

Pretty Privilege

by Gloria Majule

Pretty Privilege was originally written for the 2023 Ripped Festival at American Blues Theater

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

COFFEE, Black/African, she/hers, dark skinned, 20s

CARMEL, Black/Mixed, she/hers, light skinned, 20s

SETTING:

Not so long ago somewhere near you.

PRODUCTION NOTE:

PRETTY PRIVILEGE will thrive best in the care of a director who has the lived experience of being Black.

*Coffee and Caramel Meet
at yet another audition.*

COFFEE

I was not expecting to see you yesterday!

CARAMEL

I could tell!

COFFEE

How did your audition go?

CARAMEL

Oh I never know with these things.
You?!

COFFEE

Same.
But I gave it my best as always.

CARAMEL

Whatever happens:
It's just one audition!

COFFEE

It's not though.
We both know this is a "big break" kind of role.

*Uncomfortable laugh.
A few beats.*

COFFEE

Did you read the novel the movie is based on?

CARAMEL

Of course!

COFFEE

Huh.

CARAMEL

What?

CARAMEL

It's nothing.

CARMEL

It's clearly not.

COFFEE

I'm just surprised you auditioned
knowing the lead is supposed to be dark skinned -

CARMEL

They didn't specify skin tone in the call!

COFFEE

But you read the novel-

CARMEL

Movie adaptations rarely follow the source material!-

COFFEE

Trust me I'm aware-

CARMEL

Are you upset that I auditioned for this?!

COFFEE

No not upset-
just surprised!
Like I said!

CARMEL

It's a black female lead!
The producers asked me to audition -
it would have been stupid not to!
You know how lean it is out here!

COFFEE

And yet you book more jobs than I do.

CARMEL

What you're counting or something?!

COFFEE

You get more dates too.

CARMEL

Now I'm confused -
Is this about the audition or the guy from last year?!

COFFEE

I don't care about the guy from last year!

CARMEL

...It's not that easy for me either.

COFFEE

I can't even imagine.
It must be exhausting to have Colorism,

CARMEL

Wooooooooooooow.

COFFEE

Texturism
and Featurism
all in your favor-

CARMEL

Do you really believe every time I get cast
it's not because I work my ass off,
not because I am talented,
but because I'm a few foundation shades lighter than you?!

COFFEE

It's fine.
I really don't expect you to get it.

CARMEL

Last time I auditioned for a movie?
They gave the role to this girl.

Caramel shows Coffee a photo.

COFFEE

She's not dark skinned.

CARMEL

She's not light skinned!

COFFEE

She's lighter than me.

CARMEL

And she's darker than me!

COFFEE

Back home you would find her face on a billboard,
you wouldn't find mine!
Except maybe on a billboard advertising bleaching cream!

CARAMEL

I was just trying to show you I get rejected too,
because at the end of the day
it always comes down to who is the right fit for the role.

COFFEE

O-kay.

CARAMEL

What do you want me to do?!
I want the same dream as you do!
And I'd hope you'd be as happy to see me winning
as I'd be happy to see you!

COFFEE

Of course I'm happy to see you win!
But I also can't ignore that you are "acceptable" black,
"ideal" black,
"poster child" black -
black but not too black it's scary!

CARAMEL

I don't ignore these things either!

COFFEE

Except for when it's convenient.

A beat.

COFFEE

You...
you get to be called pretty.
you get to be a star.
I have to wait in the back of the line.
I am so sick of waiting...

CARAMEL

Can I ask something and don't get mad,
okay?

COFFEE

Just ask.

CARAMEL

...Do you think I'm prettier than you?

COFFEE

I mean,
Society has told me you are.
I think sometimes I believe it?
I see your features applauded
and take front page way more often than mine-
I'm jealous of you sometimes I won't lie...

CARAMEL

But you're drop dead gorgeous.

COFFEE

Convince the rest of the world that!
Growing up I was not allowed to play in the sun
so I wouldn't get any "uglier".
I used to rub lemons on my face
because they're supposed to lighten your skin!
It didn't even work!
It just stung like hell
and I'd smell like fucking lemonade!!
I mean I fuck with citrusy perfumes.
But the part that upset me the most was
I love the feeling of the sun on my skin.
Every night I would wish my skin would peel off
so I could play in the sun...

A few beats.

COFFEE

Have you ever been called ugly?

CARAMEL

....No.
I haven't...

A beat.

CARAMEL

...I'm sorry.

COFFEE

It's not your fault...

Coffee and Caramel get a notification.

Fuck it's the movie!

COFFEE

Really?!?
That was fast!

CARAMEL

....

COFFEE

YESSSS I GOT A CALL BACK!!
YESSS AAAAAH!!!!

CARAMEL

...I uh...
I didn't.
But Congratulations!

COFFEE

....You don't think I deserve it.

CARAMEL

You are very talented.

COFFEE

I really believe I'd be perfect for this role!

CARAMEL

....

COFFEE

Don't you?

CARAMEL

....

COFFEE

Can you please say something?

CARAMEL

Coffee sighs.

....In time...
...I'll get my day in the sun...

COFFEE

Fade to Black.
END OF PLAY