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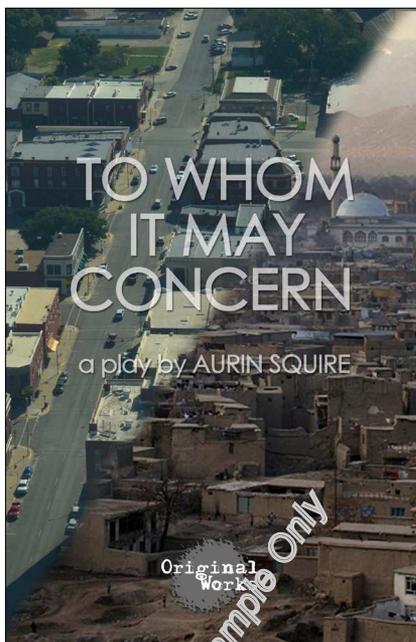
Defacing Michael Jackson

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Aurin Squire*



Synopsis: *To Whom It May Concern* is an epistolary play about transcendent and oft-kilter ways of love and internet relationships. When a 15- year-old boy writes a letter to a soldier and is confused for an older woman, a series of seductive exchanges begins, leading to an explosive encounter.

Cast Size: 2 Males

Defacing Michael Jackson

**By
Aurin Squire**

Sample Only

Defacing Michael Jackson was first produced by Flying Elephant Productions in Chicago, IL on July 27, 2018. The production was directed by Alexis J. Roston and the cast and crew was as follows:

Cast (in alphabetical order):

JACK - Samuel Martin

FRENCHY - Jory (JoJo) Pender

RED, YELLOW, COMMISH - Eldridge Shannon

OBADIAH - Christopher Taylor

Production Team:

Nicholas Schwartz (scenic design)

Petter Wahlbäck (sound design)

Jesse Gowens (costume design)

Becs Bartle (lighting design)

Jordan Affeldt (stage manager)

SETTING

1984. The arid and abandoned land of Opa Locka, Florida.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

The story is told with four actors.

FLORIDA TRACK A:

1. OBADIAH – light-skin teenage black boy and older adult man who narrates.

FLORIDA TRACK B:

1. FRENCHY– dark-skinned black teenager

FLORIDA TRACK C:

1. RED– mentally-challenged black twin
2. YELLOW - other black twin who stutters
3. CITY COMMISSIONER - black commissioner

FLORIDA TRACK D:

1. JACK – white teenage boy new to area.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The stage is bare for almost the entire play. The objects in the play can be mimed, but it's the directors choice as to how many objects. The actors should be specific with objects mimed.

Obadiah narrates the story as an older man, but lives in the piece as a teenager. Light shifts reflect a change from present to past as well as a jump to a new locations. The scene changes are minimal and the entire play should flow together without stopping.

The MJ mural can be mimed as well. If it exists then it can be created through slides, video, or just fragments of photos. As long as there is a sense of regeneration and disintegration throughout the play.

DEFACING MICHAEL JACKSON

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

OBADIAH: Can you take yourself back? Before the rubble and ash of the Twin Towers, Oklahoma City and Waco. Before crack, Columbine, Atkins, and AIDS. Further back, before Clarence and Anita, Bush and Quayle, Jim and Tammy Faye, even further! Before televangelists, telemarketing and *Teletubbies*. And here we are. The year of the eternal future: 1984. Opa Locka, Florida: a flat city of gasoline stations, abandoned parking lots, and a drainage canal where every year a few drunks drown in the weed-choked black water that carry waste from Miami and into the Everglades. A place where something is always getting started and nothing is ever finished. This is the edge. Of black and white. Of innocence and corruption. Of naïve optimism and jaded cynicism. Of the fading cold war and the approaching hot peace. Metal jacks and *Thundercats*. *GI Joes* and *Cabbage Patch*. And rising above it all is one man who they come to see. I aesthetically structured the room so that all eyes could see. They filed in with rubber bands, cracker jack toys and sticky sweet and sour fingers. The lights are turned off 30 seconds before the beginning. To set the mood. And the crowd hushes in reverential silence. Can you go back? I can.

(LIGHTS SHIFT. OBADIAH is a teeanger shouting at his friends.)

OBADIAH: All right! Hey, quiet! My parents are in the other room. No fighting, no talking, and definitely no eating candy or food. My mom would kill me. We've only got a sofa and a loveseat and it has to last. We got Lays and Ritz, and that's all you getz. If you've already

seen him once this week, go to the back, greedy. Relax, you're in my home. My living room. My family. And if any of you have seen the retarded twins down the block, tell them to give me back my bike.

Sample Only

SCENE TWO

(FRENCHY, a sassy, dark-skinned teenager settles down a group of kids. Red, a mean-snarky teen, stands beside her.)

FRENCHY: A-ight, let's get started. I said let's get started y'all. Simmer down. BOY, YOU BETTA SIMMER DOWN! *(over-official sounding)* Welcome to 'The Opa Locka City and Miami-Dade County, Florida Michael Jackson Fan Club.' As you president, Yvonne "Frenchy" Carter I call this meeting to order. Now let's get down to business because I got great news and I ain't tryin' to mess around w'ich y'all today. The first thing you can do is thank me because I am the best president ever.

RED: You da only president ever.

FRENCHY: I'm the only one qualified to fill the shoes of being responsible enough to do this, Red.

RED: You da' HNIC for now.

FRENCHY: Thanks for the fortune cookie, Niggadamus.

OBADIAH: -Frenchy! Get to the news.

FRENCHY: Well ANY-way. The city of Opa Locka is finally starting to come around to our love of Michael Jackson: the greatest musician and entertainer in the whole universe. I mean, did you see what he did on-

OBADIAH: -Frenchy.

