

RELENTLESS

By Tyla Abercrombie

**Contact:**

Darrell D. Miller

**Fox Rothschild LLP**

10250 Constellation Blvd.

Suite 900

Los Angeles, CA 90067

Office: 310.598.4178

Dmiller@foxrothschild.com

www.foxrothschild.com

**SYNOPSIS**

When two sisters return to their childhood home in Philadelphia 1919, Annelle, the happy socialite desperate to keep safe the illusion of a perfect life with husband Dr. Marcus Stanton and Janet, a single, professional nurse, determined to change history and propel black women into power, selfishly fingers through the pages of their late mothers diaries, it lands them at the foothills of a woman they never really knew and a legacy whose truths are chilling and RELENTLESSLY explosive.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

JANET - A SISTER

ANNELLE - A YOUNGER SISTER

ZHUUKEE/ANNABELLE LEE - A LIFE

MOTHER - A CAPTURED SOUL

FRANKLIN - A MAN

MARCUS - A HUSBAND

MARY ANNA ELIZABETH - A MISTRESS - A OWNER OF BLACK BODIES

### Note:

- Though the character MOTHER appears once she is a complete an actualized character.

- ONLY the actor playing ANNELLE may double as MOTHER. Keeping in mind the description read by JANET but "written" by Annabelle Lee/Zhuukee, describing her mother on page 45. The first journal entry. It also fairs easier if a head wrap is used for Mother reducing the need for two wigs effecting the speed of this quick change.

*"A beautiful violet, blue/black woman, white eyes and bright teeth with a tall slender, muscular frame. The calluses of her hands and feet like sand paper, her voice a melody of husky femininity... and her hair - short, tight, black hair. Hair like my hair."*

## **CHAPTERS (aka SCENES)**

CHAPTER ONE, SCENE 1 - NO PLACE TO BE SOMEBODY

CHAPTER TWO, SCENE 2 - WE WEAR THE MASK

CHAPTER THREE, SCENE 3 - BAMBOOZLED

CHAPTER FOUR, SCENE 4 - TO BE YOUNG, GIFTED, AND BLACK

CHAPTER FIVE, SCENE 5 - WHAT SHALL I TELL MY CHILDREN WHO ARE BLACK?

CHAPTER SIX, SCENE 6 - IF WE MUST DIE

### NOTE:

The exploration of the Black Victorian in the American experience is a very overlooked, under examined period and yet the contribution of black women during the late 1880-1950's was and is very significant. With that in mind it is very important that the character descriptions both race and gender remain as written.

The character Franklin Charles must be of fair skin, mixed race, African American.

\*These titles are projected in a natural handwritten script, onto the wall above the fireplace, floated across, then faded as each chapter began.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

"/" Indicate an overlapping of the language.

"- or -- " indicates that words are not being spoken but much is happening

"-" At the end of sentences is designed to keep the dialogue moving and not leaning on the "." for a full stop.

In order to honor the musicality of the language the sentences should almost bump into each other and yet manage to miss an overlap. Quick but not rushed.

The language should clip along, the character's dialogue coming in right at the end of each other sentences. "-" are not a cut off. The full sentence should be heard. It should overlap only where the "\" is indicated.

The dialogue should fully stop only when an emotional idea or exchange has come to completions Indicated by a "\_\_\_\_\_"

## CHAPTER ONE - SCENE ONE

### 'NO PLACE TO BE SOMEBODY'

1919 West Philadelphia

The interior of a Queen Ann house with a wrap around porch. Packing crates are piled against a wall. The house is mostly empty. Only very large pieces of exquisite antique furniture remain in place.

Though it is a house, utilitarian signs hang above or are nailed to entrance ways. "PRIVATE" hangs above the door leading to the kitchen. "REGISTRATION" hangs above a converted closet. "QUIET PLEASE" is nailed to a door leading to the sun porch just off the living area.

The center piece for the house is a very large and spectacular fireplace with an extraordinary ornate mirror centered above it. This area remains very much intact. It has a large area rug, a mildly worn Victorian chair, a lamp and a side table where one might set a cup of tea.

It is twilight. At this hour in the early evening, the room brushed through with the colors of the setting sun, just enough light bleeds through. Barely. JANET, casually dressed, sits, engrossed in the pages of a very old and a bit tattered leather bound book.

ANNELLE, bedecked beautifully in her evening finest, carefully climbs down the stairs, carrying an arm full of decorative hat boxes.

ANNELLE

(entering)

I should think I would like to keep these.

JANET

(continues to read)

Uh hum.

ANNELLE

I've gone through everything and these are the only hats worth salvaging. (BEAT) I'd show them to you but I'm afraid you might want one and I'm not inclined to share.

JANET

Hmm.

ANNELLE

I say, I'm afraid I'm already feeling rather selfish about mothers hats. (She stumbles) Oh!

She almost stumbles down a stair or two. The hat boxes tumble to the floor. JANET doesn't notice. Annelle checks herself to see if any bones are broken, shoes scuffed or a tear in her dress. All is well

-

ANNELLE

My goodness, JANET! I've practically fallen down a complete flight of stairs and you've barley noticed. That could very well have been the end of me.

Janet looking up and seeing the mess.

JANET

What on earth are you -

ANNELLE

I thought I'd toss myself and these boxes down the stairs to get your attention.

JANET

Well it worked. What are you doing?

ANNELLE

(breathless)

No. It did not work. Goodness! My heart's racing - and as usual you have missed my sarcasm completely -

JANET

You've never been very good with sarcasm. What is all this?

