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*Dramatic Publishing*

# WAITING TO BE INVITED

An full-length original piece  
by  
S.M. SHEPHARD-MASSAT



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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Based on a true situation from the life of my grandmother,  
Mrs. Louise Sims (1924-1979), to whom this is dedicated:  
to “Muddie,”  
much love always  
and forever  
from earth to heaven  
Take care of the girls  
“Your Oldest Gran’,”  
SMSM  
'95

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Donovan Marley, Artistic Director,  
A US WEST World Premiere.”

# WAITING TO BE INVITED

A Play in Two Acts  
For 1 Man and 5 Women

## CHARACTERS

MS. LOUISE . . late 30s to early 40s; short in stature, black

MS. ODESSA . . . . . early to late 50s; black

MS. DELORES . . . . . middle to late 30s; black

MS. RUTH . . . . . late 30s to early 40s; light-complexioned

PALMEROY BATEMAN . . bus driver; middle to late 40s,  
black

MS. GRAYSON . . . . . early to late 70s; white

TIME : Summer 1964.

PLACE: Atlanta, Georgia.

**NOTE: GLOSSARY AT END OF PLAY**

NOTE: CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

JULY 2, 1964 - The United States Congress passed a civil rights act which included provisions prohibiting discrimination in public accommodations and employment. President Johnson signed the bill in the presence of civil rights leaders, including Martin Luther King Jr., immediately after its adoption.

## ACT ONE

SETTING: *The women's dressing room of the Hornsby Toy Company. The decor has not been changed or attended to since the forties. A good-sized table stands center stage with three chairs surrounding it. Two of the chairs hold cumbersome shopping bags. A fan whirls DL. MS. DELORES and MS. LOUISE are changing into their summer white ensembles from their work uniforms now lying on table in front of them. MS. LOUISE checks herself in mirror before putting on hat. MS. ODESSA rushes in carrying two good-sized shopping bags.*

MS. ODESSA. DAMN THA' WOMAN! HOT DAMN 'ER TIME, THA' WOMAN! (*ODESSA slams her bags down on table; begins laying out her change of clothing including shoes, hat, etc.*) She made me mad, tha' woman. Sssshhhooottt, Mizz Hornsby come in 'ere tellin' e'rybody tha' don' wanna listen, talkin' two miles a minute, 'bout 'er ole "choo-choo" train trip to New Orleans. Like we s'posed to care, right? Like e'rybody's s'posed to jus' laugh, n' carry on wit' 'er about it. She didn' bring me nothin' back. Thought we wann't gon' nevah' git' outta there. (*LOUISE and DELORES zip each other up. ODESSA begins removing work clothes and shoes. ODESSA mimics.*) "Conductor say, anybody tha' can spell Kudzu gets a free lunch." Say she didn'



even know how to spell Kudzu. Well, I laughed at tha'. I sho' did. Wha' dummy don' know is wha' I wannit to say.

MS. LOUISE. So, why didn' cha'?

MS. ODESSA. An' wha' the hell do I care 'bout she dun' met some bare-mouth, hunnert n' fifty-year-ole goat geezer, in a two hunnert n' fifty-year-ole tweed suit, in three-hunnert degree weather, wunderin' up n' down "choo-choo" train aisles like a ghost, she say, lookin' fo' the res' room, huh? If you made such good friends wit' 'im, you shoulda showed tha' ole man where to go pee. Tha's wha' I said to 'er. *(Stands in front of whirling fan in her slip.)*

MS. DELORES. Tha's wha' chu' tole 'er?

MS. ODESSA. Damn right.

MS. LOUISE. You tole Mizz Hornsby tha'? To 'er face?

MS. ODESSA. I jus' said I did, didn' I? She oughta be ashamed. She ain't but two-three seconds younger n' dirt e'rself.

MS. LOUISE. Fo' somebody tha' wann't innerested, you sho' was pickin' up on alot a' details 'bout tha' trip.