FRENCHY: Ahem. As I was saying Opa Locka wants to honor Michael Jackson and wants us teens -and even retarded kids like Red- to be involved. So they're gonna build a giant mural on the city hall building wall!

And we're going to get to help make a monument to Michael. I'm telling you this is just the sort of thing that'll bring the Jacksons in to town. Get a mural, a few statues, maybe a theme park.

OBADIAH: We can just start with the mural first. This is kind of exciting. A mural. Wow.

(BEAT)

OBADIAH: What is a mural?

FRENCHY: It's a thing, okay. A very big thing. So stop bothering me about dumb details. A mural is a fancy work of art. And it's gonna have Michael Jackson on it.

RED: Better keep Frenchy's face away from it or she'll crack the whole damn picture.

FRENCHY: *(fake laughing)* Ahehahaha...that's so funny Red. No wonder you and your brother came out retarded. Your momma probably saw your face and tried to shove you back in.

OBADIAH: How are we gonna do this mural thing?

FRENCHY: Well, I, as your trusted president have been put in charge of it. I'm gonna be picking out different fans to help put it together. Don't worry, Obie you're at the top of my list.

OBADIAH: You'd do that for me?

FRENCHY: Hold me.

OBADIAH: What?

FRENCHY: I mean... I'd do anything for my favorite Michael Jackson fan club treasurer. Any other news?

RED: *(breaking their intimacy)* There's a new family that moved in down the street!

FRENCHY: You bug-eyed muthafucka-

OBADIAH: -Frenchy!

FRENCHY: *(composing herself)* Ahem. Okay? So you think we should invite them into the club?

RED: No, we should see if they got any cool stuff we can sneak on.

FRENCHY: Meeting adjourned.

(Lights shift.)

OBADIAH: As it turns out the mural would be a pretty big deal. It would be a collection of Michael Jackson memorabilia from fans. We would all get a chance to have our voices heard.

SCENE THREE

(YELLOW and FRENCHY play jacks. Yellow, the light-skinned twin of Red, is a boy with a speech impediment. After a toss, he swipes some of the jacks.)

FRENCHY: Uh-uh! Gimme back my jacks.

YELLOW: I w-w-win.

FRENCHY: You cheatin'!

YELLOW: Fu-fu-fair as square.

FRENCHY: Youze a lying cheatin' retard.

YELLOW: ...ah-ah-I nu-never lie.

FRENCHY: I'm finna go to Obie's house becuz I ain't playin' wit you no more. Gimme back my jacks, retard!

YELLOW: Nu-nuh-uh, ugly!

FRENCHY: Who you calling ugly, retard! You so stupid that when you count to ten, you get stuck at one.

YELLOW: Your...so ugly w-when you t-take a bath the water j-jumps out.

FRENCHY: Yeah, well you're so stupid that you took a blood test and failed.

YELLOW: Yuh-you so ugly you make onions cry.

FRENCHY: That ain't nuthin' because you so stupid that you tried to mail a letter with food stamps. You so stupid, you took a ruler to bed to see how long you slept! You is so stupid! That, that...they had to burn down the second grade to get your ass out of it. That's how stupid you are!

YELLOW: So? My momma said you uglier than s-s-sin on Sunday. Yuh-yuh-you so ugly... your doctor is a vet. Wuh-when you g-get up, th-the s-sun goes down. Yuh-you s-so ugly that if-f ugly wuh-were br-bricks you'd be the Guh-Great Wall of Ch-China. D-d-damn...youze ugly!

FRENCHY: Gimme back my jacks!

YELLOW: Muh-make me!

FRENCHY: Ima tell yo moma!

YELLOW: S-so? M-my momma don't like you. S-she said you t-too ugly.

FRENCHY: Then Imma tell my moma!

(YELLOW drops the jacks and FRENCHY scoops them up. She begins to leave.)

YELLOW: Wait!

FRENCHY: What? *(imitating)* 'Yuh-yuh-you g-g-got s-something t-to s-say?'

YELLOW: A secret.

FRENCHY: No you don't?

YELLOW: Uh-huh.

FRENCHY: Nobody else knows? *(He shakes his head 'no'.)* Why not?

YELLOW: S-s-savin it.

FRENCHY: 'Chamon, Yellow. Tell me, fool!

YELLOW: (*wags finger*) Fuh-fuh-first, the rest of the jacks.

FRENCHY: You are evil.

(*FRENCHY hands over the rest of the jacks to Yellow.*)

FRENCHY: This better be worth it, dumbo. Now tell me. Come on, I ain't got all day. Gonna take you long enough to say it. What's the secret?

YELLOW: C-cr-crackers.

FRENCHY: Crackers?

YELLOW: Crackers... w-white people.

FRENCHY: What about them?

YELLOW: They coming.

Sample Only

SCENE FOUR

OBADIAH: In the hood when you got something everybody wants a piece. “Just lemme touch, man. Just lemme hold it for a while, man. I just wanna feel it, smell it, taste it, own it. Come on, man! Lemme borrow it fo’ a second! I’ll bring it right back!” Gimme, gimme, gimme is the ghetto anthem. My family was the first in our neighborhood. The first to have central air-conditioning. The first to have lawn sprinklers. The first to have an encyclopedia set. Oh yeah. Ghetto fabulous, that’s us. We were nigger rich and cracker poor as my cousins would say. So when we were the first to get a VCR, people lined up. And when we learned how to record something on it, the time had arrived. Because this is 1984, and the kids on my block only cared about one man.

