

Nice Nails
by Aaron Ricciardi



CONTACT:

Ben Izzo

275 7th Ave, 26th Floor

New York, NY 10001

(646) 461-9383

ben.izzo@abramsartny.com

© 2017 Aaron Ricciardi

Draft 3-23-18

THE PEOPLE

The Workers

- ARIEL:** Late forties/early fifties, female, Korean-American.
Co-owner of Nice Nail, with her husband Maurice.
Thick Korean accent.
Her real name is Hyeon-Jin (賢振).
- MAURICE:** Late forties/early fifties, male, Korean-American.
Co-owner of Nice Nail, with his wife Ariel.
Thick Korean accent.
His real name is Min-Gyeong (敏敬).
- JASMINE:** Early twenties, female, Korean-American.
Maurice's and Ariel's daughter and de facto Nice Nail employee.
The slightest of Korean accents.
Her real name is Jeong-Sook (正淑).
- NOMFUNDO:** Twenties-forties, female, black South African.
New Nice Nail employee.
Thick Zulu accent.

The Visitors

- HELENE:** Late seventies/early eighties, female, Jewish-American, white.
Longtime, loyal Nice Nail customer.
Thick New York Jewish accent, originally from the Bronx.
Either dyes her hair or wears a wig *not* gray or white.
- JACOB:** Late twenties, transmasculine, Jewish-American, white.
Helene's grandson and new Nice Nail customer.
Very slight New York accent.
Has a mohawk or some funky hair color, like green.
- ALYSSA:** Twenties/thirties, female, American, any ethnicity.
Nice Nail customer. Hair long, half-up.
- LYDIA:** Early forties, female, American, any ethnicity.
Nice Nail customer. Hair long, a hot frizzy mess.
- RACHEL:** Thirties, female, American, any ethnicity.
Nice Nail customer. Hair long, in a tight pony.
- EVE:** Thirties/forties, female, American, any ethnicity.
Nice Nail customer. Hair long, down, flowy.
- KATY:** Late twenties, female, American, any ethnicity.
NY State Department of Labor investigator.
Hair long, in her face and her eyes and her mouth.
- CHARLOTTE:** Forties/fifties, female, English, any ethnicity.
Nice Nail customer. Hair short, posh.
- Played by the same actor.

THE TIME

May-August, 2015

THE PLACE

Nice Nail, a tiny nail salon in Nassau County, Long Island. There are many nail salons in Nassau County, some fancy, some not. Nice Nail is not. It's 2015, but, man, everything in this place looks like it was bought during the Bush administration. The first one.

There are manicure tables and pedicure chairs. The manicure tables might have lamps on them.

There is a display with shelves full of nail polish bottles.

There is a nail drying bar, with seats for customers. There's a counter for resting drying nails, as fans blow from above them, and fans underneath that blow air on drying toes.

A glass front door serves as the main entrance, with an Open/Closed sign dangling and a bell that tinkles when it opens. There's a window, which overlooks the street outside, with shoddy signs that say stuff like, "Manicure Pedicure \$25!" There are chairs here, along with a pile of outdated magazines waiting to be read.

In the back, there is a bathroom, a little employee closet, and a back door.

There is a counter with a cash register, behind which is an outdated stereo system. On the wall behind the cash register, a handwritten sign reads, "CASH ONLY" yes, with two Ls. When the salon is open for business, Maurice rarely, if ever, moves from his seat behind this counter.

There is a large television screen that is always playing a slideshow of landmarks and natural beauty from around the world.

THE SOUNDS

Whenever the store is open, there should be tacky spa muzak playing from the stereo—think classical music played with too much synth, or pop tunes played so acoustically on piano or guitar or mandolin that it's not clear what's even happening anymore. Oh! And lots of vague inauthentic "nature" sounds.

THE SMELL

Whenever this play is performed, the theater should be alive with the acetone-rich scent of a nail salon.

THE LANGUAGE

When Ariel speaks Korean, a translation should *not* be provided for the audience.

“When I first saw America,
it was like a huge giant,
and I was like a pygmy woman.
I made a desperate struggle with this
giant
not to fall. He whistled merrily, waving
his hands.
He was a huge man, but a man like a
snake.