MS. ODESSA *(begins to dress)*. Shoot, e'rytime she say somethin' you gotta nod n' smile, nod n' smile, but tha' ole lady don' rang my bell. You can b'lieve tha'. Nevah' has, nevah' will.

MS. LOUISE. She might not rang yo' bell, but she sho' pay yo' sal'ry e'ry week tho', don' she?

MS. ODESSA. Awh, Louise. I know wha' cho' problem is. You been sweatin' fo' tha' woman an' 'er fam'ly fo' fifteen years.

MS. LOUISE. So?

MS. ODESSA. So, I ain't tryin' ta' like them people.

MS. LOUISE. Well, you were here foe' I was, Dessa.

MS. ODESSA. Only job you ever had, tho'. Bet cha'. I cain't say tha'.

MS. LOUISE. Matter a fact, Dee, this where I met 'er but I guess she dun' fo'got about tha' too, huh? (*DELORES begins gathering her things into shopping bag.*)

MS. ODESSA. I ain't fo'got nothin'. Grits ain't groceries, Louise.

MS. LOUISE. Wha' tha' mean?

MS. ODESSA. I don' choose to owe them crackers crap is wha' tha' mean. They ain't doin' nothin' special fo' me in 'ere. You the one dun' raised one chile into college offa this doll factory, an two moe' on the git'-ready. All my chirruns was raised n' grown when I come in tha' doe.

MS. LOUISE. Don' mean nothin', an' I did so have a job foe' I came to Hornsby, fo' yo' info'mation. (*Places ODESSA's hat correctly on her head.*) I wrote the num-buhs.

MS. DELORES (*looks at watch*). Come on, ya'll. Les' go.

*(DELORES straightens ODESSA's dress. LADIES gather up their things into shopping bags and exit. SET CHANGES. LADIES begin rooting through their purses for change.)*

MS. ODESSA (*to DELORES*). You sho' Ruth gon' be out there?

MS. DELORES. Yeah, she said she would.

MS. ODESSA. 'Cause I don' intend to wait on nobody.

MS. DELORES. You mean, you don' intend to wait on her. You jus' don' like 'er.

MS. ODESSA. She awright sometimes. She jus' let 'erself git' all hincty. Like 'er stuff don' stink like e'rybody elses' jus' 'cause her husband preach at tha' big ole church ya'll go to, an' 'er chirrun sang on Gospel Jubilee Radio e'ry Sunday. You know how she get sta' goin' on... (*Mimics.*) "Brotha Peterson said this, n' Brotha Peterson said tha', n' Brotha Peterson said my chirrun got the prettiest voices." Bet tha' ain't how them chirrun got on Gospel Jubilee Radio. Wha' chu' bet?

MS. DELORES. Is tha' nice to say?

MS. ODESSA. I ain't talkin' 'bout chu'.

MS. DELORES. It don' matter. You gon' try to hurt tha' girl's feelins.

MS. ODESSA. Ssshooottt, she ain't no girl. Them days is 'way behind 'er, honey. She been 'roun the moon twice foe' she got religion. She know wha' time it is an' I ain't talkin' 'bout wha's on a wristwatch neitha'.

MS. DELORES. You don' know nothin' 'bout Ruth. Ruth is nice.

*(Walks away as though spotting something coming. STAGE becomes red surrounding the INSIDE OF AN EXPRESS CITY BUS including the entrance doorway and steps. PALMEROY BATEMAN, in bus driver's uniform, is at wheel. DELORES flags bus. We hear the usual noontime STREET NOISES and the whirling of a small fan located behind PALMEROY's head.)*

MS. ODESSA. I know'd Ruth from when she was a teenager hangin' 'roun the ole Eighty-One Club wit' grown men, Dee. She don' want me to speak on wha' I know; truly. Nawh, she don' remembuh' me but I seen 'er in

action plenny' times. Oh yeah, Mizz Ruth can take care a' 'erself, tho'.

