the first crack.

A ten minute play by Whitney white
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locations:

Lenay’s kitchen
modern, beige, not used often.
We see is a pile of dirty clothes and used items in one corner, and a refrigerator.

Denise’s kitchen
Cramped, homey, and glorious.
Herbs, spices, pots, pans, recipes posted everywhere.
Photos, notes, weird ingredients, cookbooks…
Everywhere you look, there is something to see.
This is the kind of kitchen you want to be in.
To eat in.
To laugh in.
It is the kind of kitchen you miss when you are living on your own.

characters

LeNay
A daughter. 34. Black. Lives alone. Accomplished in her field.
Nerdy.

Denise
LeNay’s mom. 65 and not in great health. But maintains a fantastic outlook.

time
The near distant future, or the very distant future.
Whenever we are out of the mess that we are in now.
Lights up. The stage is split into two kitchens. One is cluttered, homey, and fantastical. Pots, pans, herbs, family photos, and touches of home everywhere. This is Denise’s space. The other, is minimal, modern, beige, and cold. In this space we see a white refrigerator, and a frightening pile of items. Dirty laundry, take out boxes, wigs papers and work files, and much more from floor to ceiling. This is LeNay’s space.

Denise is mid meal preparation. Well, more like feast preparation. And the other woman, LeNay runs onstage. Through the house perhaps. She runs like she is running for her damn life. Lights and sound give us a touch of horror here. A paper-bag of groceries in one hand, cell phone in the other. She runs through her door and slams the door behind her.

**LeNay**

hold on hold on hold on!

**Denise**

Nay what are you yellin’ for? And what’s wrong? I told you I would call you as soon as my food was done!

we hear the clink and clank of pots and pans. Denise is putting in some work. over the course of the entire play Denise should be cookin’, movin’, and groovin’. The actor should prepare a real meal, that she and maybe even the audience can taste, smell, and eat.

LeNay on the other hand, pulls a large container of laundry detergent out of the grocery bag. Her task is to tackle the pile.

**LeNay**

I know I’m just… I feel a little off.

**Denise**

You feel off? Or—

**LeNay**

I just wanted to talk … to see how you are.
Denise
You wanted to call to see how I was doing
but you the one feeling off?
Girl, I’m fine!
I’m cooking!!!
And you are fine too baby gurl.
I think you would know if it was happening.
—if you were changing?
From your asshole to your elbow,
you would feel it.

LeNay
Let me plug in my charger and get my ear thingies in—
so I don’t lose you.

Denise
You’re just anxious sweetie.
You need to eat something.
Clean your space.
Get outdoors.
This is weird for everyone.
We been cooped up like hens on crack!
anyways.
Like I SAID….

LeNay
Mom.
ma!!!!
Wait!

Denise
…LIKE I SAID
this is happening all over the world girl!!

LeNay
I know I know.

Denise
All over the world!
Black women are just…
changing.
Just like that.
It’s down right supernatural
From woman to wolf
bam!
Hasn’t happened to me tho.
I mean, I’m here. I’m waiting.

LeNay
Of course you are.
You are eternal ma.
**Denise**
Is that why you’re calling?  
You scared sweetie?  
Can’t be scared now,  
I didn’t raise you like that.  
If it happens, it happens.  
For both of us.  
Certainly would be exciting!  
shee-it.

**LeNay**
Mom. Please don’t get crazy.

**Denise**
Don’t call your mother crazy.  
It’s exciting.  
It’s wild as hell!  
...some kind of—  
world-wide-black-woman—phenomena!  
I was expecting it to happen to me but —  
No dice.

**LeNay**
stop. don’t.  
don’t even say that.  
Don’t make me think about that.  
That would be—

**Denise**
Come on Nay,  
don’t take the fun out of everything for mom.  
You always do that  
you get so disgusted with me.

**LeNay**
That’s not true!

**Denise**
it’s an incredible thing!  
We are finally let out of our houses  
After all that virus-drama  
The world goes back to normal  
Errybody got their jobs back  
woo woo woo  
and——

> Just then, we hear a howl  
> and then other howl.  
> the howling feels close to us.

