

ACT I

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SETTING:

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The outside of the neighborhood salon. A row of chairs await eager customers. (use mannequins for other customers and stylists, we see their silhouettes behinds screened windows) We hear the ambient noise of the lively streets.

ARISE:

Shalonda waits to get her hair done, she sits with relaxer on her head.

SHALONDA

My name is Shalonda. I'm sixteen-years-old and I got nappy hair. My momma hate combing my hair. She say my hair is like a lamb's a**! She say I'm grown up now and time for me to get my first perm. She don't want none of her kids embarrassing her with nappy hair. I'll be glad tho' when I get that perm. No more hot combs being yanked through my hair. No more hot curling irons burning my ear. No more burns on my forehead. No more hot grease frying my scalp. I can't wait to be grown up with my long straight hair,...

(Two large posters of blonde icons, Marilyn and Madonna, descend from the heavens onto the stage.)

SHALONDA

...just like the girls in the magazines, and the ones who always get their man in the movies. My friends say that when you get a perm, if you do it long and hard enough, yo' hair will turn like that, yeah, it will grow out your scalp straight.

(she pauses)

Mrs. Bibbs feel sorry for me, she say,

MRS. BIBBS (V.O.)

I can't believe Claudette let that child run around here with her head looking like that!

(Shalonda rolls her eyes with a serious attitude.)