PALMEROY. Well well, this mus' be the day, then. I ain't nevah' got cha'll on a Friday afternoon befo'. Awright now.

*(ODESSA struggles a bit with bags, breathless; picks through change for fare.)*

MS. ODESSA. This mus' be yo' lucky day, then.

PALMEROY. Yes, ma'am, my lucky day indeed, Mizz Odessa. Step right up. Step right on up.

MS. ODESSA *(boards bus)*. Awright there, Mr. Bateman.

PALMEROY. Limme help ya some. *(Raises up from driver's seat.)*

MS. ODESSA. I got it. *(Puts money in fare slot.)*

PALMEROY. Oh, you ain't got to put nothin' in tha' slot, Mizz Dessa.

MS. ODESSA. Say I ain't?

PALMEROY. Nawh...

MS. ODESSA. Well, the transit folk say I do. *(ODESSA sits on long seat facing audience directly behind.)*

PALMEROY. Jus' fo' ya'll lookin' so good, gon' be e'rybody's good luck day. Let e'rybody on free jus' 'cause a' ya'll.

*(DELORES begins boarding while struggling with her extra bag and fare.)*

MS. ODESSA. Uh-huh, you let e'rybody on 'ere fo' free n' yo' job gon' be free too. Good n' free to the next application.

PALMEROY. Awh, they cain't even beg nobody take a bus job on a hot day like this. (*Wipes his face and neck with a pocket hankerchief.*)

MS. ODESSA. Plenny' people. Hush, now. Too hot fo' all tha' conversatin'. (*Takes hankerchief from purse; dabs herself.*)

PALMEROY. How you, Mizz Dee, on this day so hot chu' could cook a' egg right out there on the sidewalk?

MS. DELORES (*puts money in slot*). Don' make me no nevermind.

PALMEROY. An' look at chu' all dressed up in the hot heat.

MS. DELORES. Thank you, Palmeroy. I was raised up in the hot heat myself. (*Turns to proceed to seat; stumbles.*)

PALMEROY. Awright, Mizz Dee, don' hurt my bus, now. Watch yo'self.

MS. DELORES. I'm watchin'. (*Takes seat next to ODESSA facing her.*)

PALMEROY. Well awright, then. Today mus' be the day n' why not?

(*LOUISE puts her fare into slot; sits directly behind PALMEROY next to MS. ODESSA on long seat*)

PALMEROY (*cont'd*). My my, look at chu', Mizz Lou. E'rybody gathered up so calm, cool n' crisp. Jus' like a lil' ole bag a' brand new potato chips.

MS. ODESSA. Palmeroy, don' nobody look noway like no bag a' potato chips.

PALMEROY. Yeah, ya'll do. I mean, you look fresh. All three of ya.

MS. ODESSA. We jus' changed clothes. Cain't go in 'ere lookin' like any ole thang now, can we?

PALMERROY. You sho' cain't, Mizz Dessa.

MS. LOUISE. How you today, Palmeroy?

PALMERROY. Oh, I do fine so far, Mizz Louise. (*Mops his head with hankerchief; checks rearview.*) Hot enuff fo' ya question (*Prepares to depart.*)

MS. LOUISE. Ooh, it's scorchin' me, Palmeroy. It ain't teasin' out 'ere. (*Fumbles through her bag.*)

PALMERROY. It ain't teasin' out 'ere. I second tha' motion. (*Pulls into traffic; begins to hum.*)

MS. ODESSA. Ooh, ain't it scorchin', Louise? (*Fumbles through her bag.*)

MS. LOUISE. Ummm-hmmm, I'm tellin' you the truth. Glad we didn' have ta' wait on you no time, Palmeroy. Did, we'd be three, drippin', black spots fo' sho'.

MS. ODESSA. Yes, Lawd.

(*ALL LADIES pull out similar church fans from bags; begin fanning themselves vigorously.*)

ALL LADIES/PALMERROY. Yes, Lawd.