Annelle gathers herself and the boxes.

ANNELLE

Your impeccable attention to detail must server you well as a nurse.

JANET

Important details, yes.

ANNELLE

This is going to sound rather obvious, Sister but I'm packing mothers things-

JANET

Dressed like that?

ANNELLE

I stop just long enough to freshen up and change into something more suitable for dinner.

JANET

You look a lot more than freshened up.

ANNELLE

I clean up well.

JANET

(referencing the hat boxes)

And those?



ANNELLE

I'm keeping them.

JANET

I take it those were the items you packed?

ANNELLE

Among other things. Yes. You?

JANET

(going back to reading)

Well/these -

ANNELLE

You're leaving mother's chair?

JANET

Of course not.

ANNELLE

Then I dare say why are you still sitting in it? In fact, why are you sitting at all?

JANET

More comfortable for reading-

ANNELLE

The shippers will need to know what to take and what to /leave.

JANET

Yes. Of course-

ANNELLE

It should be placed against that wall there with everything else -

JANET

I know. /I will-

ANNELLE

We've been here 28 days now with the intent of staying no longer than the month, but at the pace you're /going-

JANET

I don't know that I want to sell it.

ANNELLE

--

Of course you do.

JANET

I don't think so.

ANNELLE

You're being nostalgic.

JANET

It's our childhood home.

ANNELLE

We haven't lived here for years.

JANET

No, we haven't -

ANNELLE

And it's not the same without mother.

JANET

No, it isn't -

ANNELLE

They'll be here to take everything away, Monday -

JANET

Furnishings. Doesn't mean we have to sell the house -

ANNELLE

I'm sure it's worth a lot.

JANET

Your husbands a doctor.

ANNELLE

And you're a nurse.

JANET

Exactly.

ANNELLE

All our friends are in Boston, Janet-

JANET

We have quite a few friends here-

ANNELLE

More of them in Boston-

JANET

You wouldn't have to move.

--

I wouldn't expect that of you... or Marcus.

\_\_\_\_\_ Silence.

ANNELLE

Don't be silly. I've not lived more than three doors from you my entire life. Once, there was a flight a stairs between us an it nearly drove me insane.

JANET

You have Marcus now -

ANNELLE

I couldn't bare losing you and mother in the same year.

JANET

You wouldn't be losing me.

ANNELLE

If you were here and I was in Boston, I certainly would be.

JANET

You can always visit.

ANNELLE

Are you seriously and might I say, very suddenly, considering leaving every thing behind in Boston and moving back to Philadelphia?

JANET

I don't know. These past few weeks... being here... sort of walking backwards through memories made from one room into the next... Philadelphia has changed considerably in all of our years of coming and going.

ANNELLE

Has it?

JANET

I think so. I can see why mother loved it so much.

ANNELLE

I see. Well... Here's what we'll do. We'll finish packing tomorrow. Let the shippers and charities come on Monday and then... when we're back home in Boston... we can think more on it. I think then the nostalgia will have subsided and we can be more practical. Less emotional.

JANET

(a soft laugh)

That was quite lovely, Annelle. If I didn't know you were my younger sister I'd think you the older, but as I am never impractical and hardly ever emotional, I really think we should consider not selling the house.

ANNELLE

Janet!-

JANET

BUT to be fair. I'll put aside the thought until after we return home. Let us spend some time with the idea... then we can discuss it again. You and me... and Marcus of course. That's fair, yes?

ANNELLE

No. It isn't fair at all but I'll not discuss it now, you need the time to freshen up-

JANET

Freshen up?

ANNELLE

In time for our dinner with Marcus and Franklin. Please tell me you're not wearing... what you're wearing?

JANET

-

ANNELLE

-

JANET

It's only dinner.

ANNELLE

Yes... It is... but... It's fine. I'll not argue with you about it. I so want you to meet Franklin, Janet. He's perfect for you. I just know it-

JANET

I doubt it.

ANNELLE

Why do you consistently refused to meet Franklin?

JANET

I have not refused. I've been/busy.

ANNELLE

I can assure you that any two people that I have ever matched together have fallen in love *immediately* -

JANET

You go. I'll stay and finish. I can meet him another time -

ANNELLE

Absolutely not! You will meet him this evening. As promised.

JANET

I don't know that I *promised*.

ANNELLE

You most certainly did. And it is high time you married, Janet.

JANET

Married?! I thought it was only dinner - you're at marriage?

ANNELLE

Yes, and why not? You are my *older* sister after all. I've been married *three years* already -

JANET

And twice before -

ANNELLE

Not at all my point-

JANET

Of course /not-

ANNELLE

And my first marriage doesn't count.

JANET

(incredulous)

It doesn't count?

ANNELLE

We never consummated.

JANET

It counts.

ANNELLE

And it was annulled-

JANET

It wasn't annulled-

ANNELLE

My second marriage was a rebound after being abandoned by my first, so clearly it was premature.

JANET

Clearly premature-

ANNELLE

It's nothing to make light of/ Janet.

JANET

I'm not... but you're rewriting history again. It was your second marriage that was annulled from a man whom you barely knew. He was a bigamist, a brut and ridiculously /older -

ANNELLE

I'd like to not remember it a all if you don't /mind.

JANET

And Joshua did not abandon you. He died-

ANNELLE

I know that, Janet. You could just play along.

JANET

Death is nothing to play with -