Now, here I am in America, where
people drink Coca-Cola, where
people are crazy about Spielberg’s silly
films, where
people chase endless desires, where
people choose an old anachronistic
movie star as their president, where
people enjoy powerful wealth, but keep
homeless people in the street, where
people shout, "ladies first,"
and don’t allow a woman to be
president.
Now here I am from the country where
the people are burning American flags,
singing, "Yankee, go home!"
Now here I am in America, where
most of my yellow people are hungry
for McDonald’s and greedy for "Made
in USA"
My brother who has a master’s degree
in English literature
thinks about Norman Mailer’s
American Dream
while selling fishes and vegetables
to his white neighbors 24 hours a day.

My sister, who liked paintings of
Picasso’s Blue Period
is working on sewing machine, with
dyed blond hair.
When colored friends are making a
rainbow coalition
my yellow people wonder whether
yellow is on the rainbow.
They think the lighter the skin, the
closer to heaven,
the darker the skin, the closer to hell.
They decide yellow is in between.
So they smile at white and frown at
black.
They make money in the hope of
becoming a majority
and forget about the minority.

Now, here I am torn between
my own self-flattery and my own revolt.
When I think about the Native
Americans
who were deprived of their land, my
stomach cramps.
When I think about the African slaves
who were stolen from their land, I
throw up.

Now here I am in America, where
I develop a serious ulcer, a sickness of
wrath.”

“Poem by a Yellow Woman”
by Sook Ryol Ryu

ONE

*Alyssa lounges in a pedicure chair,
getting a manicure and a pedicure at the same time.
Jasmine is sitting doing her toes,
while Ariel is standing doing her fingers.
Nomfundo stands next to the pedicure chairs and watches Jasmine and Ariel work.
Maurice sits behind the counter, reading a car magazine.
Tranquil spa muzak plays.
Alyssa lies there like a member of a royal family,
mindlessly Instagramming or Snapchatting or whatevering on her phone.
It remains like this for what feels like a long time—maybe an entire minute.
(Or maybe the actors have even been onstage like this since the audience came in.)
All is serene.
That is, until Alyssa's phone rings.
The ring is a pop song that clashes with the spa muzak, and it's very loud.
Alyssa answers the phone, careful not to mess up the wet polish on her nails.*

ALYSSA

I'M TRYING TO RELAX AND YOU KEEP BOTHERING ME!

What do you want.

Well I know you think you sent the paperwork but they didn't get it, so what you think happened literally doesn't matter. Just scan it it's not hard!

(To Ariel, sweet.) Top coat please, thank you so much.

(Back to the phone.) I wasn't talking to you mother. I was talking to the nail girl.

(To Jasmine, sweet.) Can you put top coat on my toes too? Thaaaaaanksss.

(Phone.) I'm not talking to you mother!

(To Ariel and Jasmine, sweet sweet sweet.) Do you guys have Quick Dry? Omigod that would be amazing. I have a meeting. Thanks so much.

You're my guarantors. Yes I'm talking to you, omigod. You're my guarantors. I can't move into the apartment until you send in the paperwork so FIG-URE-IT-OUT.

Do you want me to live on the street? 'Cause that's what's gonna happen: I'll live in a cardboard box on the street and I'll eat McDonald's for breakfast lunch and dinner and then I'll weigh six-hundred pounds and I'll have you to thank because you don't know how to use an EFFING SCANNER.

Okay, stop yelling at me? I'm getting a manipedi at a nail place on Long Island and I've never been here before in my life and you're embarrassing me in front of everyone.

Literally you can just go to Kinko's.

*Ariel and Jasmine indicate to Alyssa that she's done
and direct her to sit at the nail drying bar.*

ALYSSA

(To Ariel and Jasmine.) Oh okay.

(Phone.) Mom HOLD ON!

*Ariel, Jasmine, and Nomfundo carry Alyssa's purse and shoes to the nail drying bar,
and they turn on the nail and toe fans for her.
Alyssa shuffles across the salon like a penguin and sits at the nail drying bar.
It takes Alyssa a while to get there.
She sits and sticks her hands and feet under the fans
and situates her phone between her shoulder and her ear.*

ALYSSA

What mom.

I don't remember what I was saying.

Oh. GO TO KINKO'S! ASK THE GUY TO HELP YOU! TELL HIM YOU NEED HIM TO
SCAN THE PAPERWORK AND E-MAIL IT TO THE MANAGEMENT COMPANY! THE
END!

Wait you got it notarized right?

Mom.

Please don't tell me you forgot to get it notarized.

Mooooooooommmmmuuuuuuuhhhhhhh.

How could you be so stupid?

It *is* a big deal! You still have to *find* a notary! Notaries are really hard to find!

They do *not* have notaries that work at Kinko's you don't know what you're talking about.

