

# If Spiders Made Honey

By D. Richard Tucker

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### SYNOPSIS:

Camille is an associate editor for the Southern Voices of Color Literary Awards, and her younger brother Derek is dying of Leukemia. Derek has asked Camille to track down Joanie Huneycutt, a cancer patient who has inspired thousands by posting her experiences in an internet blog. By following Joanie's writings, Derek has been able to keep his chin up during his current battle with his disease.

It's time to award the annual winner of the Voices of Color first time novelist competition, recognizing a new book which promotes the plight of African-Americans in the USA. "Harvest of Memories" by Lindsey P. Wilson looks like a sure winner, but when the staff finds out that Lindsey Wilson is a white man who emigrated from South Africa, the award is revoked, spurring a legal battle that sends Camille to Little Rock, in an attempt to appease Wilson, as well as find Joanie Huneycutt.

The story twists, however, when Camille finds herself on the brink of meeting Joanie, only to find evidence that shows Joanie may not even exist. This story explores the relationship of art and the artist – is the value of art dependent on the artist who produced it?

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Cast of Characters

DEREK, male, 23, African American, suffering from leukemia, and enthusiastically following the exploits of the internet icon, Joanie Hunneycutt

CAMILLE, female, 25- 35, African American, Derek's sister and staff member of Voices of Color

JUDY, female, 25-35, CAMILLE 's associate and friend

RJ, male, 35 +, CAMILLE's boss

PAUL, male, 40+, Writer and professor, speaks in a South African accent

DEBORAH, female, 30 +, Nurse, compassionate, but professional  
also plays

LUCY , female, 25+, Radio talk show host

ANDY, male 25 – 35, Newspaper reporter and friend of Camille's  
also plays

CHUCK, male, 25 +, Radio talk show host

SHELBY, female, early 20's, receptionist, has a slight Southern accent  
also plays

BRENDA, female, early 20's

Time: The present

Memphis and Little Rock. Locations should be represented by a piece or two of furniture. A realistic set is not necessary.

Production Notes:

The play can be performed without intermission.

The characters DEREK and CAMILLE are intended to be African-American, but if necessary, they can be cast as any race and the last three lines of Act I, Scene 7 can be deleted to accommodate this.

DOUBLE-CASTING: Directors may choose to cast 8 to 11 actors. The parts of DEBORAH/LUCY, ANDY/CHUCK, and SHELBY/BRENDA are intended to allow three actors to play six roles, however, the director may prefer to have a larger cast.

Black outs between scenes should only be three to five seconds.

## IF SPIDERS MADE HONEY

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ACT I  
Scene 1

The stage is almost bare. Locations are represented by one or two pieces of furniture. Lights rise up on DEREK, an African American, holding his lap top computer. DEREK, is battling cancer, and in spite of his condition, he tries to not to dwell on his pain.

DEREK

(to the audience)

Her name is Joanie Huneycutt.....and she's the most wonderful person in the world. She's twenty-three years old and has terminal cancer. And every day, she writes about it on her webpage. Well, not every day. Sometimes the pain is too much...or she's in treatment, but she writes about it and I read everything she writes, over and over. I'm just like thousands of other people out there – we're her fans, because.....because she inspires us. There are many of us who look to her for guidance, and she's made a big impact on our lives.

Joanie lives in Little Rock. That's about a three hour drive from here. I've always wanted to go see her, but I'm not feeling too well, so I have stay here ... in Memphis. See, I'm also twenty-three years old. I have leukemia.....and....well, things aren't looking very hopeful for me now.

Lights fade out on DEREK.

## Scene 2

Memphis. Lights up on the Voices of Color Conference Room. CAMILLE enters and sits. JUDY rushes in, drops her folders on the table, and sits.

JUDY

Hey, Camille.

CAMILLE

Morning.

JUDY

RJ not here yet?

CAMILLE  
Are you kidding?

JUDY  
That figures. So what did you think about “Crimson?”

CAMILLE  
I like it.

JUDY  
Yeah, me too.

CAMILLE  
What about the author?

JUDY  
Huh?

CAMILLE  
Isn't he amazing? He's done so much. The work in the Ethiopia? The neighborhood programs in Atlanta?

JUDY  
Oh, I don't pay attention to the author – I just read the book.

CAMILLE  
I'm really impressed with people who can give that much to the community.

JUDY  
I don't have time to read about that. Hey- how's your brother?

CAMILLE  
....Not so good.

JUDY  
What's wrong? I thought he went into remission.

CAMILLE  
He had a relapse.

JUDY  
Oh, Camille, I'm so sorry.

CAMILLE  
It's okay, he's a tough guy.

R.J. enters and takes his place at the table.

RJ

All right, ladies – what’s on the agenda?

JUDY

Final selection – First Novelist Award Citation . Milestone 24 – award determination.  
Due this week.

RJ

Okay, who are the nominees?

CAMILLE

We’ve narrowed it down to two: “Harvest of Memories” and “Crimson.”

RJ

Okay, Judy. Talk to me.

JUDY

Both novels meet the criteria for excellence. “Harvest of Memories” capitalizes on historical references following the daughters of former slaves and their journey into the Twentieth Century. “Crimson” shows the rise of a small town’s first African American college graduate as he moves into the State Senate.

RJ

Camille?