**Denise**
GIRL SEE THAT?  
THERE THEY GO!  
You got your doors locked?
LeNay
I live on the second floor,
I don’t think they can climb up brick.

Denise
I said YOU GOT YOUR DOORS LOCKED?

LaNay goes to her door.
she locks it

LeNay
Now I do.

Denise
I don’t know what kind of hippie shit you on
With your doors unlocked
You crazy.
Don’t think the white folks in your fancy neighborhood
are not above violence.

LeNay
I was just about to do some laundry
And then you called
So I was in the middle of things…..

She looks to a corner, and revealed to us is a pile of dirty laundry
from floor to ceiling
clothing
underwear
shoes
old wigs
a few takeout boxes
this is a rotting shrine to single-working-femme life.

Denise
Well…
did you do it?

LeNay
…..Imma get to it ma.

Denise
I told you.
Just wait, you’ll see.
that trash is gonna get up
and wash it’s damn self one day.

LeNay
Well that certainly would be helpful.

Denise
Honey.
You can’t be live like this.
I know you can work from home now,
I know the world figured out how to work from home.
But those times have passed.
You gotta go for a walk
You gotta get some fresh air
You gotta get your own damn groceries
You gotta smile at a man and have him smile at you

LeNay
Really ma?

Denise
Yeah. Really.
And you gotta wash your damn clothes.

LeNay
I can't think straight.
With those things on the fucking prowl?

Denise
Don't call them things girl.
They us.
And don't swear when you're talking to your mother Nay.
I don't like it.

LeNay
Maaaaaaaaaa??????

Denise
It's disrespectful.
they wouldn't want you anyhow.
They ain't checkin' for us!
They just sniff and walk away.
They ain't really checking for anyone.
They with each other.
They only checking for each other
The pack.
But you hear those stories sometimes...
This sista in Atlanta—
Single mom.
She was trying to walk home in the dark
With her son.
picking him up from after school care.
aaaaaaaaawwwww Nay!
remember after school care sweetie?
You used to love your little friends.
I will never forget when I came to get you one day
And they had you in time out
Because you had started a hair-store
And was charging those white kids real money!

LeNay
It was pennies and nickels.
Pennies for style.
Nickels for hair and nails.

**Denise**
They thought you had play money.

**LeNay**
Why the fuck would I—

**Denise**
NAY!

**LeNay**
Why would I ask for play money.

**Denise**
You had so many friends.

**LeNay**
I know.

**Denise**
Do you miss your friends sweetie?

**LeNay**
What do you mean mom.
I miss lots of things.
Im just doing me right now.
Anyways, we talk—

**Denise**
But do you miss having them closer to you.
your male friends?

**LeNay**
Please mom—

**Denise**
Do you miss having a boyfriend there with you?

**LeNay**
Do you?

**Denise**
I can’t have men around me for too long sweetie!

**LeNay**
Well—
like mother
Like daughter.

**Denise**
You sound like us.
LeNay
Who is us??

Denise
The women of this family.

LeNay
Sounds like you miss male friends ma.

Denise
Nuh-uh
You’ve met your father.

LeNay
indeed, I have.

Denise
exactly.

a beat.
I know we don’t look like the typical family
but, we’re strong.

LeNay
—We’re all alone—

Denise
But we’re strong.

LeNay tries to sort her laundry.
is she getting warmer and warmer?
as she goes through the clothes the light in her space becomes more and more
saturated.
she takes off her shirt, sniffs it.
its foul.
she adds it to the pile.
she tries to sort through her shrine.
stops and pants
tries to sort
stops and pants.
this is a repeated sequence of physical gesture that builds.

LeNay
What are you making?

Denise
Oh, we are now in phase two my love.
The rue is done. BAM.
Still need to add a little more chicken broth and spices—
Gonna let all that simmer and—

LeNay’s breathing becomes a bit more labored.
it bleeds into the sound system of the house.
the beginning of a rhythmic sonic score.
her physical gesture should exhaust, and bring her to the ground.

Denise
——— you alright?

LeNay
Yeah.
that just sounds good.

Denise
IT IS GOOOD BOO!

LeNay
What kind of meat?