Oh yeah we did get that notarized there.

SO GO TO KINKO'S!

Why can't you just support me? Why do you tell me all the things I have to fix about myself
instead of just telling me I'm amazing?

No I know you think I'm amazing that's not what I'm saying.

I can't with you anymore. What time is it?

Oh my god I have to go!

*Alyssa makes sure her nails are dry.
She waddles to Maurice at the counter.
Helene waltzes in to Nice Nail, carrying a shopping bag.
Upon seeing Helene, Ariel preps for her manicure at her station:
she lays down a paper towel, gets a bowl with warm water, etc.*

MAURICE

(Like a song.) Hello how are you!

ARIEL, JASMINE, AND NOMFUNDO

(Like a song.) Hello how are you!

HELENE

Fair.

MAURICE, ARIEL, JASMINE, AND NOMFUNDO

Pick a color!

HELENE

Uhrite, picking a color, here we go.

Helene goes to the nail polish display.

ALYSSA

Do I pay you?

Maurice nods.

ALYSSA

(Phone.) Mom hold ON!

Alyssa very carefully takes a credit card out of her wallet.

MAURICE

Cash only.

ALYSSA

I can't understand you.

MAURICE

Cash only.

ALYSSA

(Sweet.) No one told me that? So...

Maurice points to the rather large sign behind him that says, "CASH ONLY."

ARIEL AND JASMINE

Cash only!

ALYSSA

(Phone.) Mom I have to go, this place is like in the Stone Age, they don't take cards love you too.

She hangs up.

ALYSSA

Listen, I don't have any cash so I don't know what to tell you.

MAURICE

(Pointing to the front door.) A-t-m.

ALYSSA

(Clapping her hands for emphasis.) I. Can't. Under. Stand. What. You're. Saying.

ARIEL

A-T-M!

JASMINE

Miss, there's an a-t-m at that end of the shopping center. It's not a far walk.

ALYSSA

FINE. I'll go to the goddamn a-t-m even though I have a really important open house to go to. If you even know what that is.

Alyssa realizes she's wearing paper sandals.

ALYSSA

Where are my shoes?

Everyone, including Helene, points to the nail drying bar.

ALYSSA

Oh. There they are.

Alyssa puts on her sandals, furious, and careful not to mess up her polish.

ALYSSA

Who doesn't take cards? Wake up, people! It's the twenty-first century!

*Alyssa slams the door open and storms out of Nice Nail.
A moment.*

HELENE

She should die.

*Maurice, Ariel, and Jasmine laugh their asses off. Nomfundo laughs a little too.
Helene sits at Ariel's station, placing a bottle of nail polish on the table.
Nomfundo stands to the side and watches Ariel do Helene's nails.*

ARIEL

Everyone who comes in here, they're all just like her. So rude. No manners. Not you though. Not Miss Helene.

HELENE

The most important thing in life is respect. I don't care if you got an ass that shits hundred dolla bills. You gotta have respect for people.

Helene hands Ariel the shopping bag.

HELENE

Here ya go dear.

Ariel takes a designer purse out of the bag.

ARIEL

No, Miss Helene.

HELENE

Didn't you like the Coach I gave you a while back?

ARIEL

I do. I still use it.

HELENE

So take. I have too many. What are they gonna do, sit in my closet like rejects? I'd rather give them to you than to Goodwill.

ARIEL

Very nice Miss Helene. Thank you.

HELENE

Rodney Dangerfield used to have a line "Nobody gives me respect." "No one has any respect for me." You know him, Rodney Dangerfield?

Ariel shakes her head.

HELENE

Maurice, you remember him? Rodney Dangerfield?

MAURICE

No.

HELENE

You're probably too young. He was a veeerrry funny man and he always used to say, "People don't respect me." "They don't treat me with respect." And everyone would laaaaaaugh. Because they saw the truth in it. That's what brings us together. Seeing what we have in common. And he was a Jewish boy, Rodney Dangerfield. Cohen, I think his name was. He changed it. That was back in the day people didn't like Jews very much. Still don't some places.

(To Nomfundo.) Wanna sit on my lap?

NOMFUNDO

Huh?

ARIEL

Everything okay?

Helene pounces at Nomfundo from her seat.

HELENE

Boo!

NOMFUNDO

AH!

Helene chuckles. Nomfundo is horrified.

ARIEL

(To Nomfundo.) Move!

HELENE

She's so close to me I feel like she should ask me to dinner first.