CAMILLE

Both are excellent books, though they differ greatly in style. “Crimson” is intriguing, almost a suspense thriller, while “Harvest of Memories” has a more heartfelt appeal.

RJ

You two sound like a literary revue. Talk to me - which one meets our mission best?

JUDY

It would have to be “Harvest of Memories.”

CAMILLE

Why? “Crimson” is excellent.

JUDY

It doesn’t speak to all of the values we’re trying to promote.

CAMILLE

Like what?

JUDY

Strong sense of faith and family.

CAMILLE

What about Eldon's grandmother?

JUDY

That was a one-way relationship. Eldon rejected her.

CAMILLE

What else?

JUDY

The ...triumph of an oppressed spirit.

CAMILLE

He was elected to the State Senate – isn't that enough?

JUDY

He rode the coat tails of a crooked politician.

RJ

Ladies, please -it's too early in the morning for a cat fight. You've been here long enough to know –It's about the spirit of the novel. Every year when we make a selection, I ask myself two important questions: Which novel would I be most likely to read more than once-

CAMILLE

Okay.

RJ

And which novel gives me a hero?

JUDY

Hero?

RJ

That's what this is about, folks, inspiring new generations to follow the footsteps of those who have achieved the same goals. Fiction or nonfiction, it's about stories that inspire us to be our best. How hard can that be?

JUDY

It's just that.....

RJ

Okay, Judy, who is your hero?

My hero? JUDY

Yeah. RJ

Do I have to have a hero? JUDY

Yeah. RJ

Well.....um.....Sorry, RJ. I don't have one. JUDY

Think about it. Who makes you feel like you can do more than you ever dreamed possible? Who is it that you think of when you're faced with difficulties, and use as an example to draw on your inner courage and forge ahead regardless of the odds? RJ

I don't know. JUDY

Camille, who's your hero? RJ

Umm.....Joanie Hunneycutt. CAMILLE

Who? RJ

She's a girl in Little Rock. CAMILLE

So? RJ

She's only twenty-three, and she's dying of cancer. CAMILLE

That's a hero? RJ



CAMILLE

She keeps this internet diary about everything she's going through...and people from all over the world read it and write her messages - you know, she's kind of an inspiration.

RJ

(pause)

Okay, fine. Now, if you read a book about this girl....Joanie – would that inspire you? Would you want to be like her?

CAMILLE

Sure.

RJ

Okay, who is the protagonist in “Harvest of Memories?”

JUDY

There are two – Joanna and Selma.

RJ

They inspire you?

JUDY

Yes.

RJ

Serve as an example – role models – people you want to emulate?

JUDY

Yes.

RJ

Camille – you agree?

CAMILLE

Yeah.

RJ

What about “Crimson?” The protagonist?

CAMILLE

Eldon Booker.

RJ

Is he a hero?

Well...

CAMILLE

No, he's not.

JUDY

No?

RJ

Well, hold on a minute. What defines a hero? What ...innate qualities does a hero have to have?

CAMILLE

Judy?

RJ

...Courage?

JUDY

Eldon was a very courageous individual.

CAMILLE

Okay, but that's not the only thing that defines a hero.

JUDY

Look, that's not the point.

CAMILLE

What is the point?

RJ

This is Edgar Ward's first novel. He's been a civil rights activist, a community advocate – he's done some remarkable things abroad with regards to human rights.

CAMILLE

Can't deny that - what about his book?

RJ

I think it's very well written, very entertaining.

CAMILLE

Okay.

RJ

But I don't think I want Eldon Booker to be my hero.

JUDY

CAMILLE

But what about Edgar Ward? That's pretty big name.

RJ

The name "Edgar Ward" is not in the book. It has nothing to do with the story.

CAMILLE

But Edgar Ward is a great African American.

RJ

Sure he is. But the award is for his book, not his life. Look, there are only three questions we have about the author – is he African-American, is he from the South, and is this his first novel? That's all that matters.

CAMILLE

But I really think it's good.

RJ

That's not the point. Judy – talk to me about "Harvest of Memories."

JUDY

I think it fits the criteria nicely.

RJ

Camille?

CAMILLE

Yeah, it does.

RJ

The author?

JUDY

Lindsay P. Wilson.

RJ

And she meets all the criteria, doesn't she?

CAMILLE

(looks through file)

African-American, from the Sherwood, Arkansas. Published in a couple college textbooks, but not any works of fiction. She's a professor at Philander Smith College.

RJ

Then can we close this now?

RJ (cont'd)

(getting no response)

All right. I'll go back to the Board with your recommendation. Once I get word, I'll need you to schedule a meeting with Lindsay Wilson. Don't take this personally, Camille. "Crimson" is a good novel, it's just not a good fit.

RJ exits.

JUDY

Who's this Joanie girl?

CAMILLE

It's just on my mind. Derek reads her journal every morning. She's ...well,..she's helped him a lot...getting through all this.

JUDY

I'm sorry.

CAMILLE

Forget it.

RJ enters

RJ

Ladies....

JUDY

Yes.

RJ

They need you in the contract talks in 2-B.

CAMILLE

Right.

JUDY and CAMILLE exit hurriedly.

RJ

Shelby.

SHELBY enters.

SHELBY

Yes, Mr. Harwood?

RJ

What's next on my schedule?

