troops.

*Contains heavy language and violence.

Unrelenting Relaxation

by Amanda Tischer DeMaio

5 Females, 1 Male Voice

Synopsis: A powerhouse play about four European women forced into prostitution by the Japanese regime during World War II, and the doctor who tries to help them any way she can, even if it's just to help them die.

THE APERTURE

A play by Sean Christopher Lewis

CHARACTERS

ALEX...a photographer. 30's. Strong. Unsentimental. Follows own moral code. Not evil.

OKELLO JOHN...18. Former child soldier from Uganda. Intelligent but torn. Realizes he is only valued by society when holding a gun.

CAINE... A police Captain in Baltimore County. Big, brash. The man in charge. Wants to keep things under control. Played by **ALEX**.

MICHAELS... A police officer in Baltimore County. Begins as a lap-dog and becomes a wolf. Played by **OKELLO JOHN**.

GRACE... Okello John's sister in Africa. Older than the boy she is a mother of the family. Played by **ALEX**.

YOUNG OKELLO JOHN... John in Africa. A boy. Scared. Alive. Awake to the world. Played by **OKELLO JOHN**.

LETTERMAN... a swamy, huckster Late Night Host. Can be played to stereotype. Played by **OKELLO JOHN**.

DTEMBE... A religious man in Uganda. Not willing to protect JOHN for his own safety. Played by **ALEX**.

SETTING

The play has four settings or realities that exist simultaneously. They are:

- **The GALLERY** (Representing the Present; take place in ALEX'S monologue)
- **The PAST, a nature preserve, Baltimore, Maryland** (the most recent past.)
- **A police STATION in Baltimore County** (surreal take on most recent past)
- **Africa. Uganda** (The past, 4 years ago)

PRODUCTION NOTE
Or a Guide to Reading

THE APERTURE is a difficult play. In my goal to examine the Child Soldier epidemic I wanted to demonstrate the amazingly foreign feeling we have to such an atrocity here in the United States. It's almost comic to think of a group of kids in Michigan or Long Island taking over a bus and becoming soldiers. Yet, the realities of it are horrifying.

This demanded stylistic shifts for the characters and scenes of this work.

The simplest way to read the play is use the reality guides (GALLERY, PAST, STATION and AFRICA) as a means to navigate. The rules do get broken, though and it's important to understand that. As OKELLO goes deeper into his psyche and his role play he begins to take control of the events again and therefore takes control of the play. At this point the play goes from the "Safe" play acting of ALEX'S narration in the first half, to the dangerous scene play of JOHN in the second half. At this point the realities of present tense and past scenes begin to merge.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this.

Sincerely,

SCL

THE APERTURE was first produced by Raymond Bobgan for Cleveland Public Theatre. The play was directed by Craig J. George. Lighting Design by Michael Boll. Scenic Design was by Curtis L. Young. Projection Editor was by Tom Kondilas. Costume Design was by Alison Garrigan. Photography was by C. Wesley H. Crump. The Stage Manager was Danielle Hisey, she was assisted by Carly Garinger. The cast included:

Heather Anderson Boll* - Alex/Caine/Grace/Dtembe
Isaiah Isaac - Okello John/Michaels/David Letterman
*Appeared courtesy of Actors' Equity Association

THE APERTURE

(Music. Hip Hop with an African Song sung over it.

A flash of white light goes through the audience as if a giant camera has gone off.

*As the light fades we enter the **GALLERY**.*

There stands ALEX. She is in her mid to late '30's. She looks nice.

Projected behind her is a large photograph of an African boy in an Army helmet, holding a machine gun. He wears a military vest and a pair of shorts, no shoes, and looks very scared. It's an awesome photo. It is in black and white.)

ALEX: It was a photograph I took.

I still do. Take photographs.

I document. For myself, really. No paper or anything. No news source I work for.

I just find little things I find interesting and I learn about them. And I put them in frames.

Develop them. See what comes to light in a cheese-y way.

I've done it for a while.

And then I did this.

This is the one that made it big.

It's a Boy. Obviously. Machine gun in his hand. Armourment. He's wearing shorts. He's probably 18 years old. Could pass for much younger though.

I staged this photo.

It's Baltimore actually. Just outside.

There were cars just behind us. Whole freeway.

But, yeah. I made this boy... pose.

This boy I met. In Virginia. 18.

The gun and attrumants- all the trappings, really- I got at Army Navy.