JASMINE

(To Nomfundo.) Tiana, don't get so close to the customers.

HELENE

I'm just teasing. Are you new dear?

NOMFUNDO

Yes.

JASMINE

She's in training.

NOMFUNDO

I'm in training.

HELENE

What's your name dear?

NOMFUNDO

Nomfundo.

HELENE

What is it?

NOMFUNDO

Nomfundo.

HELENE
Nadufo?

NOMFUNDO
NomFUNdo.

HELENE
What is she saying?

JASMINE
You can just call her Tiana.

HELENE
Tiana. That's easier.

NOMFUNDO
That's not my name.

*Hurricane Alyssa pummels into the salon once again
and beelines for Maurice, waving cash in the air.*

ALYSSA
Here you go! Here's your stupid money!
That a-t-m doesn't work, in case you're interested. It took me like a half hour to figure it out.
And I messed up a nail. The polish is all crinkled now.
SOMEONE FIX IT!

Jasmine grabs a bottle of nail polish, hustles to Alyssa, and fixes it.

ALYSSA
There! No! There!
(To Maurice.) Um where's my change?
(To Jasmine.) Can you move any slower? Some of us have a job to get to.

ARIEL
빌어먹을 년. Fucking bitch.

*Jasmine finishes fixing Alyssa's nail.
Maurice hands Alyssa her change.*

ALYSSA
You should one-hundred-percent take credit cards. This was like incredibly inconvenient for me.

ARIEL

(*Wielding her cuticle clippers, laughing.*) 죽고
싶어 환장했나. 갈기갈기 찢어버릴까 보다.

Let's kill her. We can chop her up into little
tiny pieces.

ALYSSA

I KNOW you're talking about me and that's REALLY rude.
Who treats people like that?

(*To Maurice.*) Teach. Your employees. To speak. *English*. This is AMERICA.

Alyssa struts to the front door.

HELENE

Honey. I think you're forgetting something. You need to give these girls a tip.

ALYSSA

Ummmmm, leave me alone.

HELENE

Look at yourself. You're behaving like an animal. They work their tushies off. Do the right thing. Give them a tip.

ALYSSA

Last I checked there's no law requiring me to give a tip when I don't think I've had good service.

HELENE

Didn't your mother teach you to act like a lady?

ALYSSA

Didn't your mother teach you to mind your business?

HELENE

My mother came to this country from Poland. At twelve years old. Alone. And then Hitler put every other member of her family in an oven. Before she met my father, she cleaned the floor of a whore house to make money, and she went to the movies every night so could learn English. These nice people had to put up with your big mouth. Give them a tip.

*Alyssa sneers at Helene,
then flashes the world's most obnoxious pageant-girl, shit-eating grin,
and marches out of the salon.*

ALYSSA

English! Learn about it!

MAURICE

We know English! We know English good!

(To Ariel.) Speak English!

Sorry Miss Helene.

HELENE

What are you sorry for?

*A photo of the Grand Palace in Bangkok, Thailand,
scrolls on to the slideshow on the television.*

HELENE

Isn't that the palace in Bangkok?

ARIEL

What?

HELENE

On the television there. That's the palace in Bangkok right?

ARIEL

I don't know.

HELENE

Maurice, isn't that the palace in Bangkok?

MAURICE

What?

HELENE

On the television!

Goddammit it went away! There was a photograph on the television there that looked like it was the palace in Bangkok. In Thailand. That's close to where you're all from, isn't it?

ARIEL

No!

HELENE

Where are you from again? Vietnam?

ARIEL

We're from Korea.

HELENE

Riiiiight, Korea. North Korea or South Korea?

ARIEL

(Laughing.) South Korea.

JASMINE

Nobody's really from North Korea.

HELENE

Oh.

ARIEL

South Korea and North Korea are very different! South Korea is one of the biggest economies in the world. They make Samsung. They make LG. Hyundai. Kia. You know those cars, Kia? That's Korean.

MAURICE

Thank God for the United States. They saved our country. My father fought in the war, in the Korean War, to protect us from the communists. Now they have Kim Jung Un, and he kills his people. It's very bad.

HELENE

Oh.

You all gotta go to Thailand. It's the most beautiful place. And the food! Puhtie. Ever had puhtie? I love puhtie. With shrimp? Delicious.

Ya know, my Harvey fought in the Korean War, did I ever tell you that, Maurice?

MAURICE

No.