(LIGHTS SHIFT. OBADIAH’s neck starts twitching like a zombie and he’s joined by FRENCHY and RED. They all do a quick series of dance steps like monsters. Frenchy and Red exit. OBADIAH continues to bob, grabs his crotch and unleashes a MJ-esque...)

OBADIAH: HOOOOO!!! *(LIGHT SHIFT BACK)* But I’m getting ahead of myself. All the kids would come to see, “Thriller.” That was the neighborhood activity, the daily event for us. Thriller at Obie’s home. We never got tired of it. The tape played again and again. Re-winding to the beginning...

FRENCHY (O/S): Obie-

OBADIAH: -fast forwarding to a part we liked-

FRENCHY: *(entering)* -OBIE!

OBADIAH: Quiet, Frenchy. I’m reminiscing.

FRENCHY: But we got a problem.

OBADIAH: What?

FRENCHY: White people.

OBADIAH: Excuse me?

FRENCHY: They're coming for us. Moving in and taking over. I'm scared. Hold me! *(she clutches him)*
That's better.

OBADIAH: Ahhh...Frenchy.

FRENCHY: Yes, Obie.

OBADIAH: Who told you that white people were moving in?

FRENCHY: Yellow did.

OBADIAH: But Yellow is, like... retarded. Brother is so stupid I told him we got a new color TV and he asked 'what color?' You can't believe what he tells you.

FRENCHY: He's never wrong. Kiss me.

OBADIAH: What?!? *(removes her)* Wait a minute. Where are these alleged White people?

FRENCHY: Down the street, near the canal. Where is you going?

OBADIAH: I'm going to go see for myself.

FRENCHY: But you might get hurt! Aren't you scared?

OBADIAH: Why would I be scared? I see White people all the time on TV.

SCENE FIVE

(Stakeout. OBADIAH and Yellow lay on the ground. OBADIAH cups his hands into a pair of binoculars and scans the horizon back and forth. Yellow steals one of Obadi-ah's hands and looks through it, and they scan the horizon as Obadi-ah talks.)

OBADIAH: We're scared of what we don't know, right? Space aliens, Big Foot, Hamburger Helper and white people. I mean this is Opa-Locka. A city of blacks built in the swamps of Seminole country. A community dreamed up by a demented real estate developer who had an obsession with "One Thousand and One Nights" and an Arab fetish. Opa Locka has the largest collection of Moorish architecture in the western hemisphere. Blacks, Seminoles, Arabs, Moors. We are a tattered village of outcast people, ideas and history. We relate to Michael Jackson. A poor boy from Gary, Indiana with a fat nose, goofy grin and high voice. We live his life and see this outsider become the ultimate insider. You live as an outcasts, a minority and then one day...

(JACK enters.)

OBADIAH: ...the majority arrives at your door. They have everything and you have nothing, so what do they want with your small little community? But you shouldn't be rude or make them feel uncomfortable.

(LIGHTS SHIFT.)

OBADIAH: What are you doing here?

JACK: Hi, I'm new in the neighborhood.

OBADIAH: Why?

JACK: Why?

OBADIAH: Yes, why?

JACK: Because my parents moved here. Hi, I'm Wes.

OBADIAH: No, you're not.

JACK: I'm not?

OBADIAH: No, that's not your name.

JACK: Yes it is.

OBADIAH: The neighborhood's been talking and we've decided that your name is Jack. That's your new name, Jack.

JACK: But everyone calls me Wes.

OBADIAH: No, they don't. Everyone calls you Jack, Jack.

JACK: Why?

OBADIAH: No one told us your name, so someone just started calling you Jack and it stuck. *(to audience)* They actually called him Cracker Jack...don't look at me. I didn't come up with it. *(to JACK)* So now everyone calls you Jack, and it's going to be a pretty hard name to shake.

JACK: But I just got here.

OBADIAH: Your name arrived ahead of you. I'm Obie. This is Yellow.

JACK: Is that his real name?

OBADIAH: I don't know. Is that your real name? *(Yellow shrugs)* Well that's what we call him.

YELLOW: M-m-my b-brother is Red.

OBADIAH: Red and Yellow are twins.

JACK: *(to OBADIAH)* Oh... he's a little... slow.

OBADIAH: Slow? No, he's very fast. He's just retarded.
Him and his brother. Only difference is Yellow stutters.

JACK: That's so sad.

OBADIAH: Sad my ass. They're both thieves.

YELLOW: Nu-no, w-we ain't.

OBADIAH: Oh yeah, then where's my BMX?

YELLOW: Red's got it.

OBADIAH: And then I got to Red and he says Yellow's got it. This is what they do.

JACK: Then you should call the police.

OBADIAH: The police? Jack, what the hell is wrong with you? I said I wanted my bike back. I didn't say I wanted him killed.

JACK: No, the police don't kill people. My dad said they help people fix their problems.

(YELLOW and OBADIAH look at each other and then to the audience.)

OBADIAH: You see how strange Jack is? But I'll be nice. *(to JACK)* Jack, your dad is a liar.

JACK: So now you're calling my Dad a liar?

OBADIAH: Well yeah.

(YELLOW and OBADIAH laugh at him. Jack looks at them.)

JACK: I guess I'm outnumbered.

OBADIAH: Get used to it.

JACK: *(humming)* ...'helpless like a baby.'

OBADIAH: What?

JACK: You know, the song...'looking in the mirror...
helpless like a baby. I can't help it.'

OBADIAH: Michael Jackson.

JACK: Yeah. I love Michael Jackson.

OBADIAH: Are you serious?

JACK: I would give my pookie finger for a signed album.

OBADIAH: No, you wouldn't. I'd give both my thumbs
for all his signed albums.

JACK: Your thumbs? That's it?

OBADIAH: I would cut off my arm for a jacket.