MS. ODESSA. An' tha' lil', ole, bitty, piece a' fan thang you got goin', makin' all tha' noise. Cain't nobody feel it but chu', Palmeroy. Tha' ain't fair.

PALMERROY. Ain't doin' me no good neitha', Mizz Dessa. Ain't no blessin'.

MS. ODESSA. These ole buses stay broke tho', don' they?

MS. LOUISE. Don' they, tho'?

PALMERROY. Yes, ma'am, they sho' do.

MS. ODESSA. The heat don' hardly work in the winter, an' the cool don' do nothin' in the summertime but blow

hot air on ya. Somebody white oughta fall out in the flo' wit' a stroke, or catch the double-pneumonia n' sue the bus com'pny. Tha'd git' tha' fixed up in a hurry...

PALMEROY. I call myself openin'...

MS. DELORES. Nip it mighty quick.

MS. LOUISE. Ummm-hmmm.

PALMEROY. Up all a' the windows n' vents foe' I started my route to git' some kinda circulation circulatin' but, sshhooottt, the cool, it's hot too. Comin' from all the exhaust from all the cars on the road you see, Mizz Dessa. Ole Palmeroy cain't do nothin' 'bout tha', I'm afraid.

MS. ODESSA. I see. I still say, one a' them white folks oughta fall out so *they'll* see.

*(Bus stops for BLACK PASSENGER. PALMEROY nods politely.)*

PALMEROY. How you? *(Bus pulls off again.)* So, today is it then huh, ladies?

MS. ODESSA. Sho' is.

MS. LOUISE. 'S got to be.

MS. DELORES. 'S now or nevah', ya'll.

MS. ODESSA. Ssshooottt, one a' them crackers in Marsh's hit me in my head, I'm mad enuff n' bad enuff to take 'em all on today.

PALMEROY *(laughs)*. Awright now, Mizz Dessa. *(Checks rearview.)*

MS. ODESSA. Tha's how come I say it like tha'. 'Cause I'm ready.

PALMEROY. Ready, yes, ma'am, Mizz Dessa. I hear too them at Marsh's, they make a special salad outta lettuce, tomato an' my'naise on Fridays.

MS. LOUISE. Me too.

PALMEROY. You heard tha' too, Mizz Louise?

MS. LOUISE. Ummm-hmmm. From Macy. She cleans up down 'ere some nights.

PALMEROY. Uh-huh, from Mizz Macy. She got the inside scoop, ain't she?

MS. LOUISE. Uh-huh. Don' she, tho'?

PALMEROY. Awright now, lettuce, tomato n' my'naise salad. Ya'll gon' be eatin' good today. (*Laughs.*)

MS. ODESSA. I eat good e'ryday.

MS. LOUISE. We see tha', Ms. Healthy-As-A-Mule Hand.

MS. ODESSA. Dawggone right. I don' need they stink.

MS. LOUISE (*to PALMEROY*). Tha' salad to go wit' these 'ere thangs called Fish Sticks they serve, Bateman. Fish in sticks, I guess. And they puttin' some kinda dressin' on it. She say it's French.

MS. DELORES (*clutches her chest, sighs deeply*). Ooohhhh...French...

PALMEROY (*nods*). Um-humph. Um-humph.

MS. DELORES. Mmmmmm, sounds right tasty to me. I luv French seafood.

PALMEROY. All the fish I evah' come in contact wit' had a head n' tail attached, Mizz Dee, but say theirs come in sticks. You b'lieve tha'?

MS. DELORES. If they say it, it mus' be so. Les' they be dupin' the public.

MS. LOUISE. Yeah, don' b'lieve e'rythang somebody say, Dee.

PALMEROY. Awright now, dupin' the public.

MS. ODESSA. Palmeroy, shut up repeatin' stuff.

PALMEROY. I cain't help it, Mizz Dessa. Ya'll 'bout to crack me up.