The vest was from Target. We got it on sale. It was a good deal.

We'd been talking.

Boy and I

We'd been talking about how he'd come to America.

He'd come from Uganda

And in Uganda- he carried a gun. Carried severed heads, carried grenades to his chest, carried orders to kill. He even carried a boy once- who'd had his chest stomped in by other boys when he'd told their Commandant he didn't want to fight any more. He carried that boy across three villages.

Here he carried Pizza Boxes.

He carried change for customers.

He really liked the difference.

And that's when I asked him to go to the store with me.

And I've had detractors.

(The projection fades. A spotlight comes up deeper in the stage. It rises on OKELLO JOHN. A boy 18 but looking younger. He is dressed as the boy in the projection. He IS that boy.)

ALEX (CON'T): I mean, what I do is... different.

And I've heard it all- that it's wrong

That it's cheap.

And it is cheap. To my wallet. To get it into a lot of people's hands.

I mean, no. I didn't go and find him in his home.

Didn't fly there. Didn't put myself in danger.

But that doesn't make it any less real.

This boy's real.

And to say any of this around him wasn't

Would be to say he wasn't either.

Are you going to tell him that?

Because I know I'm not.

(Lights change. We are in the PAST.)

OKELLO JOHN: You thought I was older when you met me.

ALEX: You had a deep voice.

(JOHN starts to creep from his spotlight to ALEX'S disappearing into the darkness.)

OKELLO JOHN: Yes.

(JOHN now shares the same light as ALEX.)

ALEX: You snuck up on me then as well.

OKELLO JOHN: It's how we walk at night.
Besides, I was curious what you were looking at.

(They turn to look at one another. They face one another throughout, occasionally turning to look at the rock.)

ALEX: Looking? Just water. You see it?

OKELLO JOHN: Yes. It carves its way around the rock.

ALEX: Carve. *(Laughs to herself)* I like that. Like it makes its way.

OKELLO JOHN: I was wanting to meet you.

ALEX: Do you know me?

OKELLO JOHN: *(Shakes head no)* I mean I saw you. Looking at the rock.

ALEX: You're foreign.

OKELLO JOHN: Yes.

ALEX: African.

OKELLO JOHN: Yes.

ALEX: From where?

OKELLO JOHN: Nowhere you'd know.
(They look at the rock for a bit)
I... have this friend.

ALEX: Oh?

OKELLO JOHN: I work for him.

ALEX: The rock made you think of him?

OKELLO JOHN: (*Nodding*) He takes me places. Places like this sometimes. He takes me to the theater too. The theater and the opera. He loves the opera.

ALEX: Cultured. Nice he shares this with you.

OKELLO JOHN: No. See, he goes to the opera to hear a song he's heard a million times. Sung by a fat person.

ALEX: That is the opera.

OKELLO JOHN: And you go to his house and he owns this song. I mean he has it in a case. It's strange he owns a song...

ALEX: When you say it like that, it is.

OKELLO JOHN: So, he owns these songs and he goes and watches them in the city and the next day he comes here and asks me what I thought-

ALEX: And you say?

OKELLO JOHN: That it was fine. I don't really know enough to judge.

ALEX: No?

(*ALEX begins to pack her things to leave*)

Well, isn't that Interesting.

OKELLO JOHN: Wait-

ALEX: This isn't really my thing-

OKELLO JOHN: I just-

ALEX: I'm not looking to pick up younger- foreign- men today. At rocks. It's strange. I'm too old to be strange.

OKELLO JOHN: Oh?

ALEX: Way too old. I need to be reserved. Professional.

OKELLO JOHN: I see.

ALEX: So...

OKELLO JOHN: I just. I didn't tell you the interesting thing. Let me do that.

(Beat)

ALEX: Ok.

OKELLO JOHN: I tell him I do not know and then he says well "neither do I. Not at first. I hate it at first. But then I buy it. I own it. I get closer to it. I learn to love it. Because I learn how it gets me away from who I am. It's something I can say I know. Say I love and then I become that. It is intelligent and now I am intelligent. It is high brow and so... I am high brow?"

ALEX: Smart friend.
You don't agree with him?

OKELLO JOHN: I agree we don't want to be what we are. Or at least we're a lot of different things.
But you have to go I'm sure.

ALEX: Have to? That's a little strong.
(Looking at water)
That rock's gonna crack.