JACK: I would cut off both arms for his jacket.

OBADIAH: Then how would you wear it?

JACK: I'd have the jacket stitched to my back.

OBADIAH: Wow... you've thought about this.

JACK: Michael Jackson is amazing. I'm, like, his biggest fan.

FRENCHY: (*entering quickly*) Waitwaitwaitwaitwaitwaitwaitwaitwait... Okay... um Jack, sweetie. You are not Michael Jackson's biggest fan. I am Michael Jackson's biggest fan. I am president of THE Michael Jackson fan club...I have all the albums. I write letters, I cut out all his pictures from Ebony and Jet and hang them on my wall.

JACK: Who are you?

OBADIAH: This is Frenchy.

JACK: Are all you all related?

OBADIAH: Ewwww. No, we're just all united by our devotion to Michael Jackson. It's kind of scary.

FRENCHY: Yeah, I am MJ's biggest fan. And Obie is second because he is co-founder and treasurer of the club.

JACK: Okay, well I just really like Michael Jackson. As much as you guys.

FRENCHY: You can't like him as much as us.

JACK: Why not?

OBADIAH: Frenchy, let's not get into this. Jack-

FRENCHY: Because he is our's.

JACK: ...wait... are you guys... related to Michael Jackson?!? Oh my God!! Oh my God, you do kind of look like him a little. I mean the hair, the skin-

FRENCHY: -he's ours because he's black.

JACK: So?

FRENCHY: So there is a difference. I can love... Obie, name something white...

OBADIAH: Hockey!

FRENCHY: Name something else.

OBADIAH: Ummm... serial killers! Sally Fields? Larry Bird.

FRENCHY: Perfect! So I can love Larry Bird. But I can't love him more than tall white dudes. It's different.

JACK: But when the Celtics beat the Lakers this year everyone on TV was celebrating

FRENCHY: Nah, people were happy. But it was different. Blacks were like 'yah Good game.' and white people were like 'FUCKING AMAZING, DUDE! Radical!' And Mexican didn't know what to do. They just looked confused. It was different. Bird was doing it for all them tall white dudes who can't dunk and wear ties to work.

JACK: Well I was rooting for the Lakers. I like Magic Johnson better any way. He's way cooler.

OBADIAH: See Frenchy! He likes Magic better than Bird.

FRENCHY: Yeah he's a regular Abraham Lincoln. 'Sho glad massa is so nice to us. I'se go tell the others.'

(FRENCHY and Yellow laugh and exit.)

JACK: Why did she talk like that?

OBADIAH: It's just 'fake slave' speech. All blacks are required to learn how to do it.

JACK: Oh, do you learn it to honor your people?

OBADIAH: No, it's usually to make fun of your people.

JACK: Everyone is so mean. I thought neighbors are supposed to welcome you when you're new in town.

OBADIAH: Look... we're just messing with you. Look, you can come over to my house tomorrow... if you like...

JACK: Umm... why?

OBADIAH: My parents have a VCR and we can watch... are you ready? "Thriller!"

JACK: And then we can hang out?

OBADIAH: Yeah. We'll 'hang'

JACK: Awesome, I've made my first friend.

OBADIAH: Sure.

JACK: Maybe we'll best buddies.

OBADIAH: We'll see.

JACK: And you'll call me Wes?

OBADIAH: Not a chance, Jack.

JACK: (*exiting*) ...at least I tried.

OBADIAH: Keep trying. *(to audience)* After that first meeting, I told Frenchy to be nicer to Jack. Now what we did to him was unfair, manipulative and a little cruel. But all the black kids I knew acted this way toward white kids. We knew it didn't matter if we made them squirm, because this was our way –at least for a few years- of evening the score a little. Besides, they would have the rest of their lives to take their revenge out on us. And they would.

Sample Only

SCENE SIX

(FRENCHY and RED are on the steps outside Obadiah's home.)

RED: I wonder what he got in that house. You know crackers get all the new shit when it comes out. I bet they got a lot of nice shit in that big fancy house.

FRENCHY: He ain't no motherfucking pharaoh. He's just another Howdy Doody-looking cracker. Besides, he can't be all that if he's living here.

RED: I saw the movers carrying in a black box. You know what it said? A-T-A-R-I.

FRENCHY: You lying.

RED: They got an Atari in there. Probably the 2600.

FRENCHY: Only rich folks got the 2600.

RED: He's probably playing Space Invaders in there right now.

FRENCHY: Space Invaders?

RED: Yeah, like an arcade. And he's probably got Pong and Frogger,

FRENCHY: You dreaming. You think he's got it like that?

RED: Slinks said he got a white boy moved in next door and they got Donkey Kong in there house. And dat E.T. game in the arcade.

FRENCHY: The E.T. arcade game sucked. Besides, my mom's got a Commodore at work and she said in a few years they may let us have it.

RED: You broke-ass Africans don't even have a toaster.
How you gonna get a Commodore?

FRENCHY: We don't have a toaster cuz your stupid-ass
brother tried to toast crayons in it.

RED: He was trying to make a rainbow.

*(JACK enters. Frenchy tries to be nice but is rolling her
eyes and looking at him suspiciously.)*

FRENCHY: Hey, Jack.

JACK: Hi, French.

FRENCHY: It's Frenchy.

JACK: Oh, like in "Grease"?

FRENCHY: What? No, like in Paris, France.

RED: What's happening, Jackie? Ain't it funny how life
is like Space Invaders?

JACK: I don't understand.

RED: You been playing video games in there, haven't
you?

JACK: No.

RED: Let me see your fingers.

FRENCHY: Don't mind Red. We're trying to get him to
switch to a different race. Something a little less embar-
rassing for our people.