SHELBY

Um...you've got a budget preparation meeting at 11:00.

RJ

Right.

(pause)

Shelby?

SHELBY

Yes, sir.

RJ

What quality would you expect from a hero?

SHELBY

A hero?

RJ

Right.

SHELBY

Well, I guess.....um.....x-ray vision?

Blackout.

Scene 3

Lights up on DEREK, holding two greeting cards.

DEREK

My sister is going to Little Rock tomorrow. While she's there, she's going to see if she can find Joanie. I've got a card for Joanie, and Camille promised to give it to her.

Nothing special, you know, just a thank you. I wanted to go with her, but, hey, it's a business trip, and my doctor doesn't like the idea of me traveling that far. Anyhow, Camille will get to see her, and that's better than nothing.

This way, Joanie can see how much she means to me – to all of us. I mean, we send her emails all the time, but I just wanted to do something personal, you know. Just a little something special.

I've got a second card- for Camille. I'll put it in her purse, just a little "thank you" surprise. See, Camille is the best sister a guy could have. She'd do anything for me.

Lights fade out on DEREK.

## Scene 4

Little Rock. JUDY and CAMILLE are drinking beverages at a table in the hotel lobby,

CAMILLE  
Come on, admit it.

JUDY  
What?

CAMILLE  
Don't play dumb – you like it here.

JUDY  
Well....

CAMILLE  
You know you do. You actually like it here.

JUDY  
I like this hotel.

CAMILLE  
You're even surprised that you like it here.

JUDY  
Yeah, my impression of Arkansas was all haystack and hillbilly.

CAMILLE  
But now...?

JUDY  
All right, it's true. It's a .... Modern... lovely place. Okay – satisfied?

CAMILLE  
No dirt roads and thatched roofs.

JUDY  
Camille.

CAMILLE  
And thoroughly modern architecture. Would you look at that building across the street?

JUDY  
I know – that thing is gorgeous.

CAMILLE  
It is.  
(checking her watch)  
Andy should be here any minute.

JUDY  
Where do you know this guy from?

CAMILLE  
High school. I saw him again at our reunion.

JUDY  
Did you mention this to RJ?

CAMILLE  
RJ won't care – as long as I'm not spending company money.

JUDY  
Lucky for you that Lindsay lives here.

CAMILLE  
Ironic, huh?

ANDY enters.

ANDY  
Camille.

CAMILLE  
Andy – hi. Thanks for coming.

ANDY  
No problem.

CAMILLE  
This is Andy Lowder from the Democrat-Gazette.

JUDY  
Hi

CAMILLE  
This is Judy Chambers. She came down with me last night.

ANDY

All the way from Memphis?

JUDY

All one hundred and thirty-eight miles of it – but who's counting?

CAMILLE

Would you like something to drink – coffee or something?

ANDY

No thanks – I don't have long. I have an assignment down at the City Park. There's a homeless man making rock sculptures, and they want a story on it.

CAMILLE

No problem – I'll make it quick.

(producing a folder)

Here's everything I was able to gather up. Copies of her webpage, that kind of thing.

ANDY

Any other contact info?

CAMILLE

None.

ANDY

Okay, I've got one of the interns at the office checking out the Huneycutts in the area. There are quite a few. I'm going to start checking hospitals next, maybe somebody there will know her.

CAMILLE

Good idea.

ANDY

(looking through folder)

I don't know how much this internet stuff will help, but I'll talk to one of our IT guys – maybe he'll have an idea.

CAMILLE

Thanks, I appreciate it.

ANDY

No problem. How's your brother - Derek, right?

CAMILLE

Yes. He's ... hanging in there.



ANDY

Well, I'll see what I can do.

CAMILLE

Thanks. Are you sure you don't mind doing this?

ANDY

It's no problem— there may even be a story in it. I'll call you later.

CAMILLE

Thanks, Andy.

ANDY

(to JUDY)

Nice meeting you.

JUDY

You, too.

(as he turns to go)

Oh – by the way.....

ANDY

Yes?

JUDY

What is that building over there?

ANDY

Oh, that's the Barringer Tower - commissioned by the Barringers - one of the prominent family businesses here. Apparently they wanted something special. It's due to be completed next week.

CAMILLE

It's definitely special.

ANDY

It's the talk of the town – we've all been looking forward to seeing the inside. Well, I'll call you later, Camille.

CAMILLE

Thanks, Andy.

ANDY exits.

JUDY

So what are you going to do when you find her?

CAMILLE

I promised Derek I'd talk to her. He gave me a card to give her.... to thank her. Maybe I can get her to talk to him on the phone.

JUDY

Is he....um.....?

CAMILLE

He really perked up when he found out I was coming here.

JUDY

So show me this website.

CAMILLE

Sure.

CAMILLE opens her laptop and powers it up. PAUL enters. PAUL is middle-aged, distinguished yet warm, and speaks with a South African accent.

PAUL

Excuse me..... Camille Harrison?

CAMILLE

Yes?

PAUL

I'm Paul Wilson. The concierge said I'd find you here. I'm here about "Harvest of Memories."

CAMILLE

Great. Will you be representing Lindsay Wilson?

PAUL

.... I always do.

CAMILLE

This is my associate, Judy Chambers.

PAUL

Nice to meet you.

