

Wash Day

Matilda Washington

INT. HALLWAY. LATE AFTERNOON

On the right and left of the wall hang baby pictures and grandparent portraits. Scenting to an old modern wallpaper covering of blue on either side. Harriet, a 35 year old black woman with flat ironed curls on top of her head, wearing a purple long sleeve cotton shirt and low rise blue jeans with soft slippers on her feet. Opening the door to her left flicking on the light and quickly turns to open the door on her right and turns on the light

HARRIET
Hewlette where are you?

Harriet walks down the hall some more and opens the next door to her left, pokes her head in and looks to her right and left.

HARRIET
(loudly)
Where are you girl?

Walks down the hall some more while the low sound of the tv plays in the background.

INT. LIVING ROOM. LATE AFTERNOON

Harriet enters the living room, a very modern red color walls with brown adjacent carpet, with a brown couch right up against the wall with blue and yellow accent pillows and a tv up on small brown desk in the center, to see Hewlette, a 11 year old girl black girl with long kinky fro on top of her head wearing loose black jeans with a patterned shirt on and white socks, sitting criss cross in front of the couch with her eyes glued to the tv screen.

Harriet stands in the middle of the living room with her arms crossed.

HARRIET
Did you hear me calling you?

Harriet still with her arms crossed looking at Hewlette with her eyes still glued to the screen.

Harriet walks toward her daughter and grabs the remote with her right hand from the couch and pushed the red button with thumbs while pointing it at the tv.

Hewlette swivels her head around to look at her mom

HEWLETTE
(loudly)

Hey

HARRIET
It's time to wash your hair

Harriet bends down and points with her left hand behind her toward the kitchen

HEWLETTE
No!

Hewlette turns her head back around to look at the blank tv screen

HARRIET
I didn't ask

Harriet turns around and starts to roll her purple sleeves up starting with her right wrist

HARRIET(CONTD)
Grab the stuff from the bathroom

Hewlette slowly stands up and walks toward the bathroom.

INT. KITCHEN. LATE AFTERNOON

Harriet standing in front of the sink in the kitchen, with yellow plastered walls and brown wooden floors with white tile countertops and silver sink with small baby pictures scattered on the wall. Harriet takes her right hand and pulls up the lever and shift it to the left on the faucet then moves her same hand underneath the water. Retracts it quickly to then adjust the lever a little toward the left and moves her same hand under the water. Shakes her right hand over the sink and then bends down and reaches her left arm over and grabs a stool on her side. Slightly standing up she places her hands on the sink and moves her right foot over and pushes the stool in front of the sink.

INT. LIVING ROOM. LATE AFTERNOON

Hewlette walks out of the bathroom slowly in her right she has the shampoo and in her left she is holding the conditioner and has two light blue towels resting across her left shoulder.

INT. KITCHEN. LATE AFTERNOON

Slowly entering the kitchen. Hewlette places the bottles on the counter next to the right of the sink while Harriet grabs the light blue towels from her shoulder and places one on the counter as she turns around and back around facing the sink. Then taking the second towel on the sink in front on the edge.

Hewlette walks toward the sink face forward and places her knees on the stool and drapes her head over the sink while clutching the towel in front as her head lays on the towel in front of her slowly.

Harriet on Hewlette's right side puts her hands under the water and moves her daughters head closer in the water.

HEWLETTE

Ow!

Hewlette moves her head back a little bit

Harriet grabs the side of her head with both hands pulling it in the water

HARRIET

be still

HEWLETTE

But it hurts mom

HARRIET

Are you gonna wash your hair

HEWLETTE

no

HARRIET

then be still

grabbing both of the side of her head again and letting the water run through it was Harriet's nails drag down the middle part of Hewlette's head. Then Harriet pulls down the lever with her right hand and reaches over with the same hand and opens the top of the shampoo bottle and turns it upside and squeezes the solution in her left hand. Rubs both of her hands together and brings them down to Hewlette head and massages her hands throughout her head, using fingertips shifting her hands from the neck of Hewlette's hair to her sides of her hair

Hewlette starts moving her right foot up and down as her knee rest on the stool

HEWLETTE
what style on your doing this time?