RED: Frenchy, his finger tips are hard. He's playing vid-
eo games!

FRENCHY: Ignore the felon. Look I'm sorry about what I said earlier. We wanted to welcome you into our club... if you were interested in joining.

JACK: Sure. I got a lot of cool Michael Jackson stuff we can do. We can have a dance party. Buy gloves and put glitter on them-

FRENCHY: -that's great, but all MJ related activities have to run through me. But first we have to ask you a few questions. An entrance exam we give it to all of the members.

JACK: Wow, an exam. It sounds so official. Is there anything I should do to prepare-

FRENCHY: -first question. Michael Jackson was born where?

JACK: That's easy. Gary, Indiana.

FRENCHY: How many Jackson kids?

JACK: 9.

FRENCHY: 10.

JACK: Shoot. But Michael was the 8th.

FRENCHY: No, he was the 7th.

OBADIAH: (*entering*) He was the 8th. Everyone getting along?

FRENCHY: Yeah. Just getting to know Jack a little better.

JACK: They're giving me the entrance exam into your club.

OBADIAH: Entrance exam? We don't have-

FRENCHY: -Next question. What was the Jackson 5's first hit?

JACK: Easy. "I Want You Back."

FRENCHY: First solo hit?

JACK: Umm...

FRENCHY: ...ah-ha! I thought so! "Don't Stop Till You Get Enough!"

JACK: ...no it wasn't.

FRENCHY: Yeah it was Jack. I told you, you don't love him like I do.

JACK: It was "You Can't Win." From "The Wiz."

FRENCHY: What?

OBADIAH: He's right. "The Wiz" did come out before that.

FRENCHY: Wait... okay... movie soundtracks don't count.

JACK: You didn't say that.

FRENCHY: Well I'm saying it now.

OBADIAH: All right. Enough. We're here today for "Thriller." Who wants to see it?

(Everyone scream. Jack stands up and starts dancing excitedly.)

FRENCHY: Sit your cracker ass down!

(Jack stops dancing.)

OBADIAH: Frenchy, remember: nice.

FRENCHY: I'm sorry. Jack, please sit your cracker ass down.

(Jack sits down.)

OBADIAH: Thank you. Now before we get to Thriller I have an even bigger surprise: a meeting.

(Frenchy and Red boo.)

OBADIAH: As your treasurer I went down and asked about the mural costs and they said someone has agreed to donate the entire amount. We don't have to ask for any money or dig into our savings, which is good because we only have about 37 cents left out of the founder's initial dollar.

FRENCHY: Obie that's great! You are so brilliant, I knew you would be perfect as treasurer of my fan club. How did you get-

OBADIAH: -We got an angel donor.

FRENCHY: From who?

OBADIAH: Jack.

FRENCHY: What?

JACK: My Dad said he could get his company to put up the difference.

OBADIAH: There's just one thing though...

FRENCHY: Thank you, Jack. I was wrong about you. You're in the club for sure. I'll even make you an honorary board member. This is great!!

OBADIAH: Frenchy, there's a catch though-

FRENCHY: Oh, who cares?!? As long as it gets done!

OBADIAH: I'm glad you feel that way. Cause Jack gets to organize the project.

FRENCHY: What?

OBADIAH: He thought it was only fair that since he was helping to pay for it, his son -Wesley- should be entitled to help put it together.

FRENCHY: But... that was my job.

RED: Who cares! As long as it gets done. That's what you said French.

OBADIAH: Frenchy it's gonna be a great mural. And Jack is a nice guy. He likes Michael Jackson. He knows all the trivia.

JACK: "I Got You/I Feel Good." That was the song the Jacksons performed that won them their first talent show competition. It's by James Brown, who is also very cool.

FRENCHY: But new guys can't just come in and take-over stuff. We got rules here about board members.

OBADIAH: Frenchy, you ever heard of the Golden Rule?

FRENCHY: No.

OBADIAH: He who has the gold, makes the rules.

FRENCHY: Well the board still has to vote on it.

OBADIAH: Okay. All those against this? (*Frenchy raises her hand*) All those for it (*Red and Jack raise hand*). And all those staying the hell out of it (*Obadiah raises his hand*). It passes. Congratulations Jack. Now for Thriller.

JACK: I can't wait to get started on this.

(Jack and Obadiah exit. Frenchy sits outside stewing while Red teases her.)

RED: What's the matter Frenchy? You sweating like a Haitian now. And if you keep it up, your hair gonna nap up like an African. You don't have to worry. In the movie, the White zombies eat your brains first. And since you ain't got no brains, you should be cool for a while. Hehehe. BAM!

Sample Only

SCENE SEVEN

(FRENCHY talks to friends in the fan club.)

FRENCHY: So this White boy comes in and starts messing things up. First day he takes my seat in Obie's living room for "Thriller." I mean, this is Frenchy Clark's seat. Ain't nooo-body supposed to sit in that seat. He just comes in like he's God/king all-mighty. And nobody stops him. Not even Obie. See, folks, this is how it starts. This is how white people take over. My momma told me all about it. First it's your seat, then it's the whole neighborhood. They're all sitting in there, laughing and jumping like it's the first time they've seen it. Trying to impress Cracker Jack. Like he's special. But what about Frenchy Carter? I'm the special one. Shoo, they make me sick.

(Frenchy continues miming her diatribe as the LIGHTS SHIFT and RED enters. He stands next to Frenchy. Spotlight on him. NOTE: in this exchange Yellow and Red are on opposite shoulders of Frenchy. They can be differentiated by different color shirts or baseball caps.)