JUDY

Are you an agent?

PAUL

No, not at all. My background is in law.

CAMILLE

Oh, well, please sit down.

PAUL

I mean, I'm not a practicing attorney right now - I'm a law professor, but I have a great deal of experience in law.

CAMILLE

Umm.. great. Thanks for taking the time to meet with us. I'd like to make this agreement right away and then we can arrange for a formal announcement and publicity photos, the whole works.

PAUL

What all does that involve?

CAMILLE

Typically, a press conference, announcing our selection of "Harvest of Memories" as this year's Voices of Color Literary Award.

PAUL

I see.

JUDY

We're rather excited about the book. We find that "Harvest of Memories" covers so many issues of the African-American culture, in such a heartfelt way, embracing the Southern roots.....inspiring the conquering of oppression.....striving for the fulfillment of our dreams.

CAMILLE

It's quite impressive.

PAUL

That's very kind.

JUDY

It's sure to be a critical success .....and that should translate into significant sales figures, as well.

PAUL

What about the book did you find most touching?

JUDY

Hmm? Oh, I think I'd have to say it was the character Joanna – the way she carried herself.

CAMILLE

She had a remarkable strength of character.... And the narrative voice is so genuine – comforting, even.

JUDY

The literary award includes a cash prize and an exclusive publishing contract. I just need a signature on these forms.

PAUL

Great.

(looking through forms)

Where should I sign?

JUDY

Oh - we'll need Lindsay's signature.

PAUL

Yes.

JUDY

Not a representative.

PAUL

Where should I sign?

CAMILLE

I'm sorry, but it can't be you – it must be Lindsay.

PAUL

I am Lindsay.

CAMILLE

I'm sorry?

PAUL

I'm Lindsay P. Wilson.

JUDY

I thought you were her attorney.

PAUL

No, I'm Lindsay. And I'm an attorney.

But.....you're not – you know....

CAMILLE

I'm not what?

PAUL

You're not.....

CAMILLE

A woman.

JUDY

No, I'm not. I mean, that's my full name – Lindsay P. Wilson. My friends call me Paul – that's what the "P" stands for.

PAUL

Well.....

JUDY

Is that a problem? The rules of the contest didn't mention any gender requirements.

PAUL

No, I just...well, the novel is written from such a tender female perspective, you know the hardships in Joanna's life ....the constant soulfulness of Selma. We just .... assumed Lindsay was a woman.

CAMILLE

Oh! Well....I'm sorry for the confusion.

PAUL

....I...uh....I don't know how to put this.... this is....this is a problem.

CAMILLE

Pardon me?

PAUL

You're...um, you're ...

CAMILLE

I'm what?

PAUL

You're white.

JUDY

PAUL

(surprised)  
....Yes?

CAMILLE

The contest specifically stated that this was for African American writers.

PAUL

(catching on)  
Oh  
(chuckling)  
I am African American.

JUDY

I'm sorry?

CAMILLE

You're not.....

PAUL

I'm not what?

JUDY

Black.

PAUL

I'm sorry.....?

CAMILLE

(taking back the folder of documents)

Mr. Wilson, this award is only for first time African American writers. Now you've written a great book, and you really had us fooled, but I'm surprised it never occurred to you that we'd meet you face to face and see that you are misrepresenting yourself.

PAUL

(hurt)

Ms. Harrison, I assure you, this is no ...misrepresentation. I was born in Johannesburg, South Africa. I lived there until I was nineteen years old, and at that time I emigrated to the United States and later became a U.S. citizen. I believe that makes me an African American.

CAMILLE

Well, that is....

PAUL

(confused)  
Is there a problem?

CAMILLE  
 Look, Mr. Wilson, I'm not one to-

JUDY  
 No. There's no problem.

CAMILLE  
 Judy, do you -

JUDY  
 There's no problem. Mr. Wilson, I apologize for our lack of manners. We've never had such an unusual combination of circumstances before, but there's no reason for us to be rude. I'm very sorry.

CAMILLE  
 (sotto voce)  
 Judy-

JUDY  
 We're very sorry, Mr. Wilson. Please, accept our apology.

PAUL  
 (cheerfully)  
 It's quite all right – no harm done.

CAMILLE  
 (unsure, hands him the folder)  
 If you'll sign these forms – we need them in order to initiate the award process.

PAUL  
 Certainly.

PAUL begins working on forms while  
 CAMILLE and JUDY move away for a  
 private discussion.

CAMILLE  
 Are you sure you want to do this?

JUDY  
 We don't have a choice - he meets all the criteria. I can't wait to see the look on RJ's face.

CAMILLE  
 He's going to be surprised, isn't he?

PAUL puts the documents back in the folder and approaches CAMILLE, handing her the folder.

CAMILLE

Thank you, Mr. Wilson. I'm very sorry about the misunderstanding.

PAUL

It's quite all right.

JUDY

We'd like to schedule a time for you to visit our office in Memphis – give you the grand tour, meet our board of directors.

PAUL

That would be lovely.

CAMILLE

We'll give you a call next week and see what works best with your schedule.

PAUL

Thanks very much.

JUDY

It was nice meeting you.

PAUL

Yes, very nice.

JUDY

And you know...I just love your accent.

PAUL

Oh...thank you.

