

ALABASTER
by
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Winner of the David Calicchio
American Playwright Prize

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CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

ALICE - 30S-50S - an internationally recognized portrait photographer

JUNE - 30S-50S - an undiscovered folk artist; mercurial

WEEZY - a goat; a healer; a "tomboy"; no-nonsense

BIB - an old goat; WEEZY's mother; ailing in health

Note: BIB never speaks in human words but there are moments when we see that she is more than just a goat.

TIME

Present day. Late afternoon.

SETTING

Somewhere near Alabaster, Alabama, early April. Portrait of a an old farmhouse, mid-morning. A yard, a porch. A small goat barn. The focal point is a master bedroom. An assemblage of folk art fills the corners and walls of this sun-lit room along with a large old bed, draped in white. Somewhere in this picture is a space for WEEZY and BIB, a pallet of straw, perhaps, or a lean-to.

This place, a virtual canvas, gains color and crispness as the story moves along, reflecting at any moment the mood or perspective of what the players experience as well as their point of view through the viewfinder.

ACT 1

SCENE 1

AT RISE: WEEZY enters the light. SHE addresses the audience as she addresses nearly everyone else around her, with a neutral, no-nonsense tone (she's not warm, but she's not cold either).

WEEZY

(to the audience)

Hello. My name is Weezy. I am a goat. I am aware that I am a goat.

(looking around the room)

I see you have found yourselves on a small farm somewhere in the backwoods of North Alabama.

(singling out a specific person in the audience)

Don't panic.

BIB, an aging goat, slowly enters the light. She's seems slightly unnerved by the presence of the audience.

WEEZY (CONT'D)

We don't get many visitors.

BIB gives the audience a suspicious side eye and then walks toward the goat barn.

WEEZY (CONT'D)

That's my mama. Bib.

(to BIB)

OK, mama?

BIB settles on to her pallet of straw.

WEEZY (CONT'D)

(to the audience)

She's sick. Old and sick.

BIB closes her eyes.

WEEZY (CONT'D)

(to the audience)

I didn't always know my mama. I was taken from her when I was real little. I have no memory of her from before. But she's here now. Right.

Lights up on a large sunlight bedroom. On the bed, a woman sits dressed in a robe nervously sipping from a coffee mug and looking anxiously around the room. Her body, or what we can see of it, is covered with scars.

WEEZY (CONT'D)

That's June.

(almost goading)

June and me, we have a connection.

Right, June?

JUNE shoots WEEZY the bird. JUNE goes back to looking around the room nervously. There are camera bags, video and lighting equipment lying around the room.

ALICE, a bright-eyed woman of a certain energy, enters the bedroom as if returning from a related task.

WEEZY (CONT'D)

That's a new person.

ALICE unzips the case of her video camera. A small dust cloth inadvertently falls out of the bag and onto the floor.

WEEZY (CONT'D)

She's not from around here.

During the following, ALICE sets up her tripod and video camera, pointing it in the direction of the bed.

WEEZY (CONT'D)

Just remember, June. You asked her to come.

JUNE nods nervously in response.

WEEZY sits in a lawn chair next to BIB outside the goat barn and watches on. She wears a backward ball cap and eats popcorn, occasionally commentating (and sometimes heckling) as if on the sidelines of a sporting event. Lights now focus on ALICE and JUNE.

JUNE

Did you get something to eat?
People talk about eatin when they
don't know what to talk about.

ALICE

I had a snack on the plane, yeah.

JUNE

Never been on a plane.
(off ALICE's look)
Nope.

ALICE

Never?

JUNE

I don't really know anybody I could fly to, anyway. Well, I know you now, I could fly to you.

ALICE

Sure.

JUNE

I wanna see Times Square.

ALICE

See a show?

JUNE

No I just want to get some mystery meat or something and stand right there in the middle of it all, the lights and stuff, and feel big or feel small.

(beat)

You live in Brooklyn right?

ALICE

Uh... that's debatable.

JUNE

How so?

ALICE

I'm kind of... sorting that out.

JUNE takes a sip from her coffee mug and offers a sip to ALICE.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Is that coffee?

JUNE

Mmm hmm. It's kind of a variation on coffee.

ALICE

What's the variation?

JUNE

I use Bourbon instead.

ALICE

Instead of what?

JUNE
Instead of coffee.

ALICE
Tempting.

JUNE offers her the mug.

ALICE (CONT'D)
I shouldn't.

JUNE
Gotta be somewhere.

ALICE
It's the work, ya know?

JUNE
The work.

ALICE
Nothing personal.

JUNE
Do you know Annie Leibovitz?

ALICE
I do know Annie.

JUNE
What's she like?

ALICE
She's hysterical. And very real.
And miles ahead.

JUNE
I read some place she said people
think it's the photographers job to
make their subjects comfortable.
She does not... *subscribe* to this
notion.

