

Isabelle: Weep for Me Monologue (An excerpt from the play *A Way Home*) by Maxie Rockymore Copyright 2013

Setting: A laundromat circa 1965, Gulfport, Mississippi. Isabelle has spent the night sleeping on her daughter's Francine's grave. Francine has been killed by either her young white lover or his father. No one knows for sure. Isabelle enters the Laundromat in a dream like trance. Her friends Pepper and Stella are domestics/maids doing their weekly laundry. They attempt to comfort her...

Isabelle

Do you hear the wind sister, blowing sister? The wind is blowing eastward to gloryland, where all the spirits go to settle and dance in the cool shade of the evening under weeping willow trees that fan the tears of a thousand crying mothers who have lost their children too soon. And Solomon in all his songs never told of the pain of a mother because he did not have a womb. And so who will tell her story sister? Who will tell the story of a mother that eats worms for breakfast and drinks the pee of turtles for tea when she thirsts. Who will tell it sister? Who will tell how your breath tries to run away from you when you slumber at night. Even your tears taste like the salt of dreamers working in salt mines and being denied a glass of water to quench their thirst. Which machine is open sister?

*(Grabs her basket of clothes.)*

No. These are mine. These things belong to me. I have my baby's things in here. I have her dresses in here. I have her socks and her dress. Did I tell you that this dress smells like fish? Why does my baby Francine's dress smell like fish? *(She licks the dress.)* Why does her dress taste like salt? I found the scales by the water see? *(She pulls out two large fish scales from the basket.)* See? God put the big fish scales over my baby's eyes just like this *(places scales over her eyes.)* see. He put them over her eyes so that she would not see what they had done to her. She gave me her fish scales. She asked me to keep them for her. She told me to save them for when she returns, when she returns to me.

*(Pulls the dress out of her basket.)*

Francine wants her dress clean for tomorrow. You know she has to go to work. She has to go down to the store in the morning. I am going to press her hair tonight. We are going to eat fried shrimp and fish for dinner just how she likes it. And she is going to make us some cornbread with honey.

*(Beat.)*

When I went to the cemetery to lie down and take my afternoon nap with Francine like we did when she was a baby girl, I found this pretty ribbon. (*Holds up the ribbon that Francine had in her hair.*) And that fella told me that some old white man had left the ribbon where Francine was sleeping. I asked him what white man? Who was he? What did he look like? And he said to me that it was the white man that owns the department store in town. I ask him what is that old white man doing with Francine's ribbon? He said that he don't know...He don't know. I am tired.

(*Beat.*)

Yes, rest myself from the wind. The old winds of people that I have never met all calling her name, Francine, Francine, like they knew her at Christmas when she was ten. A little boy stops on the street. He looks at me; his eyes point at me and ask me why? Old ladies walking hurriedly to get out of the noon day sun wipe their brows with warm sweat rags, the ice cubes all melted like the tears that they would not shed for me because...because they say I should have known better. I should have known better than to let my Francine go on that boat with white folks. And in the church choir yesterday I thought I heard a sister sing off key when she sang, *when, when, did white folks ever need a black girl of sixteen at their birthday party?* I know that I heard her sing that. I saw old brothers in suspenders and worn blue overalls creating myths about my ignorance, my arrogance and my attempts to let my daughter Francine be *other*. I saw Mister McHenry, Mister Jeff and Old Bone beating on the old aluminum tubs that they sat on like old black owls sitting upon their perches, spitting tobacco of wisdom, mixed in with *she shouldn't have-where was her daddy at- they ought to whoop her mama-take a good switch to her mama.*

No. No sympathy eased from their lips like burnt offerings of mourning. I have to burn my offerings alone, in solace, ashes in my hair and face making a wonderful paste for a fine burial mask worn only by mothers who unknowingly, unknowingly traded beauty for ashes. My own body has rebelled against me in the night. I cut my wrists while lying across my unmade straw bed and no blood comes running out. Even my blood was too angry to carry my mourning. Sleep attempts to still my breath and instead stuffs my mouth with torn, rent pieces of Francine's dress in attempts to suffocate me. My teeth clatter, clatter and dance playing, tick, tack, toe. Clatter, clatter, they laugh at me. No; my own body still finds me guilty and will not allow me to mourn, properly; and so I have learned to weep. (*Beat.*) Won't you sisters weep for me? (*She extends out her hands in invitation.*)

*Close.*