

SIDE 2 - CLEO

P. 4 - CLEO Scene

During the following, **CLEO BOUVIER**, African American, late 40's, ex-educator, married lesbian is talking on the phone. She carries a wilted hibiscus.

CLEO

(into phone)

Alfie, you're twelve-years-old. You're not getting butt injections for your birthday! I don't care what the Kardashians are doing... Good... I'm glad that show's going off the air. Now maybe we can bring back the shame of having a fat ass! Call me after you do your homework. I love you, precious girl! (hanging up, then, to others) Boy, it was so much easier when I could just control her with that Elf on a Shelf. (noticing the women) Hello, you must be Haley.

CHARLENE

Haley, this is Anthony's cousin, Cleo. When Anthony left to start his law practice, Cleo bought his share of Sugarbaker's. She went from being a junior high, English teacher to our resident, landscape designer.

CLEO

Yes and apparently, not a very good one. I'm afraid I've neglected this poor little hibiscus.

HALEY

Oh, I've got the perfect thing for that. (digging in purse) I had my husband's prescription filled this morning. I can't tell you what's in it... (pushing pill into planter) because, that would violate the sanctity of my marriage.

CLEO

If that's what I think it is, I'm pretty sure that's an old wive's tale.

HALEY

Oh, no, it really works. I promise. By tomorrow, that plant will be...brimming with confidence!

MARY JO

(entering) Hello, hello, hello! I just cut my design consult short, so I could see Charlene off and welcome Miss Haley here!

CHARLENE

Mary Jo, you didn't have to do that.

MARY JO

Oh believe me, I was happy to escape. The wife, (dramatic) Bronwyn, has this giant, life-size, naked painting of herself, from when she was nine months pregnant, hanging over the living room mantle. Thank God I had my mask on 'cause I was giggling like a little, first grader.

SIDE 4 - CLEO

CLEO

Everybody's an exhibitionist now. And the women are the worst! They're just all over the internet--Look at my tight abs! Here I am on all-fours, gettin' waxed! Have you seen this? How about this? Yes, we've seen it all! You may have taken better care of yours, but we all got the same starter kit, so please stop shoving all your gadgets and noodakins in my face!

P. 14 - CLEO Scene

Haley crosses with the bag of food and sits it on the big table. Then, leaning down, to Cleo,

HALEY

Excuse me for interrupting, but your cell phone is apparently turned off...(whispering) your, uh, wife called.

CLEO

Yes? (as Haley glances at the others) It's okay... They know. Her name is Priscilla.

HALEY

Oh? Okay. That's pretty. (giggly, then) Sorry, you just make me so nervous... Anyway, it looks like her poetry class is gonna run long. Evidently... she's a professor ?

CLEO

Yes, that's what she's been telling me.

HALEY

Well, anyway, she said... don't forget to go by the grocery store on the way home.

CLEO

Okay, thank you... Was there something else?

HALEY

No, just, uh... God bless you and your wife. (exiting) I'll just get your salads ready in the big kitchen.

CLEO

That girl has never been around a gay person in her life, much less a married one. I guarantee, from now on, her number one hobby is going to be praying for me not to burn in hell.

SUZANNE

And how do you know that?

SIDE 4 - CLEO

CLEO

Because it's the number one hobby for all evangelicals. It's like... their golf.

SUZANNE

You know everyone can't just arrive here as you people like to say, "woke." Before you, Cleo, I didn't really know any lesbians. I used to be worried sick that you were gonna become attracted to me.

CLEO

I was never attracted to you.

SUZANNE

Well, a lot of people are, you know. A lot of people have wanted... some of this.

CLEO

Not me.

P.67 - CLEO Scene or Monologue

Read scene with reader OR read bold only to perform as monologue

CLEO

Seriously, people, we have not completed discussing a single book! Let's cut our losses and call it a day.

SUZANNE

Oh, of course! Let's quit now, because my book is up next and you know what it is--

CLEO

Oh, let me guess. *Gone with the Wind*?

SUZANNE

That's right! And since no one is asking, I'll ask myself-- "Tell us, Suzanne, why did you decide to revisit *Gone with the Wind*? Well, because I am deeply offended that no one wants to talk about it anymore! And also because Margaret Mitchell did such a beautiful job of telling the true history of the South!"

CLEO

Okay, you wanna talk *Gone with the Wind*? Let's do this! Let's just get it all out there on the table!

SIDE 4 - CLEO

MARY JO

Oh, Lordy, hide the children--

CLEO

First of all, *Gone with the Wind* is not history. It's fiction pretending to be history, where all the slaves were well-treated, happy and singing!

SUZANNE

That could have been true! The O'Hara's were a wonderful family!

CLEO

No one who is owned by another human being is happy, okay? And no one who owns another human being is wonderful. I'm not saying you shouldn't read it. I'm just saying, call it what it is-- bullshit! In fact, that should've been on the cover. The slave part is bullshit.

SUZANNE

You can't cancel everything, Cleo. I mean, you wouldn't even attend my last wedding because it was at a plantation. Of course, the real reason was, you wanted to be politically correct!

CLEO

No. The real reason was, I don't enjoy partying at Auschwitz. Anyway, keep your damn plantations. Just don't invite me over. Keep your monuments. Just put 'em in a museum. I'm liberal, but I'm not stupid liberal. All I care about is stop stopping us, stop harassing us, stop beating us, stop tasing us, stop choking us, stop shooting us and, oh yeah, also, get your damn knee off our necks!
(cheery)
And then we'll be good.

SUZANNE

And I am all about equality. When I was Miss Georgia, my entire platform was, (grandly)
"I refuse to rise alone!" But things don't just change overnight!

CLEO

That's true. However, **y'all have had three or four hundred years to do better. (on her look) But, hey, it's okay. Like Dr. King said, the arc of the moral universe always bends toward... you know, justice... but... just in case... just in case... it doesn't... then we gon' take it and bend it ourselves.**

JULIA

Cleo, I think you've just eloquently reimagined Martin Luther King for the twenty-first century.

SIDE 4 - CLEO

SUZANNE

Yes, that's wonderful, but I still fail to understand why I'm a Karen... Anyway, I Googled that woman and of course she was suspicious of that black guy-- in my entire life, I have never seen a black person watching birds!

CLEO

Really? Because I'm a black person and I'm watching one right now, you puffed up, little, racist canary who just proved my point!