ALICE
How so?

JUNE
I was hoping you could tell me.

ALICE
Hmm. I guess I can see that. We're
not wedding planners. Ya know? It's
portraiture.
(playfully)
(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

My job is not to console you my dear, it is to capture you.

JUNE

Well, now that sounds a little dangerous.

ALICE

It kinda is.

JUNE

And I totally get that, I do.

(beat)

We used to let outsiders just come and go, but things have just gotten so desperate.

ALICE

Oh yeah?

JUNE

It's the inbreeding, we lay traps.

ALICE

Traps?

JUNE

Amazing what we catch.

ALICE

Really?

(beat)

What do you use for bait?

ALICE's phone rings with the theme song from PSYCHO.

JUNE

(recognizing the ring tone)

Who the fuck is on 'your' shit list.

ALICE

That's my dad.

JUNE

Solid.

ALICE digs for the phone in her backpack and mutes it.

ALICE

Sorry.

JUNE
Alice?

ALICE
Yeah?

JUNE
Breathe.

ALICE
That's my line.

JUNE takes a breath. ALICE takes a breath.

JUNE
You need a break?

ALICE
I'm good.

ALICE resumes setting up her equipment.

JUNE
So, how many women have you... ya
know...

ALICE
You're number seven.

JUNE
Lucky seven.
(beat)
You just go from city to city...

ALICE
Pretty much.

JUNE
Got a favorite?

ALICE
Savannah.
(beat)
You're asking me to pick a favorite
woman?

JUNE
Sure.

ALICE
No way.

JUNE
Do they all have scars like me?
(Beat.)

Guess not.

ALICE
What are you asking?

JUNE
I thought that was pretty straight
forward.

ALICE
Ya think?

JUNE
I don't know what to think, I'm
making shit up.
(beat)

ALICE
What was the question?

WEEZY
(to the audience)
June likes to push.

JUNE
Do they all...have scars...like me?

WEEZY
(to the audience)
I used to think it was the PTSD
from her injuries, ya know, but
then I remembered, nope, she's
always been a bitch.

JUNE
Hello?

ALICE
No and yes.

JUNE
Good answer. Duh.

ALICE
It's never been about the scars.
Not for me.

JUNE
Wait, what?
(MORE)

JUNE (CONT'D)

You're taking pictures of people
with scars but it's not about the
scars, what's it about, then,
Alice, tell me.

ALICE

I think it might be hard to tell
you anything.

(beat)

Fear.

JUNE

Rings a bell.

WEEZY

(to the audience)

Fear of the unknown. Fear of self-
discovery. Fear of happiness, even.

ALICE

These women--some of these women--
are

JUNE

(overlapping)

Why not men?

ALICE

(overlapping--continuing)

in a lot of pain because-- NO. *Men?*
Why do people / always ask me that?

JUNE

(overlapping)

It's whatever.

WEEZY

Let her talk.

(beat)

ALICE

Can I finish?

ALICE (CONT'D)

The scars...

WEEZY

(frustrated)

...oh my god.

JUNE

You're gonna tell me they're
beautiful?

ALICE

They're a way in.

JUNE

In.

ALICE

What I mean is -- and I want to...
I want to be careful here because
it's not like I'm an expert on
scars or anything, but -- what I'm
learning is or what I have learned
is... every woman is *different*.
Every scar is different. Umm...
some women are still in the early
stages of dealing with them. Others
have... made peace, I guess, is
that weird to say? With their
physical worlds? I feel pretty
lucky. Not everyone gets to do what
I do.

JUNE

Why the switch?

ALICE

Switch?

JUNE

From the celebrities.

ALICE

My assignment work, you mean?

JUNE

Assignment. Work.

ALICE

Have you been reading my
diary?

JUNE (CONT'D)

I'm not painting you in.

ALICE

I needed a change.

JUNE

Just all of a sudden...

(beat)

You spend just as much time with
Demi Moore as someone like me,
what's the difference, really?

ALICE

Is that a serious question?

(beat)

It's more intimate, obviously.

JUNE

Not obviously. I've seen your
celebrity shots, those are some
scarred up motherfuckers.

(beat)

ALICE

I can see I have to choose my words
more carefully.

JUNE

Because you weren't before?

ALICE

That's not how I meant it.

JUNE

It's how I meant it.

ALICE

I'm listening.

JUNE

Why the switch?

ALICE

I told you, I needed a change.

JUNE

You needed a change because
you needed a change?

ALICE (CONT'D)

And it was admittedly a pat
response, but it's what
people say in polite company
instead of the alternative.

JUNE

I'm not polite company.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Which is the horrible truth
of their *lives*.

(beat)

Is that ok? Is that ok, June?
If I hang back on that
question. Until I know you. A
little better?