RED: *(thinking)* I wonder what dem titties feel like? I heard a black woman titties are as warm as chocolate chip cookies. One big chocolate chip right in the middle of each titty. Maybe Frenchy would let me eat her chocolate chips. They in the oven, growing bigger and softer every day.

(LIGHTS SHIFT to YELLOW.)

YELLOW: *(thinking)* R-red... wa-why staring at F-Frenchy's chest? (He looks down) Dayum! S-sweet gravy. Red? R-red, I know you hear wh-what Imma thinkin'...

(LIGHTS SHIFT BACK TO RED.)

RED: Hell yeah, twin ESP. I know your thoughts. And I ain't sharing my chocolate chip cookies. Damn, this girl still talking.

FRENCHY: I can't wait till I marry Michael Jackson and move into his mansion. We'll buy this block and all of Opa Locka. What kind of a stupid name is that for a city. I'll pour gasoline on all the roofs and burn down this whole city and rename it "French Toast," which will be the name of our first kid.

RED: That's cool, Frenchy.

FRENCHY: Ahh, Red? What are you 2 felons looking at?

YELLOW: Hu-hu-he just like your shirt.

FRENCHY: Why are you two acting so weird?

YELLOW: C-cuz, w-we-we-we l-looking at-

FRENCHY: -looking at what?

RED: Nevermind! What were you saying about Michael?

FRENCHY: Oh, and we'll have ten kids and move to Africa and buy some islands. And each island will be named after our kids.

RED: Booty thicker than a bag of Snickers.

FRENCHY: And Michael will dedicate his next album to me and I'll become famous, and everyone will know me, but I won't know anyone, like all stars.

YELLOW" Thighs s-swole like Bu-bublicious.

FRENCHY: We'll be on the cover of *Ebony* and I'll be *Jet's* swimsuit model of the week, and I'll start my own hair products line called "Kool n' Kinky" which will blowout people's hair into an afro. And I'll become president and then queen and then an astronaut, in that order.

RED: Damn those chocolate chip cookies.

FRENCHY: I'll be so famous I might have to marry another husband, Tito Jackson... maybe Jermaine. If Obie acts right, I might even let him marry me. But first Michael, I promise. And, and, and... that's what is going to happen. Yeah. Just like that.

Sample Only

SCENE EIGHT

(Jack watches TV and Obadiah comes into his living room.)

OBADIAH: Jack, you ready to go to Nasty Man?

JACK: What's that?

OBADIAH: The store.

JACK: You got a store called Nasty Man?

OBADIAH: Yeah. It's the one on the corner. They couldn't afford a sign when it opened so there was no name for a while. So people-

JACK: -came up with one for it. Why do you call it that?

OBADIAH: Cause it's nasty, man! Windows got dead flies stuck to the glass, toilet is always backed up. But the boiled peanuts are amazing, the grape drink is cold, and they got a Jamaican patty that'll make you cry. You should show your face there. Nasty will probably give you a free bag of peanuts.

JACK: Really? All of sudden everyone is so nice to me.

OBADIAH: That's the Golden Rule.

JACK: I don't know who to pick for the mural.

OBADIAH: Pick whoever gives you the most.

JACK: That doesn't seem fair. Maybe you can help me?

OBADIAH: Help you how?

JACK: You can tell me who to pick for the different parts.

OBADIAH: Why me?

JACK: You were the first one who wanted to hang out with me. Even my Dad likes you. He says you're not like the others and you can come over. He even said you could even sleep over and he wouldn't even be scared.

OBADIAH: Gee, thanks.

JACK: We should have a sleepover. And then you can help me pick.

OBADIAH: Why can't you just do it?

JACK: Cause everyone is so nice to me. But not in a good way. You guys are always together, laughing and having a good time.

OBADIAH: Well you got in the club so you can always join us.

JACK: It's not the same. I'm just in the club because my Dad paid me in. But I want to be like you guys. Like a family.

OBADIAH: You're too plain to be...in, Jack.

JACK: Why?

OBADIAH: Cause all of us are messed up. That's why we came together. Frenchy's dad left and her mom drinks, Red and Yellow's dad beats the hell out of them.

JACK: Well what's wrong with you?

OBADIAH: I don't know. My parents are never around. So these guys became my family.

JACK: I can be family too.

OBADIAH: Jack, you're just too normal.

JACK: No, I have messed up stuff about me.

OBADIAH: Like what?

JACK: My Dad does things and that's why we had to leave the last place we lived at. Cause of what he did.

OBADIAH: What did he do?

JACK: I don't want to talk about it. If I tell you, you'll hate me and tell other people. And then we'll have to move again. But I just was just proving that I have messed up stuff about me too.

OBADIAH: But that isn't you. That's your Dad.

JACK: ...right. You're so smart Obie. I just want everyone here to be my friend like they are with you.

OBADIAH: Why do you think most people are friends with me?

JACK: Cause you're smart and funny?

OBADIAH: It's because I have a VCR.

JACK: That's not the only reason.

OBADIAH: Sure and we got stuff that people take. Got a mango tree in the backyard and I haven't tasted one mango from it. Why? Cause before the mangos get ripe, people peel back our fence at night and pluck the tree bald.

JACK: Frenchy likes you. A lot of the girls like you.

OBADIAH: Cause I'm high yellow.

JACK: Cause you're what?

OBADIAH: Nevermind. Look, why don't we go to Nasty Man. Get some free boiled peanuts, grape drink and go over to my place and watch "Thriller"

JACK: But no one else is over there.

OBADIAH: I'll show it just for you. Payback for the glove. A private viewing of "Thriller."

JACK: Oh... sure, okay.

OBADIAH: What's wrong?

JACK: I've seen "Thriller." Many, many times.

OBADIAH: How?