PAUL exits. CAMILLE and JUDY share a long knowing look.

CAMILLE

Poor RJ – he has no idea what he's in for.

JUDY

“It's not about the author; it's about the book.”

CAMILLE

Well,,,,,



I love irony.

JUDY

CAMILLE and JUDY return to their seats and CAMILLE picks up her laptop to navigate to the website.

CAMILLE

Look, we don't need to head back for a few hours. Would you mind it if I ran around town for a while?

JUDY

What for?

CAMILLE

I figured I might help look for Joanie Huneycutt. We can leave after supper and still get home in good time.

JUDY

Ah, what the hell.

CAMILLE

You sure?

JUDY

Yeah, why not. I might go over and check out the Barringer Tower.

Blackout.

#### Scene 5

A Hospital ward in Little Rock – Later that afternoon. DEBORAH, a nurse, is perusing a clipboard. CAMILLE and ANDY enter.

ANDY

Excuse me -

DEBORAH

Yes?

ANDY

I'm Andy Lowder, the Democrat-Gazette. This is Camille Harrison.

DEBORAH

Yes?

ANDY

I called earlier about-

DEBORAH

Oh, right. Look, Mr. Lowder, it's not my place to meddle, but I believe you're wasting your time here.

ANDY

I just want to ask a few-

DEBORAH

It's like I told you on the phone – we don't know anyone by that name.

CAMILLE

Is it possible she used a different name?

DEBORAH

No. I mean, well, maybe - But it doesn't matter – there's no reason for you to be here, so I'll have to ask you to leave.

ANDY

Look, ...Deborah. Joanie Huneycutt is a bit of an icon. The public deserves to know about her.

DEBORAH

I'm not concerned with the public, Mr. Lowder. My focus doesn't go beyond this ward, and I'm telling you straight out, you're wasting your time. Perhaps you can go to another hospital and bother some one else.

CAMILLE

May we just look around? I have her photograph – I'd like to ask if anyone knows her.

DEBORAH

I'm sorry, but I can't let you do that. Please respect the privacy of our patients.

CAMILLE

I don't think you understand. I really need to find her.

DEBORAH

No, Ma'am, you don't understand. This is a hospital, not a place to shine your little media spotlight. These kids here are just barely hanging on. I don't want to let them down, and yet I do every day, because we can't save every one, so now show a little dignity, for Pete's sake, and go away.

CAMILLE

Listen, Deborah, Joanie Huneycutt has been writing about her illness, her struggle with cancer, and there are thousands of people all over the world who depend on her. She's their inspiration, and all we want is to find her.

DEBORAH

I think you'd better leave now.

DEBORAH exits.

ANDY

She's obviously not here.

CAMILLE

Andy.....what if something happened to her?

ANDY

(shrugging)

Let's go try the University Medical Center.

CAMILLE

I can't. I have to go back to Memphis.

ANDY

Okay, I'll drop you off at the hotel. Can I have the photo? It might come in handy.

CAMILLE hands the photo to ANDY and they exits, as the lights fade out.

Scene 6

Lights up on DEREK, wearing hospital pajamas.

DEREK

Camille didn't find Joanie. It never occurred to me how hard it would be. She's still looking, but I'm trying not to get my hopes up. See, it's been two weeks now, and Joanie's webpage hasn't been updated. Not even once. And that's just not like Joanie. It kind of makes you think that, well, maybe....oh, God, I hope that's not true.

Lights fade out on DEREK.

## Scene 7

Memphis. Lights up on the Voices of Color Office. SHELBY is sitting at a desk. RJ enters.

Shelby. RJ

Yes, sir. SHELBY

Let me know when Ms. Wilson gets here. RJ

Yes, sir. SHELBY

CAMILLE enters.

Ms. Harrison. We didn't expect to see you here today. SHELBY

I came in to see Lindsay Wilson. Is Judy around? CAMILLE

Ms. Chambers? Yes, ma'am, she's- SHELBY

JUDY enters.

Right there. SHELBY (cont'd)

Hey – I thought you'd be out all week. JUDY

I wanted to be here for Lindsay's visit. CAMILLE

Oh, I can take care of that. JUDY

I know - I just wanted to be here. CAMILLE

JUDY  
How are things?

CAMILLE  
The same.

JUDY  
Really? I'm sorry. Is he at home or-

CAMILLE  
No, he's still at Baptist Memorial.....but he's got a very good doctor. How did RJ take it.....about Lindsay?

JUDY doesn't respond.

CAMILLE (cont'd)  
You didn't tell him?

JUDY  
I couldn't exactly build up the courage.....

CAMILLE  
Sparks are gonna fly.

JUDY  
I know.

CAMILLE  
We should tell him.

JUDY  
Don't spoil the fun, Camille.

CAMILLE exits and JUDY chases after her.  
PAUL enters.

PAUL  
Excuse me?

SHELBY  
Yes, sir?

PAUL  
I'm here to see Ms. Harrison.

SHELBY  
Yes, sir, is she expecting you?

PAUL  
Yes, we have an appointment.

SHELBY  
And your name, sir?

PAUL  
Wilson. Paul Wilson.

SHELBY  
Oh. Are you related to Lindsay Wilson?

PAUL  
Yes. I mean, no - not exactly. Actually, I am Lindsay Wilson.

SHELBY  
You're.....