Denise
Chicken.
Shrimp.
Spicy sausage.
Crab legs—
All made juicy with tomatoes
Okra
Salt
Pepper
Paprika
Filé
Cayenne—

LeNay
And what about the roast?

LeNay crawls her way to her refrigerator.
she opens it.
we see a few bottles of rose
blueberries
and a package of raw chicken breast cutlets.
she looks...
looks...

Denise
Prime beef roast boo.
Perfect size.
Perfect cut.
My butcher- Barry never lets me down.
That cute lil snack.
Butcher-Barry.

LeNay pulls out the raw chicken.
she peels back the cold plastic
she takes out her first cutlet with her bare hands.
pink and slimy.
she licks it.
the breath score intensifies.

Denise
Even in the quarantine
He would still let me call
And talk to him
And ask about the meat
And send me pictures
And let me fight with him about the price
And he would set my little roasts aside for me
— that is a man I could spend some time with.
He outdid himself this time.

\[
\text{she devours raw cutlet after raw cutlet.}
\text{we can hear the sounds}
\text{the tasting}
\text{the nibbling}
\text{the biting}
\text{the chewing}
\text{the swallowing}
\text{and breathing.}
\text{quick deep labored breaths}
\text{all while Denise cooks, and cooks...}
\text{adding spices and the perfect touches to her delicious meal.}
\]

\text{Denise}
Red.
Juicy.
Not to fatty.
Beautiful piece of raw meat.
Can't cook it too long or—
OH NAY!!!

\text{this breaks her spell}

\text{LeNay}
Jeesus what mom,
are you alright?

\text{Denise}
I was trying to tell you about this sista in Atlanta!
Anyways....
Nay.
....Nay?

\text{LeNay}
Yeah Mom, I'm here.

\text{Denise}
Well she was—
\text{we hear a beep from Denise's world.}
\text{a timer.}
Wait wait wait!
hold on.
let me put some more chicken broth in.

\text{In the silence LeNay puts the phone on speaker}
\text{and crawls away so that no one can hear her}
Denise
Anyways girl—
This sista was trying to get home
after work
with her son
And two men rolled up on her.
Tried to rob her.
Tried to mess with her.
And her kid
and then...BLAOW!!!
Six of them appeared from no where.
dogs.
wolves.
Big ones.
Hungry ones.
Rough ones.
And those men tryin’ to jump her?
They ripped those mothafuckas to shreds
and just let the mom and son go.
Not only did they let them go,
but those dogs followed them the entire way home
Protecting them.
Making sure they were safe.
Black power!
finally.
super-power.
superwomen.
And when the news showed up...?
Those little dogs were just playing in the street.
With the bones.
With the scraps.
Playing with each other.
Rolling around in the dirt.
Licking each other.
happy.
And then they run off.
we hear howling again.
LeNay just breathes.
she pants.
it intensifies.

Denise
Sweetie, you alright?

LeNay
Yeah I’m good I’m just—

Denise
You’re breathing weird boo.
LeNay
I’m not breathing weird.

Denise
What’s in your mouth?

  the chicken pack is empty now
  but you know how there’s a little
  raw-pink–water–chicken-blood-juice sometimes?
  In the pack?
  she tips the pack to one side,
  puts it to her mouth
  and drinks that.
  slurps it up.

LeNay
I having a snack.

Denise
mmhmmm.

LeNay
I talked to my aunts today.

Denise
How were they?

LeNay
They were fine
At home.
Getting back to work
Back to their routines.

Denise
How did they sound?

LeNay
Good but—
Mommy, how did we get this way?

Denise
How did we get what way?

LeNay
I mean—
What happened to them.
Like the men?
Literally all of them?
My dad, your dad, cousin Sarah’s husband—

Denise
Your grandfather used to look after you.
Before he passed.
You two were close
He did his best.
He looked after us all.
And you have your godfathers!

**LeNay**
We’re good women.
You’re a good woman.

**Denise**
What does that mean.
A *good* woman.
Who says I’m a *good* woman.

*a beat.*

Denise sticks a fork into the oven and takes a nib of her perfectly cooked roast.