JACK: I have the tape.

OBADIAH: What?!?

JACK: I'm sorry, I was going to tell you, but my parents have a VCR. BETA. You should switch. My dad says it's the future.

OBADIAH: You had a VCR this whole time?

JACK: Yeah, my Dad keeps it hidden because he's afraid... well he just likes to keep stuff hidden. And I didn't want to say anything.

OBADIAH: Great.

JACK: I just wanted to fit in.

OBADIAH: With us poor kids, right?

JACK: No! With you. I thought you wouldn't talk to me, or... or...

OBADIAH: Or what?

JACK: Be my pal. You know, a special friend.

OBADIAH: *(to audience)* At this moment, a strange feeling is bubbling up. A chemical reaction like... something coming loose and breaking a part. My mom makes a special stew out of chopped carrots, sliced onions, diced celery, and beef chuck. Hours of stirring the pot and the meat would break apart into thin, stringy fibers of flesh until it was unrecognizable. And things inside me keep bubbling up, breaking apart, disintegrating, and falling down. This hot gray stew is in my gut. Rising up my chest and neck, up through my head. Bubbling and foaming over the brim and sliding down the sides of me.

(JACK pumps his fists and OBADIAH jerks away.)

JACK: Ah. You flinched!

(Jack punches him three times on the arm and then rubs it.)

JACK: Your turn.

(OBADIAH looks at the floor. He raises his fists slowly and suddenly jerks forward. JACK flinches.)

JACK: I flinched. Now you hit me.

(OBADIAH raises his arm but can't bring it down. There's a strange moment: intimate and tender. Obadiah breaks the moment by jokingly punching Jack and laughing.)

OBADIAH: You're funny.

JACK: *(runs off)* Hey, you wanna see something?

OBADIAH: What? You got an Atari back there, don't you? Everyone's said they've seen the box.

JACK: *(O/S)* That's all I have left. My Dad traded it in.

OBADIAH: Jack, your father should be arrested! How do you trade in an Atari? It's got Frogger!

JACK: *(re-enters with VCR tape)* I know but the salesman convinced him to buy something else. It's this weird Japanese thing. You gotta keep this a secret, ok?

OBADIAH: I better cause if I tell kids you gave away Atari, you'd lose all your cool points.

JACK: No, that's not the big secret. This is. *(shows tape)*

OBADIAH: Is that your copy of *Thriller*?

JACK: No. Look, my dad would kill me if he found this outside his stash. You can't tell anyone.

OBADIAH: All right, Jeez! Just put it in.

JACK: I don't want to show it to you now. You should come back. Let's have a sleepover.

OBADIAH: To watch a video?

JACK: Yeah, try something new, right? We can talk, hang out, and watch this. It should be watched at night.

SCENE NINE

(Pieced-together mural of Michael Jackson's face.)

OBADIAH: We were going to use a picture of Michael Jackson from "Off the Wall" and let people in the neighborhood just decorate it. The designer Jack's Dad hired said we could make a mosaic. Little pieces of Michael that each person could take away and add something to and bring back. That way everyone gets to do something. But then people started to fight over who got what, so Jack had to take over. He handed them out to people.

(Pieces of the mural disappear.)

OBADIAH: The ears were the first to go. Then the neck, hair, chin. Jack said he wanted to save the bigger parts for the bigger friends. Nasty Man gave him free boiled peanuts for a week. He puts them in this wet paper bag and Jack said it looked disgusting. The peanuts were all slimy and wet. Nasty Man had these red eyes, and his breath smelled. He had sores on his arms and he told Jack that he works on the weekend as a lawn man and that he does the lawns in half the neighborhood. The peanuts were good so Jack gave Nasty's son the nose. Frenchy got an eyebrow. I know she's the president of the fan club and all, but until she learns to be nicer to Jack that's all he's giving her.

SCENE TEN

(Frenchy talks with Yellow about how everything has gone wrong. Yellow tries to seduce her.)

FRENCHY: I call this emergency meeting of “The Opa Locka, Florida and Miami-Dade County Michael Jackson Fan Club” to order. I just want to say that we have a serious issue and that issue is Cracker Jack and how he’s taken over this club.

YELLOW: W-whut you talkin’ ‘bout?

FRENCHY: Yellow we can’t let these white folks take over. They’re like aliens. But not the cool E.T kind. Now Cracker Jack-er has taken over. And that was my project! It ain’t fair.

YELLOW: T-t-t-t-tough.

FRENCHY: Tough?

YELLOW: T-t-tough. Dat’s what they do.

FRENCHY: And are you gonna just sit there and stand for it? We need to strike back.

YELLOW: *(singing softly to her)* You can’t win. You can’t break even. And you can’t get out of the game.

(Yellow tries to kiss her. Frenchy ignores him and blocks his kiss with a sudden epiphany.)

FRENCHY: Let’s vote him outta the club! Then we go down and talk to Opa Locka city manager and tell him Cracker Jack ain’t a part of the club no more so he can’t be in charge. I’ll start up a petition to get him off the board. Just gotta come up with a catchy title, sign it, then get your brother to sign it, then some of my friends...

YELLOW: Wh-hut about Obie?

FRENCHY: He'll come around. And you'll use them claws of yours and scribble your name.

(BEAT)

FRENCHY: What's the matter?

YELLOW: J-jack has Atari. Obie t-told m-me he played it.

FRENCHY: So? Yellow, you gonna let Atari get in the way of our friendship?

YELLOW: Yup.

FRENCHY: Fine! Go on with ya' retarded ass. Probably can't even play the game. Sell your own sister down the river for a game. You see, dat's what dem white folks want you to do, Yellow. My mom used to be in wit' dem Black Panthers and she told me all about how dem white folks trick no-education-having niggers with penny candy and a smile. My momma knows all about dat.