OKELLO JOHN: You know this?
(ALEX nods)
What will be inside?

ALEX: Gold?

OKELLO JOHN: No.

ALEX: That would be silly. Not treasure. Happiness?
(JOHN shakes head)
Love?
(JOHN shakes head)
I know: Secrets!

OKELLO JOHN: Secrets?

ALEX: Or World Peace?

(JOHN smiles)

Yeah, I think you're right. I think it will be secrets inside.

(The lights shift back. The GALLERY)

ALEX: *(To Audience)* Romantic comedies start like that.

A sweet foreigner. An odd girl.

Sometimes there's a green card involved-

OKELLO JOHN: I left the machine gun against the wall.

ALEX: Or a machine gun.

And they're oh so happy.

Firearms do that for people.

And they buy the machine gun- *(To JOHN)* is it an uzi?

OKELLO JOHN: No.

ALEX: *(To Audience)* It's not an uzi but they buy a baby carriage.

And they put the gun in it with a bonnet and a pacifier and say

"Look at our cute baby. We call it BOOM."

OKELLO JOHN: We don't have to do it this way.

ALEX: I'm telling them about our baby.

OKELLO JOHN: We didn't have a baby.

ALEX: Not a romantic comedy, then.

Can't have a romantic comedy without a baby. A baby gun.

What if I'm telling them about what we MADE?

OKELLO JOHN: What we made?

ALEX: We did do this together...

OKELLO JOHN: Sure. Will we have fun?

ALEX: Fun.

OKELLO JOHN: Like we used to. I want to have fun again.

(ALEX picks up the gun from the back wall)

ALEX: Yeah. I'll carry the baby. It's called BOOM.

OKELLO JOHN: And you call me Michaels.

(JOHN puts on a hat)

ALEX: John, he's the one who hunted you...

OKELLO JOHN: *(Smiling)* I know! It was exciting!

Come on! You're a policeman.

You're the boss.

(JOHN hands her a hat)

ALEX: *(Remembering)* I'm Caine.

OKELLO JOHN: We're both policemen. On the case.

ALEX: On the hunt. For you.

OKELLO JOHN: That's what it's like here!

Just have fun.

Laugh.

Okay?

(The lights shift to the STATION. ALEX and JOHN play CAINE and MICHAELS. The tone is funny, absurd, over the top.)

ALEX (CAINE): MICHAELS!

JOHN (MICHAELS): Yes sir.

ALEX (CAINE): What's the deal?

JOHN (MICHAELS): Deal?

ALEX (CAINE): Skinny?

JOHN (MICHAELS): Sir?

ALEX (CAINE): The Scoop, man?
The Hoopla?
The whole kit and caboodle!

JOHN (MICHAELS): Oh! The Kit and caboodle? That would be revolution, sir.

ALEX (CAINE): Rev- It's a bunch of fourth graders.

JOHN (MICHAELS): Yes. They're very small.

ALEX (CAINE): Fuck! What is happening in Baltimore! Fourth graders don't go on revolution. They go on field trips. They drink milk through their nose.

JOHN (MICHAELS): If you say so boss-

ALEX (CAINE): You're fucking right I say so! I mean- EXCUSE ME? SIR? What were you doing in fourth grade?

JOHN (MICHAELS): Playing soccer.

ALEX (CAINE): Playing soccer...

JOHN (MICHAELS): Sometimes I pissed my pants. I was a bed-wetter sir.

ALEX (CAINE): A bed-wetter? So, you didn't stage any coups?

JOHN (MICHAELS): Not until I changed those sheets, sir.

ALEX (CAINE): Not until you changed those sheets...
Well, I guess that's how it goes. People making a mess where they live in either case.
So, what are we talking here? How many?

JOHN (MICHAELS): Dead?

ALEX (CAINE): That's right. D-E- dead.

JOHN (MICHAELS): Well, a school bus driver, a few motorists and a crossing guard- though they said she had it coming to her-

ALEX (CAINE): Michaels!

JOHN (MICHAELS): Six.

ALEX (CAINE): So these fourth graders? They're armed?

JOHN (MICHAELS): To the tooth, sir. We think they have a (*having trouble finding the word*) sits on your shoulder and blows up tanks?

ALEX (CAINE): A bazooka? okay, you think a couple of ten year olds have a bazooka. That's what you're telling me?

JOHN (MICHAELS): Yes, sir.