PAUL  
Lindsay Wilson.  
(pause as SHELBY stares)  
Lindsay P. Wilson.  
(pause as SHELBY stares)  
The "P" stands for "Paul."  
(pause as SHELBY stares)  
Is something the matter?

SHELBY  
Oh, no, sir. Assuming .....you enjoy fireworks.

PAUL  
I'm sorry?

SHELBY  
Let me get Mr. Harwood for you. He's been waiting for your arrival.

SHELBY gets up and moves to the entrance,  
never taking her eyes off PAUL.

SHELBY (cont'd)  
(calling out)  
Mr. Harwood? Lindsay Wilson is here to see you.

Just a second.

RJ (off stage)

He'll be just a second.

SHELBY

Yes. I heard.

PAUL

(pause)

So .....you're from Little Rock.

SHELBY

Yes.

PAUL

I...hear it's very nice there.

SHELBY

Yes. It is.

PAUL

SHELBY stares at PAUL until he feels awkward.

Shelby, bring Ms. Wilson on in.

RJ (off stage)

Right this way.

SHELBY

SHELBY escorts PAUL offstage.  
CAMILLE enters, followed by JUDY.

Shelby, where is-  
(looking around)  
Shelby?

CAMILLE

SHELBY enters, looking back towards RJ's office.

Where's RJ?

CAMILLE (cont'd)

SHELBY nods offstage.

JUDY

We heard Mr. Wilson was here.

SHELBY

He's meeting with Mr. Harwood right now.

JUDY and CAMILLE exchange looks as RJ enters.

RJ

Camille.

CAMILLE

Hello, RJ. I see you've met Mr. Wilson.

RJ

I ought to fire the both of you.

CAMILLE

For what, RJ? What did we do?

RJ

You could have told me that....that-

JUDY

"Harvest of Memories" was selected based on the criteria of Voices of Color. Mr. Wilson meets every one of those requirements.

R.J.

Well, he doesn't look like any African American I've ever seen.

JUDY

He was born in South Africa.

CAMILLE

And he's now a US citizen.

R.J.

Even so, the award is for Southerners.

JUDY

He is a Southerner.

R.J.

He's from the South? The Southside of what....Liverpool?



CAMILLE

He's lived in Arkansas since he was nineteen.

R.J.

I don't care if he's a direct descendent of Stonewall Jackson. He can't win this award.

JUDY

Why not, RJ? Because he's a white man?

R.J.

I should have known about this. Before now.

CAMILLE

He's African American, he's a Southerner, and this is his first novel.

RJ

But -

JUDY

This isn't about him, it's about his novel. If not, Edgar Ward would have won.

RJ

Well, he may win after all.

CAMILLE

You're going to take the award away from Lindsay?

RJ

I don't see any other way. Go tell him there's been some kind of mistake.

JUDY

What?

RJ

You two got us into this mess. Now you can deal with it.

CAMILLE

That's hardly fair.

R.J.

Call it what you want, Camille, but we'll lose our funding - and probably our jobs - if the winner of the Southern Voices of Color Literary Award opens his mouth and sounds like Crocodile Dundee.

PAUL enters.

CAMILLE

Mr. Wilson. Nice to see you again.

PAUL

Hello.

PAUL approaches and shakes hands with  
CAMILLE and JUDY.

R.J.

It was nice meeting you Mr. Wilson.

RJ exits.

PAUL

Is there a problem?

CAMILLE

Um.... No. Just a minute. We'll be right back.

CAMILLE and JUDY exit to speak with R.J.  
SHELBY and PAUL share an awkward  
moment.

SHELBY

(pause)

Would you like to sit down?

PAUL

Thanks.

SHELBY

(long pause)

This is kind of awkward, isn't it?

PAUL

A little.

SHELBY

Mr. Wilson, I ....umm.....I just wanted to tell you.....I really love your book. I found it  
very inspiring.

PAUL

Really?

SHELBY

Yes, sir. It was something else. I couldn't put it down, but even more than that, sometimes I find myself thinking about it, you know, how would Selma have reacted to this or that? Or what would Joanna have said about such and such.... it just made me think about a lot of things.

PAUL

Well, I'm happy to hear that.

SHELBY

I even cried when they lynched Joanna.

PAUL

Oh, I'm sorry.

SHELBY

Oh, no. It was a good thing.

PAUL

Then I'm....glad.

SHELBY

(pause)

How did you write about those things? I find that fascinating – I want to be a writer one day - How did you do that? I mean, these weren't experiences you had first hand.

PAUL

No, not at all. Actually, I've met several African Americans who told me about experiences their grandmothers and great grandmothers related to them. The actual characters, well, I just made them up – imagined what they'd be like and wrote it down.

SHELBY

It's amazing that you could do that.

PAUL

I don't think so. I think people are a lot alike. We all experience things from a slightly different cultural reference, but we still all have the same human emotions.

SHELBY

I just love your accent.

PAUL

Thank you. I think your accent is rather charming, too.

SHELBY

(taken back)

I don't have an accent.