YELLOW: J-just cuz y-yo momma so B-Black she purple d-don't make her a Black Panther.

FRENCHY: You just another house nigger.

YELLOW: W-what?

FRENCHY: A house nigger. You selling me out for Atari so you can sit up in Jack's house smiling crooked as the devil while he lets you play his games for a few minutes. I don't need you cause Obie's gonna back me up with this. And so are a lot of other kids. So go on with your stupid games.

YELLOW: (*exiting*) M-maybe retarded, b-but I ain't stupid, Frenchy.

FRENCHY: You can't let White people just take over stuff without a fight. They coming for me and all of you. They coming for the aliens, for Michael Jackson, for all of it. But I'm not gonna let them. Look at what happened to Lionel Richie! And Debarge! They get in the mix and get ya to switch.

Sample Only

SCENE ELEVEN

(Jack and Obie play Nintendo.)

OBADIAH: Jack, I was thinking about the painting?

JACK: Yeah?

OBADIAH: How about we do something nice for Frenchy?

JACK: What do you mean?

OBADIAH: I noticed you haven't given away a few pieces. You still got the eyes.

JACK: I'm saving the eyes. They're special.

OBADIAH: What's so special about them?

JACK: The eyes are the center. Everybody wants them.

OBADIAH: I just feel bad since the whole thing was sort of Frenchy's idea.

JACK: Why do you care about her?

OBADIAH: Cause she's my friend. And she's cool. You guys should be friends.

JACK: Every time I see her I try to say hi but she just turns her nose up and walks off. That's not a friend. You're my friend.

OBADIAH: Well... thanks.

JACK: You wanna see something?

OBADIAH: What?

JACK: The video. But remember....

OBADIAH: ...yeah, secret. Sure. Fine.

JACK: Cool.

(Jack stops playing Nintendo and exits. Obadiah pauses the game.)

OBADIAH: Jack rummaged under his bed and then came out with this black BETA tape and a quilt. He looked like he was carrying a grenade and put them down gently. I started to shiver.

JACK: Are you cold?

OBADIAH: A little.

JACK: *(handing him quilt)* Here.

OBADIAH: *(wrapping self in quilt)* Thanks. Then Jack put in the tape.

JACK: *(getting under quilt)* It's kind of fuzzy at first. I don't know if you can see it.

OBADIAH: Kind of... what is that? An elbow? A chin?

JACK: It takes a minute to come into focus.

OBADIAH: Okay, I see a man and a woman and...

JACK: Yeah.

OBADIAH: That's their skin. All of it.

JACK: Yeah.

OBADIAH: And they look very... very... angry. No. No, I take that back. They look... I don't know what they look like.

JACK: Isn't it cool?

OBADIAH: It feels like the room got 30 degrees colder.

JACK: My Dad said it's the real reason people started buying VCRs. So they could watch... 'this.'

OBADIAH: How did you get 'this?'

JACK: He ordered it from a catalog. It came in this package in the mail wrapped in brown paper like my school lunch. And he told me he had to hide it from my mom because she would get pissed if she saw it. So I hid it under my bed and then... when she was gone to the store a few days ago, we watched it.

OBADIAH: With your Dad?

JACK: Yeah, it's cool right? Everyone does this when they grow up. Makes you wanna grow up faster. Hey, are you all right?

OBADIAH: Huh?

JACK: You're not freaking out, are you? Cause we said we'd keep this a secret. My Dad can't find out I showed this to you.

OBADIAH: I won't tell.

JACK: Do you want me to turn it off?

OBADIAH: ...no.

(Obadiah is transfixed at the screen. Jack inches closer.)

JACK: Hey Obie? Can I feel your hair?

OBADIAH: My hair?

JACK: Yeah, it looks different.

OBADIAH: Little did I know that for decades this would be a constant question every time I ran into whites. I know they're curious but it makes me feel like I'm in a zoo. They ask and then they put their fingers on it. Some squeal with delight at the experience, others are fascinated and begin running their fingers over my scalp. And you kind of just stand or sit there as someone is touching you. But not like a person. It never feels like they're touching me. It's like they're pressing their fingers in me and I leave. My hair, my skin, my whole body. And I feel like I'm standing somewhere else watching them say...

JACK: Wow, it feels like a brillo pad. I wonder what Michael Jackson's hair feels like?

OBADIAH: Probably wet. He's got a jheri curl. A lot of activator juice.

JACK: You're funny. I feel like when you're talking to kids, you're talking over them, sort of making fun of them. My mom says that means you're probably real smart. Are you black?

OBADIAH: Yeah.

JACK: But all of you? It's just that my parents were wondering if your family was half of something. Like a Cuban or Seminole.

OBADIAH: Nope. Just black.

JACK: Really? Like forever?

OBADIAH: Okay, I think my Mom said we're part Irish.

JACK: Like Larry Bird.

OBADIAH: No, like a leprechaun. But that's a zillion years ago.

JACK: That's so cool. So you're like me.

OBADIAH: No. I'm black.

JACK: I wish I was part black. But not too black. Not like Nasty Man or Frenchy. Just enough so I could... I wish I was Black like you. Or Michael Jackson.

OBADIAH: Well I wish you were too, Jack.

JACK: Obie, I like you. Do you like me?

OBADIAH: You're... sure, Jack. I like you.

JACK: I wanna show you something my Dad showed me. Can I?

OBADIAH: Sure. Fine.

(Sound of static rising as Jack and Obadiah go under the covers. The world goes into darkness except for the eyes on the mural.)

END OF ACT ONE

END OF SAMPLE