ALEX (CAINE): What chores are these kids doing they can afford a bazooka.

JOHN (MICHAELS): I don't know sir. I used to mow the lawn.

ALEX (CAINE): Well, very good. They've pooled their money together obviously.

This is ridiculous. Ten year olds with missiles.

Christ. How many do we think there are?

JOHN (MICHAELS): Children? About 15. Boys and girls mixed together. Perhaps one adult with them-

ALEX (CAINE): An adult? There's an adult?

(*MICHAELS shows him photos*)

JOHN (MICHAELS): Well, they're in the fourth grade sir. Curfew is a question. I'm thinking they have a chaperone.

ALEX (CAINE): For a killing spree?

JOHN (MICHAELS): Yes.

ALEX (CAINE): Oh right. That makes sense.

JOHN (MICHAELS): Sir?

ALEX (CAINE): THAT'S A SHITTY CHAPERONE, MICHAELS! Bazookas and dead bodies and you think they need someone to remind them to take a nap.

JOHN (MICHAELS): Well, these photos sir.

ALEX (CAINE): Oh my heart. Great to see they're taking precautions. Travel?

JOHN (MICHAELS): They were heading west toward the woods. It's quite a strategy they've got sir.

ALEX (CAINE): Yes. They're very clever. Well, we'll make calls. We'll block roads. That's how we start Michaels. Michaels?
(CAINE notices MICHAELS has been rubbing his jaw throughout the scene)
You okay?

JOHN (MICHAELS): Just a massage. I get tense.

ALEX (CAINE): Putting it back in place?

JOHN (MICHAELS): You could say that.
Putting it all back in place.

(Lights change. The PAST. JOHN continues to rub his jaw.)

ALEX : How's it feel now?

OKELLO JOHN: *(Quiet)* Fine.

ALEX: You sure?

OKELLO JOHN: Uh-huh. *(Points to gun)* Let me see...

ALEX: Oh! You wanna hold our child?

(ALEX holds the gun out. He takes it. Shakes his head)

ALEX: You look like our first photo.

OKELLO JOHN: You didn't call it a child then. Just gun. "Hold the gun up. Put the gun down."
You weren't trying to make it mean something.

ALEX: I was always trying to make it mean something.

OKELLO JOHN: No.

ALEX: No? What? It exploitative? Am I hurting the gun's feelings?
Everything's exploited John.

OKELLE JOHN: That isn't true...

ALEX: It is. Lovers. They exploit one another.

OKELLO JOHN: I was your lover.

ALEX: Let's not-
I'm just saying: we have Lovers and we have Friends...

OKELLO JOHN: You were my friend.

ALEX: (*Driving through*) *And we have Jobs!* And sometimes all of those things are the same thing.

OKELLO JOHN: I don't understand.
Do you want to be my lover? My friend?

ALEX: John-

OKELLO JOHN: I will give you my teeth, Alex, if you say yes...

ALEX: FAMILIES TOO! Okay? Just-
We use people until we get what we need. And then? Everything goes away.

OKELLO JOHN: Not everything.

ALEX: And it's still a surprise when it happens though, isn't it?

OKELLO JOHN: I will pull them from my head Alex. The teeth. So you'd know.

ALEX: You were exploited and you were a kid. I'm sorry John. And that's what it's like when it happens to everyone. When we get used?

It's like we're all these willful little children. We can't believe we aren't cute anymore. Can't understand that they don't want our energy around. They need to take us by the hand.

(ALEX takes JOHN by the hand)

OKELLO JOHN: You'd know how deep it really goes.

ALEX: Hush us.

(ALEX puts her finger to JOHN'S lips. HE looks at her. In Awe.)

Say, "It's okay." "It's okay. You'll be okay."

(ALEX sits JOHN in a chair at center)

And put it all to bed.

(JOHN'S head drops as if he were asleep)

Like we'll just sleep it off.

It's amazing how much even the godless need that.

"That"

Being rest.

Being peace.

Being...

OKELLO JOHN: *(In his sleep)* Grace.

ALEX: I am godless. I mean look what I do.

How I do it.

But I believe in it.

I believe we need-

OKELLO JOHN: GRACE.

ALEX: As a group. We need that.

Which means some people will have to sacrifice.

It's a bigger picture than one person.

OKELLO JOHN: *(Waking)* GRACE!