SHELBY (cont'd)

(pause)

You know, Mr. Wilson, I've been thinking, and I admit that I thought you must have been a black woman, too – I mean, before I met you, and now that I know you're not....well... it really doesn't change anything for me. I still feel moved by Selma and Joanna, even though they aren't real, I mean, I knew that they weren't real – It's not like I thought they were real people before I met you, I mean– well, I knew they weren't real because they're in a novel, you know, and so they couldn't be real, or otherwise it wouldn't be fiction, but ....well, it's like the book has a life of its own. It doesn't matter that you're a man. It doesn't matter that you're from Little Rock or you have an accent or anything. It's a great book.

PAUL

It means a lot to hear you say that.

SHELBY

Well.....that's just what I think.

PAUL

Thank you.

SHELBY

(long pause)

So.....you're not black, are you?

PAUL

No.

SHELBY

I didn't think so.

CAMILLE and JUDY enter and approach  
PAUL

CAMILLE

Mr. Wilson, there's seems to be a little problem.

PAUL

Oh?

CAMILLE

The fact is, you wrote a very good novel and you deserve the award, but....well, frankly, you won't be receiving it.

PAUL

No?

CAMILLE

I'm really very sorry. ....but..... there seems to be no way we can give you the award.  
.....I'm sorry. No one would ever believe it.

PAUL

Believe what?

CAMILLE

It's a beautiful novel, but no one would believe that a white man could understand things about black women like that ...the feelings... the agony... the pride.

PAUL

Ms. Harrison, I made that up. Those people never existed. They never felt those feelings or encountered those situations. They're fiction.

CAMILLE

There is a.... general feeling that you won't be eligible for the award because .... Well ... quite frankly....

JUDY

Because you don't fit the ... general impression the public would have of the .... person who would receive this award.

PAUL

I suppose I should have expected this, shouldn't I?

CAMILLE

I'm sorry?

PAUL

There's an African folktale about bees and spiders. The Queen Bee was upset because the women from the local village would seek out her hive, looking for honey, and when they found it, they would destroy the hive in attempts to get to the sweet honey comb. Every time they came, they would leave the bees homeless and force them to build another hive. So the Queen Bee tried building the hive farther away, but the women still found it. Then the Queen ordered the bees to sting the women, but the women would cover their skin with a light coat of mud, that wouldn't allow the bees to sting them. Finally, the Queen Bee made a pact with her friend the spider, and the spider and all her spider friends would build their nests over the bee hive. That way, when the women came, they would see the spiders hanging over the hive and think that the spiders were making the honey. Repulsed by the spiders, the women would return home and tell their families that the honey was no longer sweet.

CAMILLE

You're saying that your book is our honey?

PAUL

And I am your spider.

JUDY

Mr. Wilson, it's difficult to explain.

PAUL

Oh, no, I think I understand. The reason I can't win the Voices of Color Award, is because my voice is the wrong color. Thank you for your time. Please tell Mr. Harwood that I'll see him in court.

CAMILLE

You're going to sue us?

PAUL

Ms Harrison, I'm an attorney. What else would you expect?

(starting to exit, then turning back around)

Ms. Harrison, have you ever been to Africa?

CAMILLE

No....I haven't.

PAUL

Then I guess that makes me more of an African American than you.

PAUL exits. Blackout.

#### Scene 8

SOUND: Bumper music that fades out under the first few lines of dialogue. Lights up on radio studio with CHUCK and LUCY behind microphones.

CHUCK

Hey, we're back – you're listening to "Tennessee Tonight" with Chuck

LUCY

and Lucy

CHUCK

Here on KXAM 990.

LUCY

We've been talking about the Southern Voices of Color and this year's nominee for the First Novel Award Citation, which went to the book "Harvest of Memories" by Lindsay

LUCY (cont'd)

P. Wilson. And for those of you just tuning in, Wilson is not black, so the he's been labeled unfit to receive the award. So, Chuck, does this guy Wilson deserve the award or not?

CHUCK

No, not at all – I don't know what he was thinking when he got involved with this in the first place. All he has to do is look in the mirror and see that he's not African American.

LUCY

But he was born and raised in Africa.

CHUCK

Hey, just because your cat has kittens in the oven, that doesn't make them biscuits.

LUCY

So he's not an African, even though he's from South Africa.

CHUCK

He's not an African American. We all know that African American means black. It's not a matter of where you're from, it's all about race.

LUCY

Well, what about the people from Africa who aren't black?

CHUCK

They won't ever be African Americans. The Voices of Color people were right – you shouldn't give an African American award to a white man. I mean, that's why it's called "Voices of Color." It's not for white people.

LUCY

So you're saying white isn't a color?

CHUCK

No, 'cause if it was, it would just be "Voices" – not "Voices of Color," because if every voice had a color, then "Voices of Color" wouldn't make any sense. I mean, the whole reason for having a "Voices of Color" award is to honor those things, those books... that speak to a certain audience...because black voices will speak to black people differently than white voices will.

LUCY

So why don't they call it "Black Voices" award?

CHUCK

Well, that just sounds stupid.

LUCY

You've got to give him credit, though. It sounds like a very good book.

CHUCK

I heard it's very inspirational.

LUCY

You haven't read it?

CHUCK

Nobody's read it – it hasn't been published yet. I'll read it once it's published.

LUCY

Well, it doesn't really sound like something you'd read.

(looking over press release)

Sentimental story of Southern Black women .....the daughters of slaves... family values, pride, journey from oppression, blah blah blah.....

CHUCK

Is that a technical term?