JUNE

I think you would make a shitty
wedding planner.

WEEZY

(to JUNE - a warning)

June.

JUNE

(to WEEZY)

I got it.

ALICE (confused) Got what?
 WEEZY (to JUNE) Asshole.

JUNE (covering)
 I've got... an apology.

WEEZY (to JUNE)
 Better.

JUNE shoots WEEZY the bird. Unseen by ALICE.

ALICE
 No. Actually, I'm sorry. Can we start over?

JUNE
 Sure.

ALICE
 Great.

ALICE nervously turns her attention to fixing the video camera. She looks around at the art in the room.

ALICE (CONT'D)
 (regarding the art)
 I love all your pieces.

JUNE
 Thanks.

ALICE
 I haven't had a good look, but I'd like to.

JUNE
 Sure.

ALICE
 Did I see a Barksdale over there?
 You're a collector, obviously.
 (positioning the camera)
 I collect a bit myself.

JUNE
 Am I scar-ier than Hollywood?

ALICE (playfully)
 By an order of magnitude.
 (beat)
 (MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

But, I wouldn't come all this way
just to cower in a corner.

JUNE

You can if you want to.

ALICE

I don't want to.

JUNE

You don't want to?

ALICE

I don't want to.

ALICE adjusts the light on JUNE. JUNE watches her.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I'm glad you answered my ad.

JUNE

Oh, That was my neighbor, Peachy
Sawgrass.

ALICE

Peachy Sawgrass.

JUNE (CONT'D)

She told me -- I know, it's a
name, it's a name -- she told
me you were lookin' for
women.

ALICE

Oh. I don't know why I thought you
found it online.

JUNE

I don't do *online*.

ALICE

You don't do--

JUNE (CONT'D)

I'm dumb and I have a dumb
phone and I like it that way.

ALICE

Really?

JUNE

No shit.

ALICE

So...if you don't do online...how
did you see my portraits?

JUNE

The library.

ALICE
Your local library has my
books?

JUNE (CONT'D)
Birmingham. I called Aggie
Nolan at the Five Points
branch, she sends me stuff.

ALICE
You have your own personal
librarian?

JUNE
She's my cousin.
(beat)
She's also a librarian.
(beat)
She told me she saw your pictures
one time at the Corcoran when she
went up there on a school trip to
DC. She wanted me to ask you why
people in your pictures look so sad
all the time. And then I looked at
your pictures and I saw it too. The
sadness, I mean. Or maybe that's
new information. To you?
(beat)
Are you gay?

WEEZY
(to JUNE)
OH MY GOD.

ALICE
You ask a lot of questions.

JUNE
Are you?

WEEZY
(to JUNE)
SERIOUSLY?

ALICE
Does it matter?

JUNE
No.

OK...

ALICE
(beat)

JUNE (CONT'D)
Are you attracted to me?

ALICE
No. No, I'm not attracted to you.

JUNE
Is that right?

ALICE
 (making a joke)
 You're not my type.

JUNE
 (highly amused)
 DAMN! Not. Your. Type!?

WEEZY
 (to JUNE)
 You deserved that one.

WEEZY (CONT'D)
 (to JUNE)
 She's just trying to do her job,
 June. Would you relax?

ALICE
 (playfully)
 You're pretty impossible.

JUNE
 Assignments and clients and
 jobs. Oh, my.

JUNE (CONT'D)
 So many words.

ALICE
 Maybe we should stay focused on the
 work.

JUNE
 Yeah, ok.

ALICE
 Are you ready?

JUNE
 Been ready.

*ALICE sits in a chair next to the video camera and pulls out
 a note pad and a pen.*

ALICE
 OK. So, these questions...just say
 skip, OK, if you can't or don't
 want to answer.

JUNE
 Skip?

ALICE
 Yeah. Ya know, like if I ask
 you--

JUNE (CONT'D)
 NEXT QUESTION--practicin.

JUNE (CONT'D)
 My head pops off from time to time,
 just to warn ya.

JUNE turns to see WEEZY amused but shaking her head with disappointment. SHE sticks her tongue out at WEEZY.

ALICE smiles at JUNE and takes a big breath. JUNE takes a big breath. WEEZY takes a deep breath. BIB, still snoozing, takes a little breath.

ALICE

You're very brave, sitting there.
OK...just so you know the order,
I'm going to ask about the scars
first so I can get the video. We'll
do the photographs separately when
we get the light.

JUNE

Fine.

ALICE turns on the video camera. JUNE nervously mugs for the camera.

JUNE (CONT'D)

I don't know why I did that,
there's nobody in there.

ALICE turns on her little handheld voice recorder. SHE looks up to see that JUNE has removed her robe.

ALICE

Oh. No. I'm only recording from the
shoulders up. You can...

Pause.

JUNE

(pointedly)
Why am I so quick to take my
clothes off? That is something I
should explore.