HELENE

Hey, what if your father met my husband sixty years ago in some field someplace? Wouldn't that be something! We never went to Korea. He didn't want to go back. Which is funny 'cause we went all over the world. We went to Africa. Went to Australia. All over Europe. Turkey. Israel four or five times. Thailand, of course. You all gotta go. You must go to Thailand.

ARIEL

We're going to Disney World soon, / and in Epcot

HELENE

Disney! The worst!

ARIEL

You don't like?

HELENE

I've been to Disney World. Too many times. If I ever have to look at one more Mickey waffle or Mickey chicken finger or Mickey bar of soap, I swear to god, I'll end it all.

ARIEL

Oh. Well in Epcot, they have all the different countries from around the world. You can see the whole world in just one theme park.

HELENE

You'll have a nice time. No matter where you go, traveling is a great joy. Harvey and I, there was nothing we loved more than exploring new places, seeing all different kinds of people. Now that Harvey's gone, and with my hip, I don't go anywhere. I am going on a cruise tomorrow though.

ARIEL

Oooohhhhh. Very nice.

JASMINE

Where's it going to?

HELENE

Just the stupid islands. The Caribbean or the Bahamas or wherever they send you.

ARIEL

The beach!

JASMINE

I'm jealous.

HELENE

We're just doing a four-day. They send you to the crappy ports. They let you off the boat, there's nothing to do, you get back on the boat.

ARIEL

Who you going with?

HELENE

My grandson.

ARIEL

Grandson? I thought you only have granddaughters.

HELENE

Well. You remember Jackie?

ARIEL

Yes! Your daughter's daughter. You were telling me all the time about how she got into very bad trouble. She used to fight with her parents, dropped out of college.

HELENE

Yeah, that's my little guy.

ARIEL

Jackie. I remember Jackie.

HELENE

He's Jacob now.

ARIEL

What?

HELENE

He just moved in with me because he had this surgery. He's a transgender.

ARIEL

He's a what?

HELENE

He a trans, uh...he changed from a girl to a boy. He was born a girl and now he's a boy.

ARIEL

Changed from a girl to a boy? Changed from a girl to a boy? That's crazy!

JASMINE

Mom, don't you know Bruce Jenner from the Kardashians? The dad?

ARIEL

I love that show.

JASMINE

Well he just said he's a girl.

ARIEL

No!

JASMINE

Yeah, he's gonna start dressing like a girl, and nobody cares. I don't care. That's just what it is.

ARIEL

That doesn't happen in Korea. If a boy tries to be a girl in Korea, people say they're crazy and call the police.

HELENE

Well, god bless America.

(Singing.)

LAND THAT I LOVE.

STAND BESIDE HER,

AND GUIDE HER,

THROUGH THE NIGHT WITH A LIGHT FROM ABOVE!

Written by a Jew, that song.

The image of the Grand Palace appears on the slideshow again.

Ariel gives Helene elaborate hand and arm massages,

which makes Helene's bracelets jingle.

Maybe Jasmine comes over and massages Helene's shoulders.

HELENE

There! That's the photograph!

Isn't that gorgeous? What a beauty. People used to live like that. Like kings and queens. Well, not *like* kings and queens. They *were* kings and queens. To think: a life like that.

People waiting on you hand and foot like you're Cleopatra, carrying you around on a stretcher, giving you baths. More food than you could ever imagine.

And to think: people still do live like that in some places! There still are kings and queens!

Monarchs. I don't see the point of them personally. I see that fuhkakte nonsense on the news when one of them has a birthday, and it's like, enough already with the mishegoss with the birthday, go blow out some candles on a piece of sticky toffee pudding and leave me the hell alone. And get a job! Get a job! They don't even work, William and whateverhisnameis.

A moment.

HELENE

(Singing.)

THROUGH THE MOUNTAIN,

THROUGH THE PRAIRIE,

THROUGH THE OCEAN,

WHITE WITH FOAM,

GOD BLESS AMERICA,

MY HOME SWEET HOME!

TWO

*The end of the same workday.
The spa muzak is not playing. The television screen is off. There are no customers.
Jasmine and Nomfundo are cleaning/tidying up.
At some point, Jasmine locks the front door and flips the sign on the door to "Closed."
Maurice is sitting behind the counter reading a car magazine.
Ariel is on her smartphone.*

MAURICE

This magazine says the Cadillac C-T-S is one of the ten best cars you can buy. They also say Tesla, BMW, Chevrolet, Ford, Honda, Mazda two times (*with disdain:*) three Japanese cars and Porsche and Volkswagen. Three Japanese cars, three German cars, *four American cars*. America wins. That's good.