LUCY

Yeah, "Blah-blah-blah" is a phrase used by a lot of publishers. Now, here's a really good question for you – are these women still going to find the novel inspirational .....now that they know it's written by a white man?

CHUCK

See, that's what I don't get. Shouldn't the story be inspirational all by itself? I mean, if a story is good...or bad....can't the reader figure that out?

LUCY

All right, now you're getting philosophical on me.

CHUCK

Sorry - didn't mean to stretch your brain. But is that the case?

LUCY

You mean. if somebody writes a book in the forest, and nobody hears him writing it, will you be able to tell his race by reading what he wrote?

CHUCK

What came first, the novelist or the anthropologist?

LUCY

I think it was the chicken.



CHUCK

I say the egg.

LUCY

So getting back to this award - should the writer be an African American, or should the book be about African Americans?

CHUCK

Both.

LUCY

Why both? What is to be gained by both?

CHUCK

Well...you're looking for a story that is, you know, ..um...what's the word I'm looking for...um...for a story that specifically addresses the interests of African Americans-

LUCY

So why does it have to be written by an African American, why can't it be written by an Asian guy.

CHUCK

Because the award is for African American writers.

LUCY

Then why does the book have to be about African Americans? If the award is for an African American writer, who cares what the book is about?

CHUCK

Well, you have to....the book has to be about African Americans, 'cause otherwise, you could have some African American guy write a book about ..I don't know...he could write a mystery novel about a Jewish detective who moonlights as a plumber or something.

LUCY

Now, I would read that book.

CHUCK

I'd wait until the movie came out.

LUCY

So anyhow...we made a few phone calls...and even though the Southern Voices of Color people weren't interested in talking to us-

CHUCK

Imagine that.

LUCY

We dug a little deeper and found out that the people who made this decision, you know, to take the award back from Lindsay Wilson...are mostly...are you ready for this?

CHUCK

Ready.

LUCY

They're mostly white.

CHUCK

You mean they're multi-colored?

LUCY

No, it's a committee thing, but most of the people on the committee are white - Caucasian. So the white people are taking an award away from another white guy in order to give it to an African American.

CHUCK

Which is where it should have gone in the first place.

LUCY

What I'm wondering, is whether they're trying to be politically correct...or if they really believe that.

CHUCK

I wonder what the African American community would say.

LUCY

What about the Africans who aren't allowed to be African Americans?

CHUCK

You know the great thing about it is, that, hey, this is America, and anything is possible. If Michael Jackson can become a white man, then Lindsay Wilson can surely become a black woman. A little surgery, and Wilson can come back and claim that award.

LUCY

You are a sick man.

CHUCK

Well, that's about all the time we have this evening. You've been listening to Chuck

LUCY

and Lucy with Tennessee Tonight here on KXAM 990.

CHUCK

Thanks for tuning in

LUCY

and join us next week when we'll interview a Knoxville man who is not allowed to take cat naps because his neighbors figured out that he's not actually a cat.

Bumper music as lights fade out.

Scene 9

Memphis. Lights up on CAMILLE and JUDY at table. RJ enters.

RJ

(pause)

Come on, it can't be that bad.

JUDY

We don't like doing your dirty work.

RJ

Somebody has to.

CAMILLE

How about you?

RJ

Come on, he probably hates my guts. If anybody can do this, you two can.

JUDY

Why? Maybe we agree with him.

CAMILLE

Maybe he should sue us.

RJ

Look, this is bigger than all of us. The Board met and agreed to present him with another award – a special thing-a-ma-bobber to make up for all the confusion.

JUDY

(looking through folder)

“Exceptional perspective of African American interest?” RJ, can you sidestep the issue any more transparently than this?

RJ

That's what the board wants – just get him to drop his lawsuit.

JUDY

Why can't you just call him up and tell him that, RJ?

RJ

That's not the way we do business, you know that.

SHELBY enters.

SHELBY

Ms. Harrison, you have a telephone call – it's urgent.

CAMILLE exits followed by SHELBY.

JUDY

(pause)

That may be about her brother.

RJ

Let's hope not.

JUDY

Which means... I get to go to Little Rock.

RJ

I really appreciate this.

JUDY

Yeah, well, you sign my paycheck.

RJ

Make sure he understands that it's not likely he'll win a lawsuit. The court will probably stand on our side.

JUDY

Really?

RJ

We're just lining up with the Federal government's terminology. He doesn't stand a chance., but we don't need the expense, the bad PR, or the general headache.

JUDY

You think this'll work?

RJ

Cross your fingers. Make sure he knows – everything is equal: publishing contract, cash prize, the whole bit – it's the very same as the First Novel Citation.

JUDY

Except that it's for a completely different thing-a-ma-bobber.

RJ

Yeah.

CAMILLE enters.

CAMILLE

Okay, RJ, I'll go to Little Rock for you.

RJ

You will?

CAMILLE

Sure, I'll go tomorrow.

RJ

Well.....all right then. Let me know if you need anything. Judy, fill her in. I'll inform the Board.

RJ exits.

JUDY

What was that about?

CAMILLE

Andy called from Little Rock. He found Joanie Huneycutt.

Black out.

To read the rest of the play, contact [Dave@drichardtucker.com](mailto:Dave@drichardtucker.com)