MS. DELORES. But, how they do it tho', I wunder? How they git' a reg'lar ole fish to be like a stick, ya'll?

MS. LOUISE. I'm sho' I cain't say, myself.

PALMEROY. Me neitha', Mizz Dee.

MS. ODESSA. Do it matter?

MS. DELORES. Well, how they eat it, number one?

MS. ODESSA. Knife n' fork, chile. Eatin' is eatin'.  
Pro'bly ain't nothin' but ole Salmon Croquette anyway.  
Bet cha'.

MS. DELORES. Dessa, is it finger food is wha' I'm askin'.  
I jus' don' wanna look like no dummy. Tha's all.

MS. ODESSA. Wha'ever they doin' to the po' fish, it cain't be too hard.

PALMEROY. Listen at chu', Mizz Dessa.

MS. LOUISE. Long as don' taste like some sticks I'll be satisfied.

PALMEROY. I bet cho' bottom dollar might can find 'em in somebody's curb market you look hard enuff. Maybe not cho' corner A&P but somewhere. Pro'bly could fix 'em up jus' as nicely if you tried; an' cheaper too. Wha' chu' thank, Mizz Dessa?

MS. ODESSA. Don' say nothin' ta' me.

MS. DELORES. Awh, we jus' goin' in 'ere to exercise our right to be, Palmeroy. I wouldn' care if I didn' eat nothin' at all.

MS. LOUISE. You better care 'cause ain't nobody goin' 'ere to jus' sit now. Tha' ain't the game plan.

MS. ODESSA. They ain't got ta' gimme nothin' but bread n' water. Sssshhhooottt, they can gimme the tablecloth to chew on. I'll sprinkle a lil' salt over it an' pick my teeth afterwards.

MS. LOUISE. Now, tha's the spirit, Dessa.

## GLOSSARY

a' - of	forgimme - forgive me
an' - and	git - get
ain't - isn't	gon' / gon' ta' - going to
anotha' - another	gran'chirrun' - grandchildren
befo' - before	hissself - himself
bes' - best	holla' - holler; to yell or speak
bet' - better	with
bi'niss - business	hunnert - hundred
bothen' - bothering	'im - him
bruh' / brougham - brother	I'm mo' - I'm going to
cain't - can't	'imself - himself
cha' - you	innerested - interested
cha'll - y'all / you all	innit - isn't it
cho' - your	's / it's
cho'self - yourself	jus' - just
chu' - you	jus' ta' - just a
cote' - court	kep' - kept
'cross - across	know'd - knowed
doe' - door	Lawd - Lord
don' - don't	leech - leash
dun - have	lil' - little
eitha' - either	lemme - let me
enuff' - enough	lookt - looked
'ere - here	ma' - my
e'ry - every	main' - man
e'ry time - every time	make 'miration - to admire
evah' - ever	'membuh - remember
exercised - emotional	mem'ry - memory
fiff - fifth	moe' - more
flo' - floor	mus' - must
foe' - four	'n - and
'foe' - before	nawh - no
foe'ty - forty	nayah' - not any / none

neitha' - neither  
'nem - them  
nevah' - never  
New Yawk - New York  
nothin' - nothing  
numbuh' - number  
offa' - off of  
origin'lly - originally  
plenny' - plenty  
read' / red' - ready  
remembuh' - remember  
'round / 'roun' - around  
sho' - sure  
sit'ations - situations  
smelt - smelled  
spec'tacla - spectacular  
s'posed - supposed  
stoe' - store  
sugah - sugar  
ta' - to  
tha' - that  
thang - thing  
thankin' / thinkin' - thinking  
tho' - though  
thoat - throat  
thoe' - throw  
tho'd / thoe'd - throwed  
thu' - through  
toe' - torn  
unbear'ble - unbearable  
wann' / wann't - wasn't  
wannit' - wanted  
weatha' - weather  
wha' - what  
whetha' - whether

wit' - with  
ya - you  
yo' - your  
yondah - over there  
younges' - youngest