ARIEL

(*About the device.*) 정숙아 이거 안된다.

Jeong-Sook, this thing won't work.

JASMINE

Mom, please speak English. It's rude to Tiana.

ARIEL

알 게 뭐야?

Who cares about her?

JASMINE

She's a member of our family now.

ARIEL

(*To Maurice.*) 우리 가족이라고?

She's a member of our family?

JASMINE

Mom!

MAURICE

Hyeon-Jin!

ARIEL

(*To Jasmine.*) Come here.

Jasmine goes over to Ariel.

JASMINE

What's wrong?

ARIEL

I can't get this thing to

JASMINE

What are you trying to do?

ARIEL

I want to see how much

JASMINE

Mom you're not even on the right screen.

ARIEL

Yes I am! I'm trying to find a price

JASMINE

Just hold on, let me do it.

ARIEL

You don't have to pull.

JASMINE

I'm not pulling. There.

ARIEL

Oh. It's loading.

They wait for the screen to load.

ARIEL

Okay it says we could get a package for four days for about two-thousand dollars.

MAURICE

TWO-THOUSAND DOLLARS?

ARIEL

All-Star Sports hotel.

JASMINE

Does that include park tickets?

MAURICE

Oh my gosh.

ARIEL

Shut up! We can pay for that!

MAURICE

That's expensive.

ARIEL

Yeah yeah, we know, go back to your magazine.

JASMINE

Omigod look at Animal Kingdom Lodge, it's almost seven-thousand dollars.

MAURICE

We're not staying there!

JASMINE

I didn't know Disney was so expensive. Jesus.

ARIEL

Don't say Jesus' name like that!

*Jasmine rolls her eyes and goes back to cleaning.
Silence as they clean/read/look online.*

MAURICE

Belle Park has this car. Cadillac C-T-S.

ARIEL

How do you know what kind of car Belle Park has?

MAURICE

I saw her driving before. I wanted to take my Corolla and drive her into a tree. She didn't see me, thank Jesus.

ARIEL

Why do you care if Belle Park sees you?

MAURICE

It's embarrassing! We came to this country in nineteen-ninety-four! She's here, what, five, ten years, and she drives a Cadillac. She looks like a success. You don't look like a success if you drive a Toyota Corolla with the mirror hanging off the side.

ARIEL

It's just 'cause she married that rich American Jewish. If I married some rich American Jewish I could have a Cadillac too, but I married Mister Lazy.

MAURICE

Don't say that word! I'm not lazy! I work hard!

ARIEL

Maybe if you worked harder you'd have a car like Belle Park.

JASMINE

Speaking of lazy, why don't you get off your asses and help us close? I mean, come on.

Ariel puts her phone down.

Maurice tosses the magazine on the pile of magazines by the front door.

They help.

ARIEL

Don't forget: I taught Belle Park everything she knows. She may think she's a big success story with her fancy salon right next to the Whole Food. Now she's doing gel manicures, ooh lah lah, good for Belle Park. But she used to be working here. I was teaching her how to do acrylics. I was teaching her how to scrub callouses off a dirty feet, okay?

JASMINE

I don't think you can really compare our salon to hers, Mom.

ARIEL

What are you trying to say?

JASMINE

Like, we only do nails. They do everything at Belle Park's salon: nails, waxing, facials. It's like a spa. They even do hair.

ARIEL

You should go to Belle Park's salon and have them fix *your* hair. So messy.

JASMINE

Stop touching me.

ARIEL

You look like one of the lesbians.

JASMINE

How do the lesbians look?

ARIEL

Like that. You spend too much time with that girl.

JASMINE

Which girl?

ARIEL

Your friend. That lesbian.

JASMINE

So?

JASMINE

Mom. I'm never going back to your church. The people there are racists, they're male chauvinists, they're homophobic

ARIEL

Come on. Just go out with Thomas one time. I showed him your picture. He says you're pretty.

What's on your fingers?

JASMINE

It's just polish.

ARIEL

Let me see.

JASMINE

It's just polish.

ARIEL

Who did this?

JASMINE

I did it myself.

ARIEL

When?

JASMINE

Last night.

ARIEL

You used polish remover all day today, how's it still stay so perfect?

Ariel pulls Jasmine to a lamp and examines Jasmine's fingers under light.

JASMINE

Leave me alone.

ARIEL

This isn't normal polish. Is this is this gel?

JASMINE

No.

ARIEL

Yes it is. This is gel polish. Look at it. It's nice. Where'd you get this?