ALEX: It's a bigger picture than one country. One atrocity. It's a step towards ending them all.

(Lights shift. AFRICA.)

OKELLO JOHN: GRACE!!!!

ALEX (GRACE): I am here brother.

OKELLO JOHN: Brother? You are Grace? *(She nods)* You... are my sister. You are older than me...

ALEX (GRACE): I take care of you.

OKELLO JOHN: How old? How old am I?

ALEX (GRACE): What a thing to ask!

OKELLO JOHN: No, I fell asleep. And I woke up and now-

ALEX (GRACE): You're 14. You're a strong boy

OKELLO JOHN: And it's just you and me?

ALEX (GRACE): No, no. We have a brother. The youngest.

OKELLO JOHN: James.

ALEX (GRACE): He cries at night. He wanders outdoors when he wakes-

OKELLO JOHN: *(Overcome. Panic)* No. I don't. God Grace my teeth are chattering. I don't...

ALEX (GRACE): You don't what?

OKELLO JOHN: Know him! I remember no brother!

ALEX (GRACE): But John you just said?

OKELLO JOHN: I don't have a brother! *(Grabs jaw)* Oh God! God-you read me books?

ALEX (GRACE): I teach you, I read at night-

OKELLO JOHN: (*Holding jaw*) Teach this to stop.

ALEX (GRACE): John?

OKELLO JOHN: (*HE begins digging into his mouth at his teeth*) Tell God. He's in your book, that you read?

ALEX (GRACE): Yes.

OKELLO JOHN: Tell him to make this stop.
Please! Tell him-

(*A loud noise.*)

ALEX (GRACE): Go.

OKELLO JOHN: G-race...

ALEX (GRACE): Under the sheet. I will get you. Now go.

(*JOHN does.*)

(*The lights fade to the GALLERY.*)

ALEX: I watch him at night.
When he sleeps, after the photos.
And he looks like he runs.
My camera can't capture that. Stop motion. But he does.

Not that I have to photograph everything.
I sold the first one. And people believed it was real.
I didn't tell them that it was. They just believed it.
People believe and don't believe whatever they want.

They just make it black and white.

Simplifies the scene.
That way we can look at something
and say "oh that's about religion."

“That one is a border dispute.”
Or whatever.
Funny thing about people
They want to know about everything
Have an opinion on everything
But they don’t really want to LEARN about anything.

Like this-
When you’re a photographer
If you’re gonna use black and white-
First you have to build it up
Piece by piece

(JOHN begins to rise from where he rested.)

And a live subject-
“Use” might be a tough word here-
But when you’re the photographer
And you have the camera
Well, you’re also going to have a bit of control
You’ll have to really find it.
Manipulate it.
Coach it out

If you want the picture to really be worth anything.

(Lights shift to the PAST.)

(JOHN holds an empty bowl and a photo of what would be parents. His machine gun is over his shoulder.)

OKELLO JOHN: You wanted me to stand here holding this.

ALEX: A little more towards me. You look very cute.

OKELLO JOHN: I feel cute.
Tell me to stand here holding pictures of parents that aren’t mine. I have no parents.

ALEX: Chin up.

OKELLO JOHN: Do you have parents?

ALEX: I do. They live in upstate NY. My dad started a farm.

OKELLO JOHN: Sounds nice.

ALEX: Well mommy despises him for it. I don't think he really likes it anymore either. Rearing things- cattle, children- it's a lot of work. SO they sold all the animals.

OKELLO JOHN: All?

ALEX: And now they have just a bunch of land. And each other.

OKELLO JOHN: Do they have photos of children that aren't there's?

ALEX: No, that's crazy.

(SHE changes the roll of film)

OKELLO JOHN: I just- I never really wanted to re-live this-

ALEX: No?

OKELLO JOHN: No. You said this would help. You said-

ALEX: It is. More people have seen that one photo then would ever see you. It's your story.

OKELLO JOHN: It's not real.

ALEX: Of course it is. This is real.
I need to see your face John.

OKELLO JOHN: My face.

(Begins taking more pictures)

ALEX: Yup, I need to see "it" in the whole thing. Jaw, eyes, teeth, hair
-

OKELLO JOHN: "It."

ALEX: You're very beautiful.

(He doesn't look at her)

"It's" the pain John.

Imagine- I don't know- imagine the worst thing that happened to you over there. Say that with your eyes. Okay?