HARRIET
what style do you want?

HEWLETTE
well, Juliet, got her hair done and
it's straight with curls at the end

Harriet gripping her head with both of her hands, moving the soap throughout

HARRIET
you wan't your hair straight

HEWLETTE
yeah

HARRIET
well are you white

HEWLETTE
no

HARRIET
then your hair isn't going to be
straight

HEWLETTE
But Monica has silky black hair at
school

HARRIET
And

HEWLETTE
She isn't white

HARRIET
(louder)
and

HEWLETTE
And I saw grandma one day straighten
her hair

HARRIET

so...

HEWLETTE

and isn't your's?

silence fills the room and Harriet continues to massage her daughters scalp with both hands. Then with her right hand moves the lever up and water runs down. She moves Hewlette's head under the water and uses both hands massaging each section of her hair as the water runs through.

Harriet moves the lever down from the faucet and Hewlette lifts her head up as water runs down her shirt

HEWLETTE (CONTD)

so can I?

HARRIET

no

Harriet grabs the conditioner to her right and opens the bottle and squeeze the solution in her right hand and rubs her hands together and points her index finger down toward the sink.

Hewlette then slowly moves her head back down on the slightly damp towel beneath her

Harriet places her hands in her daughters hair and starts moving all around the head

HEWLETTE

why can't I?

HARRIET

because I said so

HEWLETTE

sighs

Harriet continues rubbing the conditioner throughout Hewlette's head and turns on the faucet with her right hand and Hewlette moves her head toward the water running down and Harriet rubs her hands throughout Hewlette's head. Massaging Hewlette's hair under the water. Turns off faucet with her left hand and turns around to grab the light blue towel and drapes it over Hewlette's head.

Hewlette lifts her head up and Harriet wraps the towel around securing it on Hewlette's head securing it on the left side

of her head. Hewlette places both of her hands on top of her head holding the towel in place

HEWLETTE (CONTD)

then what are you going to do?

Hewlette slowly removes her knees from the stool and places each foot on the kitchen floor standing upright and takes her right foot and pushes the stool to the wall on the side.

HARRIET

Bantu knots!

HEWLETTE

Ugh, I don't want that

HARRIET

are you doing your hair?

HEWLETTE

no

HARRIET

exactly so can you grab the oil and other stuff

HEWLETTE

yeah

INT. LIVING ROOM. LATE AFTERNOON

Harriet walks in the living room and grabs a yellow pillow from the couch with her right hand and places it on the floor in front of the tv and sits down on the couch in front.

Slowly walking out of the bathroom with a brush, argon oil and comb in her hand, Hewlette walks toward her mom sitting on the couch and Harriet grabs the tools out of Hewlette's hand and places them to the right of her on the couch.

Hewlette slowly turns to face the tv and sits her behind down on the yellow pillow beneath her.

HEWLETTE (CONTD)

why can't I have straight hair?

As Hewlette crosses her legs in front and Harriet takes her right hand and takes off the towel and places it around Hewlette's neck

HARRIET

well why do you want straight hair?

Harriet grabs the comb on her right and starts parting Hewlette's hair going from the front of her hair, sectioning it in parts down the middle.

HEWLETTE

I don't know, it seems easier and pretty

HARRIET

You don't think your hair is pretty?

Places the comb down to her left and grabs the oil with her right and and spread it on her hands and through Hewlette's hair in parts.

HEWLETTE

no

Hewlette bends her head down as Harriet pushes her hand down on Hewlette's head

HARRIET

well hair isn't easy to maintain

HEWLETTE

well Juliets hair looks simple and nice

HARRIET

but Juliet does not have your texture of hair

HEWLETTE

You don't have my texture either

Harriet, takes on section of Hewlette's hair from the back and starts to twist it in her hands down and takes the twist and wraps it around itself

HARRIET

No, you can thank your grandma for that

HEWLETTE

But

HARRIET

But can Juliet's hair twists like

your's can?