JASMINE

Nowhere.

ARIEL

Did you go to Belle Park?

JASMINE

No.

Ariel smacks Jasmine, over and over.

ARIEL

Did you go to Belle Park? Tell me!

JASMINE

Ow! Stop hitting me!

ARIEL

Tell the truth!

JASMINE

Okay! Fine! I went to Belle Park's salon. Ow.

ARIEL

When did you go?

JASMINE

Yesterday, after we closed. They're open 'til nine.

ARIEL

'Til *nine*?!?

MAURICE

Nine o'clock?!?

JASMINE

Yeah and the place was packed. I had to wait like half an hour.

ARIEL

Who did your manicure?

JASMINE

Esmerelda.

ARIEL

Great. She leaves working for us to go work for Belle Park and you go there and she gives you a manicure.

MAURICE

Belle Park's gonna tell everyone at church.

JASMINE

Will you stop? I wanted to see what it was like.

ARIEL

So? What's it like?

MAURICE

Tell us everything.

JASMINE

Okay so first of all, it's very well decorated. It's like a hotel. But the most amazing part are the pedicure chairs

ARIEL

Do they have massage machines?

JASMINE

Yeah, for your back *and* for your legs.

MAURICE

Holy moley.

JASMINE

Not only that. They have iPads.

MAURICE

Oh my Jesus.

JASMINE

Every pedicure chair has an iPad with all these games and magazines already downloaded.

ARIEL

Why do customers need iPads?

JASMINE

Because they want them.

ARIEL

Why can't they get a pedicure and not have to look at their iPad iPhone iWhatever?

JASMINE

Because that's how business works. People like something extra.

ARIEL

People are so stupid.

JASMINE

Well Belle Park is charging ten dollars more than us for every service and people are flocking there, so *she's* not stupid. Remember Miss Audrey? She was there. She goes there now.

ARIEL

That bitch!

MAURICE

Why are people going to her if they have to pay more money?

JASMINE

Well, they get all these extra perks. Especially gel.

MAURICE

What's gel?

Jasmine's flashes her fingers in front of Maurice's face.

MAURICE

Ohhhh that's nice.

ARIEL

It lasts a long time, like acrylic.

JASMINE

But it's cheaper than acrylic. There are way less supplies.
I dunno, maybe we should do it.

MAURICE

That would cost money.

JASMINE

It wouldn't cost that much. Gel, iPads, maybe some new pedicure chairs? That's like a few thousand bucks.

MAURICE

Business isn't doing good anymore, Jasmine! They're raising our rent!

JASMINE

I thought we had money saved up.

MAURICE

We do.

JASMINE

How much?

ARIEL

That money's for Disney.

JASMINE

Mom. Stop talking about Disney.

ARIEL

But you want to go to Disney.

JASMINE

This is more important.

ARIEL

But I want to go to Disney!

JASMINE

Mom, I'm not trying to be mean, but look at this place. The wallpaper's peeling off the walls. The fabric on the pedicure chairs is coming apart. That handwritten piece of paper that says Cash Only? It's turning yellow, and it's misspelled. The word Only has one L, not two. O-N-L-Y.

ARIEL AND MAURICE

Ohhh.

JASMINE

Maybe that customer today was right. Maybe we should start taking credit cards.

By this point, Nomfundo has been standing by the door, ready to leave, for a long time.

NOMFUNDO

Excuse me. I have to go to my church.

JASMINE

Oh right. Sorry. I gotta pee.

Jasmine runs to the bathroom. Maurice and Ariel get ready to leave.

ARIEL

Church. That's good. I try to get Jasmine to go to church but she won't go. Why you going to church? It's Thursday.

NOMFUNDO

I go to my church every day.

ARIEL

Every day?

NOMFUNDO

I work in the kitchen. I make food for the people who come to the church to eat.

ARIEL

Oh.

NOMFUNDO

That's how I came to New York. They got me my papers, and they give me a room to sleep.

MAURICE

How do you like living in New York?

NOMFUNDO

It's nice. The room I'm staying in is small, but it's nice. Yesterday I called my daughter on the computer and she said, "Mama, does America have streets that are made of gold?" And I said, "No, the streets look worse than they do at home, and they smell like peepee!"

Ariel and Maurice chuckle to be polite. It's very awkward.

NOMFUNDO

The other day, I was outside my church, and I saw a man going peepee on the wall on this busy street. Before I came to America, I thought like my daughter. Everyone told me it would be like The Wizard of Oz, like the Emerald City, everything clean and happy, but then I come here and there are men going peepee on the wall of a church when the sun is out.