(Pause as the camera flashes. HE looks at us. It is heartbreaking)

Good. Now say some things. Like you were over there still.

OKELLO JOHN: Like?

ALEX: Like anything. Mom. Dad. Lunchtime.

OKELLO JOHN: Infantry.

ALEX: Sure that's different. Infantry.

OKELLO JOHN: *(Click)* Artillery.

(Click) Officer.

ALEX: Good. Keep going. Just associate.

OKELLO JOHN: Private.

(Click)

Corporal.

(Click)

Luftenant.

ALEX: What else?

OKELLO JOHN: Front line Airfield Ambush Bombard Advance Set fire.

(Beat)

Kill.

ALEX: What?

OKELLO JOHN: Kill.

ALEX: Maybe you should pick the baby up again.

(HE picks up the gun)

That's good, John. You're doing good.

You're doing so good.

(Lights shift. The GALLERY.)

(ALEX takes photos of the audience.)

ALEX (CON'T): See, a war happens in another country. And soldiers go over and reporters go over. The soldiers send back letters, the reporters send back photos. Sometimes both are embellished. I mean there's photos of bombings and offensives. And sometimes when they send these photos they'll add a little smoke. Gather a little crowd. Move a soldier a little to the right. A little to the left. Get them into the right light. If you held up two photos: the published and the unpublished? The published one would be the more gruesome. The unpublished one would be the one doctored. And he's giving you facts!

The journalism just becomes Art. You see? Because Art? Is a statement. Journalism's not. And me? I'm not a fucking journalist. I don't ask for my subject. I wasn't assigned.

You want facts? You want me to be sincere to him?

Fine

There is a war in another country.

And little boys?

Are drinking blood.

I mean

Can we even imagine that's over here?

(Lights begin to shift to the STATION.)

JOHN (MICHAELS): The kids on the bus...

ALEX (CAINE): What?

JOHN (MICHAELS): They're being led by an African, sir...

ALEX (CAINE): An African? From Africa? Not an African American?
(MICHAELS shakes head "no") Oh man-

JOHN (MICHAELS): Sir?

ALEX (CAINE): OH JESUS.

JOHN (MICHAELS): Are you all right?

ALEX (CAINE): An African! Oh wow.

(CAINE Takes pills)

JOHN (MICHAELS): Sir?

ALEX (CAINE): We've got a dilemma on our hands.

JOHN (MICHAELS): I know. Making national headlines. The president even-

ALEX (CAINE): Fuck the president-

JOHN (MICHAELS): Sir?

ALEX (CAINE): We've got a media- circus- waiting to erupt Michaels!

JOHN (MICHAELS): That's what I'm saying Sir. That's what I see.

ALEX (CAINE): No you don't. You don't see. The president! The president you said. Because you're stupid!

JOHN (MICHAELS): I am not stupid, sir.

ALEX (CAINE): It's the media-

JOHN (MICHAELS): I have magna cum laude-

ALEX (CAINE): They'll poke in here Michaels...

JOHN (MICHAELS): I speak three languages. A Student Ambassador-

ALEX (CAINE): What?

JOHN (MICHAELS): I speak three languages.

ALEX (CAINE): Woopy-doo. You're impressing me? We've got rabid kids on the loose and you're showing off. What do you want me to say? 'Wanna go on a date?'

JOHN (MICHAELS): I'm sorry I'm taken sir-

ALEX (CAINE): You don't reject me, understand mister.

(Silence)

Now, I'm sorry I called you stupid.

JOHN (MICHAELS): And... I'm sorry I didn't want to go on a date with you.

(Beat)

ALEX (CAINE): It wasn't a real date.

JOHN (MICHAELS): Of course-

ALEX (CAINE): I was being silly-

JOHN (MICHAELS): Right.

ALEX (CAINE): Yes.

JOHN (MICHAELS): Yes.

ALEX (CAINE): Well. An African?

JOHN (MICHAELS): I'm afraid so.

ALEX (CAINE): Do we know his name?

JOHN (MICHAELS): Okello. John. Here's a picture.

ALEX (CAINE): That's a very big head.

JOHN (MICHAELS): Indeed.

ALEX (CAINE): That things huge.

JOHN (MICHAELS): A melon. He's got a melon head...

ALEX (CAINE): Come on!

JOHN (MICHAELS): What?

ALEX (CAINE): We have to be sensitive. No melon. No chicken. No collared greens-

JOHN (MICHAELS): Sir-

ALEX (CAINE): The media?! Please.