ALICE

Are you more comfortable with your
clothes off?

JUNE
That is....

WEEZY
Yes.

JUNE
Yes. Yes, I am.

ALICE

Well, it certainly doesn't bother
me, Whatever makes you comfortable.

JUNE hesitates.

WEEZY
 (to JUNE)
 Girl, get dressed!

JUNE rolls her eyes at WEEZY and then puts her robe back on.

ALICE
 This is June. Age 31. It's April 5,
 2018, and we're just outside
 Alabaster, Alabama.

JUNE
 Lord, that's almost my gravestone.

ALICE
 So, how long have you lived here,
 June?

JUNE
 All my life. Which is forever,
 seems like forever.

ALICE
 You like living here?

JUNE
 I like the farm.

ALICE
 The farm.

JUNE
 (a loaded answer)
 I don't get out much.

ALICE
 Why's that?

JUNE
Issues.

ALICE
 Issues.

ALICE makes a note on the paper.

ALICE (CONT'D)
 Anything interesting?

JUNE
 Next.

ALICE
 Got it. So, what do you do for a
 living?

JUNE
That's a stupid question.

ALICE I'm sorry?
JUNE (CONT'D) No, I get it. I get it. It's a progression.

JUNE (CONT'D)
I take care of the farm. Feed the goats. Whatever needs doin. I don't really need a whole lot...
(beat)

ALICE Are you--
JUNE (CONT'D) actually.

JUNE turns her focus to WEEZY during the following.

ALICE
(tentatively)
So...you're happy?
(beat)
Last week, when we spoke on the phone, you were telling me about the accident.

JUNE
(still looking at WEEZY)
Accident?

WEEZY
Accident...

JUNE
When you say accident, I think maybe we're talkin about a fender bender on the bypass.

ALICE
I'm so sorry. I was just trying to be sensitive.

JUNE
Could you not, you're creepin' me out.
(turning her attention back to ALICE now)
We don't have to dance around it.

ALICE OK.
(beat)
JUNE (CONT'D) Sorry.

ALICE
There was a storm?

The video camera BEEPS. JUNE startles.

JUNE
(unnerved)
You could say that...

ALICE becomes momentarily distracted with the noise on the video camera.

WEEZY
(to JUNE - a warning)
Easy.

ALICE
And you were here, right? On the farm?

The BEEPING continues. ALICE struggles with the camera.

(regarding the noise.)
Ah. It's not stopping!
(the BEEPING stops)
Oh, there we go. Sorry.
(returning her focus to JUNE)
You, uh... you lost your family?
They were crushed?

Pause.

JUNE
You need to trust me, don't you?

WEEZY
(to JUNE - a warning)
OK.

ALICE
What?

JUNE

You need to trust me, because you want your story to be accurate because it's just too hard to believe or whatever, but I could be unstable, right, I could just be some redneck meth head, for all you know, lookin for my payday, my 15 minutes, and embarrass the hell outta you like that lyin shitball did to Oprah Winfrey.

WEEZY

(to JUNE)
She's just trying to do her job, JUNE. Why do you have to be such a ball buster all the time, just let her do her job!

ALICE

A Million Little Pieces...

JUNE

(overlapping)
A million little shitball pieces.

ALICE

June, I came a long way to be here today. And I'm sitting here with you now. And...there are scars all over your body. Every part of your body.

(beat)

I just want to know what happened.

JUNE

For your coffee table book? Fancy New York friends.

ALICE

You know, June...I have scars too.

JUNE

That's hot. Are we in a club now?

ALICE

I'm on your side.

WEEZY

(to JUNE)
 She could go, you could just ask her to go. Or just let her sit here. In your creepy bedroom. And get eaten alive. Slowly and painfully. By a weirdo!

JUNE

On your side? You sound like fuckin Jerry Lewis. Are you Alice, are you? If you were passin through this shit town on your way to sunny Orlando and you saw me sittin on a bench outside of Golden Corral, and you wanted to take my picture, would you ask my name and buy me a coffee, or is that just too much of a chore?

JUNE (CONT'D)

On your side. You know somethin, I was valedictorian of my high school class, you believe that? That's all right though, just sit there... with your assumptions.

WEEZY

(overlapping - to JUNE -
 exasperated now)

OK.

JUNE

(to WEEZY)
 No. No. NOT OKAY.

ALICE

"My" assumptions?

JUNE

Maybe you should go. If you know where you're going. Do you know? Where / you're going? To?

ALICE

(overlapping)
 Soooo lost. / So lost.

WEEZY

(to JUNE)
 KNOCK IT OFF!!!!!!

Pause.

JUNE takes a deep breath.

JUNE

I--I am so sorry. That... I think I get... nervous sometimes... or... somethin. Can we just... umm... slow down for a minute?