

Excerpt from
The Giver
by
Kim Dunbar

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THE GIVER -- CAST OF CHARACTERS

ANNA - 29, from El Salvador. Her gray hair and her weary stance make her seem much older. She hasn't seen her three children in eight years.

KATHY - Mid-40's. Takes good care of her outer self. Her life of privilege hasn't helped her inner self much.

CARMEN - early 40's. Estranged from her mother, has lived in Europe the last twenty years. Suffers greatly from being weaned too early.

THE GIVER - SETTING AND TIME

The stage is defined by three areas -- the foyer, the sitting room and Anna's room. At times, the action will take place in more than one of these areas at the same time.

As written in this draft, THE GIVER is set in 2000, because of its proximity in time to the war in El Salvador. However, it's possible to set the play in the present with some adjustment, (made by the playwright, of course).

ACT ONE

Scene One

In the darkness, a persistent scratching sound. Light comes up on ANNA, on her hands and knees, fiercely scrubbing a stain on the tile floor. Her gray hair is pulled back into a bun, making her look more like an old woman, than a woman of twenty-nine. She wears a simple maid's uniform.

The stage is separated into different areas; the foyer, (indicated by the tile floor), the sitting room and Anna's room.

Anna continues to scrub, as lights come up in the sitting room. Framed photographs of children of different races line the mantle. A fire crackles. KATHY sits leafing through a magazine. She is an attractive, well put together woman in her mid-forties. She stops reading a moment, and listens to the sound coming from the foyer.

Anna?

KATHY

Anna continues scrubbing.

Anna!

KATHY

Anna stops scrubbing and listens.

Are you at that floor again?

KATHY

Yes.

ANNA
(calling back)

You don't have to do that right now. It's late.

KATHY

Anna sits listening.

KATHY (CONT'D)

I don't know where those marks are coming from --

ANNA

(quietly)

You black shoe.

KATHY

What? Come in here and talk to me. I'm gonna lose my voice shouting like this.

Anna puts down the brush and makes her way to the doorway of the sitting room.

KATHY

Anna --? Did you hear me?

ANNA

I hear.

KATHY

Oh! I didn't see you standing there. What did you say?

ANNA

I no say nothing.

KATHY

But you did. That's why I called you --

ANNA

I no say nothing, missus.

KATHY

Oh. Look how red your cheeks are.

Anna touches her face, embarrassed.

KATHY

Pretty.

ANNA

No.

(beat)

ANNA

The clothes no finish.

She starts out.

KATHY

Wait. Take a break.

ANNA

No.

KATHY

C'mon. You've been rushing around all day. Please. Come sit down a minute.

Anna hesitates, then sits awkwardly on the loveseat. Silence.

KATHY

Did I tell you I'm thinking of going to El Salvador this summer? What's the weather like that time of year?

Anna says nothing.

KATHY

It's really hot, isn't it?

Anna shrugs her shoulders.

KATHY

Aren't you from El Salvador?

ANNA

Maybe too hot for you.

KATHY

That's what I thought.

ANNA

Maybe too cold, I don' know.

KATHY

Are you all right?

ANNA

I tire today.

KATHY

You've been cleaning like a mad woman all day. The house is spotless, you can stop now. (pause) It's so damn quiet, I don't know what to do with myself. I'm sitting here wondering what Jason's doing. Actually, I probably don't want to know. You know all they do the first year is drink and do drugs. You're lucky you don't have to worry about that. Did you ever want kids?

ANNA

No kids.

KATHY

But did you want to have children when you were younger? How old are you?

ANNA

Thirty year. En July.

KATHY

Wow. You're still young enough.

ANNA

No.

KATHY

You never know, you might meet somebody. You ever go out?

ANNA

No.

KATHY

We should do that sometime. Me and you. We could go to lunch or a movie or something. Just for fun. What kind of movies do you like?

ANNA

I no watching the movie. The tv show I watching.

KATHY

Okay. We could watch tv. What do you watch?

ANNA

Mujeras en Gañadas.

KATHY

Oh. We don't have to watch anything. I wouldn't mind just talking to you. Mary and I used to talk a lot. I miss that. But it wasn't like I'm the boss and she's the maid or anything like that. We were friends. Real friends. We could talk about anything. I wish we could do that. You know, talk to each other sometimes? We could do it now.

Anna gets up.

ANNA

I go finish --

KATHY

I don't care about the laundry, sit down.

Anna sits back down.

KATHY

C'mon, you talk. Ask me anything.

ANNA

(long pause)

Mr. Michael coming home this week?

KATHY

No. No, I don't think so. But he hasn't told me anything. As far as I know he might not be coming back. He...he doesn't love me anymore, Anna. I know that.

ANNA

I no say nothing. I go finish.

KATHY

But we're having a conversation. Why won't you talk to me?