Oohh girl! Just tasting my handiwork
Hold on…
Carrots
Garlic
Onions
Bell peppers
herbs—
It’s been slow cooking for three hours.
Falls off the bone.
Red meat baby.
Delicious.
Sustenance!

*a longer beat.*

Does a good woman deserve company more than any other type of women?

**LeNay**
no, I don’t think so.

**Denise**
I suppose we’re just all too busy trying to survive.
Isn’t that what you say you’re doing?
Just focusing on you?
Just doing you?

**LeNay**
Yeah but…
I’m only saying that shit because—

**Denise**
Nay I’m gonna get you if you don’t stop cursing on this DAMN PHONE!

**LeNay**
I’m only saying *that* because
I’m so…
Denise
What nay?

LeNay
Disappointed.

Denise
Don’t be sweetie.
There’s a lot to enjoy.
Even alone.
Can’t be bitter
Can’t be depressed
You’re blessed honey.
And anyways that’s what they are saying
is a huge contributing factor to this whole—

LeNay
What, being alone?

Denise
No— loneliness.

LeNay
Same thing.

Denise
Alone and lonely are not the same thing.
Everyone is alone.

LeNay
that’s cheesy,

Denise
but it’s real.
No matter how close you are to anyone.
To any man.
They will never be in your skin.
In your shoes.
In your life.
They can’t trade places with you—
And they won’t trade places with you.
That loneliness sweetie…
if you don’t come to terms with it
It just brings sadness.
Sadness and then rage.

LeNay
I get the rage part.

Denise
Of course you do.
But it’s no good.
LeNay
What kind of carrots did you get for the—

And then we hear a violent, loud crack.
It is LeNay’s spine.
It reverberates through the space.
It brings her over onto all fours.

Denise
What was that!
What was that crack?

LeNay
I don’t know
I don’t—
Aah!

More cracks.
the spine, each vertebrae.
knuckles.
ankles.
joints.
fingers.
toes—

LeNay
Nonononnoono!
Mmmmmmmmmy my
aaaaah!!!!

Aaaaaaaaaaaaah!
pelvis.
femurs.
calves.
muscle.
breasts.
sinews
bones.
all of them.
cracking and bending and breaking and growing again and growing stronger
and stretching bigger.
and then stretching smaller.
we watch LeNay transform into a wolf.
she writhes
and moves
and hollers
and yells
her voice is pitch shifted deeper.
too deep.
she sounds much bigger than she is.

Denise
This is it.
This is it!
That's how they said it would happen.
Can you hear me sweetie?
Can you hear me still?

LeNay
muuuuhhhhhhaaaam. Maaaaaoooom!
hhhhhhhhHHHHHHHHHelp me. ppppleaseuuuh
My.....my.....my—

Denise
It's ok!
It's ok.
You’re going to be strong.
Just listen to my voice.
You’re gonna be like all of them now.
That’s what’s going down.
Everywhere.
everywhere!
The ones alone.
The ones who can’t come to terms with being alone.
—wolves.
But its ok!
You will run.
And you will play.
And you’ll have a pack girl, a pack!
And you can go anywhere
And no one can hurt you
you won’t be alone, or lonely
you won’t yearn for anyone
in that sad-angry way.
You’ll roam.
And eat.
And kill.
And lick.
And taste.
And be girl.
finally.
You’ll just be.
silence now
as LeNay has changed into a beautiful, terrifying, wolf.
with blue eyes.
a black and silver-grey mane.
porcelain white teeth.
white fangs.
a long pink tongue
and snout.
a wolf.

Nay?
Nay!
Are you—

The wolf pants.
it stretches a sweet little downward dog. 
it looks to the audience 
and then it looks to the pile. 
it draws near the pile, lifts one leg up, 
and takes a piss all over it. 
one last action to say goodbye to a life that never fulfilled her. 
and then our beautiful wolf that was once LeNay leaves the space. 
It tries to go through the door, but can't. 
it looks to the audience again. 
much more menacing and ferocious this time. 
It then, looks towards a window. 
runs for it 
and violently smashes through. 
finally free.

**Denise**
Run my little wolf. 
Run.

*Denise sits down with her food, 
she listens on the phone until 
LeNay is out of sight.*

*She eats her delicious meal.*

**end.**