JOHN (MICHAELS): I was talking about his head.

ALEX (CAINE): Sure and then it gets in an editing room and the next thing you know is a picture of Mr. Okello here and a girl with bad perfume interviewing you as they ask what's the perpetrator eat, Officer Michaels?

JOHN (MICHAELS): Melon.

ALEX (CAINE): Oh does he also drink Kool Aid? Or any other fuckin' stereotype? So, be cool.

JOHN (MICHAELS): I will.

ALEX (CAINE): And they're out here? These kids.

JOHN (MICHAELS): Yes.

ALEX (CAINE): All around us.

JOHN (MICHAELS): In the brush, sir.

ALEX (CAINE): This type of thing doesn't happen here Michaels. I promise you we're gonna snuff'em out

JOHN (MICHAELS): Sir?

CAINE: You know what this would be like somewhere else... If we were in Serbia, Somalia, or fuck! That entire continent-

MICHAELS: We'd have no tolerance for this.

CAINE: Damn straight.

MICHAELS: We'd decapitate them.

(The scene grows darker and more fevered. The lights change as they act out the following in a frenzy.)

CAINE: We would!
We would cut off their heads. We'd say Luftenant!

MICHAELS: Yes Sah!

CAINE: Mosquitoes Luftenant! Dese boys are mosquitos!

MICHAELS: YAH!

CAINE: AND WHAT DO WE DO TO MOSQUITES, LUFTENANT!

MICHAELS: BLOOD, SAH. BLOOD!

CAINE: WHA?

MICHAELS: BLOOD SAH BLOOD!

CAINE: DO YOU WANT THEIR BLOOD?

MICHAELS: YES SAH?

CAINE: WHA?

MICHAELS: YES SAH!

CAINE: WHA?

MICHAELS: YES SAH!

(The fever breaks. Normalcy.)

CAINE: ...I mean really.

MICHAELS: And the ones that put this in their heads?

CAINE: Deplorable. Taking advantage. That's where the example needs to be made.

MICHAELS: I believe that sir.
I really do.

CAINE: What else do you believe, Michaels?

MICHAELS: I believe in this country, sir.
That things like this don't happen here.
And if they do we crush them.
And if they happen somewhere else
We crush them there as well.
We stop them. And we live better.
I believe that very much sir.

CAINE: You've inspired me.

MICHAELS: Sir.

CAINE: You really have. We're going to find who brought this problem here.

MICHAELS: Yes Sah!

CAINE: And then we'll drag them into the streets. By nail and foot. By blood. By our hands. By what makes us right. We'll make the crumble with fear! Oh! My chest...This doesn't happen here. It just doesn't. Oh!

(Lights change. The PAST.)

ALEX: How is the rock?

OKELLO JOHN: It splits more and more.

ALEX: The skin on your jaw... you've been scratching?

OKELLO JOHN: A little.

ALEX: You've been holding the gun close lately...

OKELLO JOHN: Just taking care of it... remembering what to do with it...

ALEX: Clean it, feed it, carry it...

OKELLO JOHN: Yes.

ALEX: You name it? (*HE hakes head "no"*) A bastard, then...

OKELLO JOHN: I... I think you should hold it for a bit.

ALEX: Me?

OKELLO JOHN: (*Nods*) Be its mother.

ALEX: All right. "Hush little baby don't say a word..."

(*Takes it*)

How do I look?

OKELLO JOHN: Sexy.

ALEX: I bet. I used to look at this porno with women and guns. (*HE looks at her. SHE dismisses his look*) I'd look at it for a project... Figure out just how someone could possibly get the lighting that bad and it'd still be erotic... It was strange. John? (*Looking at gun*) Did you have a baby back home?

OKELLO JOHN: No. No baby. No.

ALEX: Did you want one?

OKELLO JOHN: No- want one? No I never wanted that...

ALEX: Of course. Of course you didn't... I'm being tasteless. I... I'll put this down. (*SHE puts the gun down and looks at his jaw. Touches it*) God... it hurt? (*Shakes head 'no'*) And you don't remember? (*Shakes head 'no'*) You remember everything you told me- about how you got here?

OKELLO JOHN: Yes.

ALEX: You were a boxer-

OKELLO JOHN: In the Army, yes. After the government beat the rebel army who took us- they put us in their army too.