The three of them stand there silently, smiling at each other, nodding, super awkward.

NOMFUNDO

Thank you very much for this job. God was looking down on me the day I met your daughter and she told me I could work here at Nice Nail. And thank you for driving me in your car. I am very appreciative.

Silence: nodding, smiling, awkward.

NOMFUNDO

Sir, I want to ask, if it's okay, I want to get paid more money. Right now, it's too little.

MAURICE

No.

NOMFUNDO

I was telling the people at my church. They said it is too little money. And they said you should give me back the hundred dollars. They said that's not right.

MAURICE

No, everywhere you have to pay the hundred dollars. That's your training fee. When you work with customers, then we pay you more.

NOMFUNDO

I'm ready to work with customers.

ARIEL

No no, not yet.

Jasmine comes out of the bathroom and gets ready to leave.

JASMINE

Tiana? Um, Tiana?

NOMFUNDO

That's not my name.

JASMINE

I know, but it would be really great if you could go by that name when you're in the salon?

NOMFUNDO

My name is Nomfundo.

JASMINE

I know it is, but it's very difficult for our customers to pronounce.

ARIEL

I can't say it.

MAURICE

Me neither.

JASMINE

Your nametag says Tiana. It's confusing. And it ruins our salon tradition. It's a fun thing we do here. In the past we've had Esmerelda, Belle, Nala.

ARIEL

Pocahontas.

MAURICE

Mulan.

JASMINE

It all started because when I was little I loved Disney. I still do! Do you like Disney?

NOMFUNDO

No.

JASMINE

It would just be really great if you could go by the name Tiana. She's a really special Disney princess. She's the first and only *black* Disney princess, isn't that cool?!?

*A customer, Lydia, appears at the locked front door,
pounding on the door, desperate, life-or-death.
Lydia looks older than she is.
She's wearing food-stain-riddled pajamas, covered by a fur coat.*

LYDIA

Hello!!!

MAURICE, ARIEL, AND JASMINE

We're closed!

LYDIA

Did you find my magazine?

ARIEL

Come back tomorrow!

LYDIA

I left something here before. *Please let me in!*

Jasmine unlocks the front door. Lydia flies in and searches through the salon.

LYDIA

Did you find my magazine?

JASMINE

What magazine?

LYDIA

It was a beauty magazine. You know, one-a those beauty magazines.

MAURICE

We didn't find.

LYDIA

It has to be here. I've looked everywhere!

JASMINE

Maybe it got mixed in with our magazines over here?

Lydia tears through the large stack of magazines, throwing them everywhere.

LYDIA

It's not here! It's not here!

JASMINE

Can you maybe buy a new copy of the magazine?

LYDIA

DON'T YOU THINK I WOULD'VE DONE THAT BY NOW?!? I need *this* magazine. It has a number written in it. A special number. For the cable company. I wrote it on the page with the perfume.

JASMINE

I can try to look up the number for you online.

LYDIA

You don't know anything! It's a special number! My brother gave it to me! Where is my magazine? Where Is My Ma Ga Zine?

JASMINE

It's okay.

LYDIA

It's not okay! This is the worst day of my life!

NOMFUNDO

I have to go to my church.

JASMINE

I'm sorry that you're having a bad day. But we have to close the shop now.

LYDIA

Oh. I'm sorry I made such a scene. My boyfriend broke up with me last week. I found out he was stealing from me. Thousands and thousands of dollars. I wanted to believe he was good, but then life goes and kicks you in the crotch.

JASMINE

Okay well we have to close the shop now.

LYDIA

Can I help clean up?

JASMINE, ARIEL, AND MAURICE
No.

JASMINE
We got it.

LYDIA
Okay. I hope you all have a splendid evening.

Lydia leaves.

JASMINE
I deserve a medal.

NOMFUNDO
I have to go to my church.

ARIEL
(*To Nomfundo.*) What do you think we're stupid?
Why does she have to say the same thing over and over? "I have to go to church, I have to go to church." We're not deaf.

JASMINE
What's wrong with you? Be nice.

MAURICE
Let's go.

ARIEL
She looked just like that girl from today.

JASMINE
Who?

ARIEL
That woman, just now, looking for the magazine, she looked like that girl this morning, the one who was yelling at her mom on the phone.

JASMINE
She looked nothing like her.

ARIEL
I don't know, they all look the same to me.

And they're gone.