HEWLETTE

no

HARRIET

Right because your hair is natural and can be manipulated in many styles and patterns

HEWLETTE

why don't you have that

HARRIET

because your grandma every Sunday like today, and she took a very hot comb and straighten my hair.

HEWLETTE

why can't you do that like grandma

HARRIET

it damaged my hair over the years. Mom never allowed me to love my natural hair.

HEWLETTE

then does grandma not like her hair?

HARRIET

society made us love straight hair, not kinky curly. Which I am trying to have you see

Harriet continues to twist each section of Hewlette's hair making small buns.

Hewlette uncrosses her legs and pulls her knees together.

Silence fills the room

HARRIET(CONTD)

it will take time to love your hair.

HEWLETTE

Can we watch something now

Harriet reaches over to left end of the couch and grabs the remote with her left hand and places it in Hewlette's left palm.

Hewlette presses the red button with right thumb and the tv flickers on. Hewlette takes her right hand and clicks the button on the remote switching to another channel.

On screen a news reporter mentions the name Trayvon Martin, headlines read: "black boy shot by off duty police"

HEWLETTE (CONTD)

Mom, what's this about?

Harriet lifts her head and her head stop moving

HARRIET

another black soul lost way too young.

HEWLETTE

did he do something wrong

Hewlette turns her head around to the right facing her mom

HARRIET

no and thats the sad part.

Harriet places her hands down on her lap

HEWLETTE

what do you mean?

HARRIET

you might hear more about this in school tomorrow, and you can't be fazed by what others say

HEWLETTE

because he didn't do anything wrong

HARRIET

exactly, us black folks have to be careful, because people of authority, like the police will suspect we are dangerous and do any means necessary to justify that we are. Resorting in ending our lives

Harriet moves Hewlette's head back around and continues to section and twist her hair in the middle of Hewlette's head

HEWLETTE

I thought things got better

HARRIET
no it still exist

Hewlette takes the remote and points it toward the tv and presses the button with her right thumb, a cartoon plays in the background

HARRIET(CONTD)
you know it happened to your father

HEWLETTE
what did

HARRIET
he was walking home after school when a cop pulled over and questioned him and arrested him right on there, down the street from your Grandma

HEWLETTE
why, what happened

Harriet twist's Hewlette's front part of her hair in her hands.

HARRIET
Your grandma went to got him, but they arrested him because he looked like a criminal they were trying to find, a grown black man

HEWLETTE
they suspected daddy as an adult?

HARRIET
yes, because they don't see our black boys and girls as kids

HEWLETTE
they wont' see me as a kid?

Hewlette turns her head back around toward the right facing her mom

Harriet pulls her oily hands out of Hewlette's hair and touches Hewlette's face with both hands and pulls her head in close. Foreheads touching.

HARRIET
(softly)
I wish the world had changed before

you came, but it has not, so you have
to be careful because the world won't
see you as a daughter

tv noises echoes in the background while Harriet holds her
daughter's head in her hands.

HARRIET(CONTD)
now come on, I'm almost done.

Harriet moves Hewlette's head back around toward the front.
Hewlette moves her right hand across her cheek. Harriet twist
the last section of hair toward the front. While Hewlette's
eyes are gazed on the tv screen

Harriet removes her hands from Hewlette's hair and taps her
on the back.

HEWLETTE
go see

Hewlette quickly stands up and walks toward the bathroom.
While Harriet crosses her legs on the couch looking at the tv
screen as she takes her hands and screws on the top to the
oil.

Hewlette steps out of the bathroom walks over toward her mom
and sits on the left side of her. Harriet puts her left arm
over Hewlette and pulls her closer.

Hewlette looks up toward her right.

HEWLETTE
I like it

HARRIET
I'm glad you do

Hewlette burrows her head into her moms underarm as they both
close their eyes with the tv playing in the background.