ANNA

You sign the paper, missus?

KATHY

What?

ANNA

You sign for me? You say you sign for me the paper.

KATHY

Your papers. I told you we sent it to our attorney. He said it was easier when the war was still on in El Salvador.

Anna looks away.

KATHY

Just be patient. Jerry takes care of everything.

ANNA

I going home today.

KATHY

You can't. Michael's gone. You always stay.

ANNA

I going home. (pause) Maybe I no come back.

KATHY

What are you talking about? Anna? What--? Is this about your papers? I told you we're taking care of all that. I promise.

ANNA

I very tire!

*The telephone rings. Neither woman moves.
Then Anna walks to the phone and answers.*

ANNA

Wallace residence. Wait one minute.

Anna puts down the receiver and exits.

KATHY

Who's that? Make sure you check to see who it is before you open the gate.

(to herself)

We don't want a home invasion.

Kathy hears Anna talking in the foyer, she strains to make out what she's saying. Anna enters again.

ANNA

A lady here to see you.

KATHY

Who is it?

ANNA

She say no tell to you.

KATHY

What?

ANNA

Es surprise, she say.

KATHY

Surprise? Who is it? What does she look like?

ANNA

A black lady. Dress nice.

KATHY

A black lady? I know her? You should have asked me first--

CARMEN enters and watches them from the doorway. She carries a large stylish purse, her clothes are very European.

ANNA

-- Es surprise!

CARMEN

Chatty Kathy!

KATHY

Oh my God! Carmen? Jesus, you scared me.

CARMEN

Who'd you think I was?

KATHY

It's just -- oh God, give me a hug.

The two women embrace warmly.

KATHY

Anna, this is Carmen, Mary's daughter. Anna helped take care of Mary before she -- she was a big help.

ANNA

(surprised)

You Carmen.

CARMEN

Glad to meet you.

KATHY

Sit down. Anna, bring us some tea. Would you like a cup?

CARMEN

I'd love it, thanks.

Anna heads out.

KATHY

Anna. On the silver tray, please.

The two women sit.

KATHY

If I looked strange it's because I thought she let a stranger in the gate. It's just the two of us here.

CARMEN

I told her it was a surprise. You got divorced?

KATHY

No. Micheal's away on business.

CARMEN

And what's her name lives with you?

KATHY

Anna. She's been here three years now and I still have to tell her everything. I love her and she's really sweet, but she's no Mary. Mary always knew exactly what to do to make you feel taken care of.

CARMEN

Then why don't you get someone else?

KATHY

It's too hard. Starting all over again, explaining how you live your life. I think it'll work out eventually but, it's not the same. I don't have anyone to talk to anymore.

CARMEN

Got yourself a family but no one to talk to?

KATHY

Figuratively, I meant. You look so different. You still look like Mary but -- you look more European, I guess.

CARMEN

Your face looks thinner.

KATHY

I've had a couple of adjustments here and there. Why not? You were blessed with good genes. Think I'm gonna let you get away with that? (beat) We thought you'd come home when Mary died. You don't know what we went through trying to find you. We finally had to go ahead.

CARMEN

Yeah, well...

KATHY

Everyone wondered why you weren't at the funeral. I didn't know what to say.

CARMEN

What could you say?

KATHY

Why'd you come now?

CARMEN

I missed you.

Carmen reaches into her purse and pulls out a pack of cigarettes.

CARMEN

Mind?

KATHY

No, go ahead. I usually ban smokers to the patio, but you're a special guest. I'll get you an ashtray.

CARMEN

I've got my own, thanks.

Carmen pulls a small ashtray out of her purse and sets it on the coffee table.

KATHY

What else have you got in there?

CARMEN

You don't want to know, believe me.

KATHY

Somehow I do.

They sit in silence for a moment. Carmen rolls her cigarette between her fingers but doesn't light it. Kathy picks up the ashtray.

KATHY

Abergo Romano. Nice hotel?

CARMEN

No. It means "The Rome Hotel". Same variety as the "Hotel du France". Cheap.

KATHY

How long were you in Rome?

CARMEN

I don't know. Nine years, I guess. I got tired of Paris.

KATHY

What kind of work were you doing?

CARMEN

Didn't do much a that.

KATHY

Then how could you afford to stay so long? I mean, I know Mary helped, but it still must have been expensive. Even if you lived in a cheap hotel.

CARMEN

I don't remember saying I lived there.

KATHY

Oh.

Anna enters with the tea tray and sets it down on the coffee table. She turns to leave.

KATHY

Anna, do you mind?

Anna looks around at Kathy, then goes back to the table and pours the tea. She hands Carmen the teacup and saucer. Then Kathy.

CARMEN

Thank you.

KATHY

Pour one for you too.

ANNA

No, Miss Kathy.

CARMEN

Miss Kathy!

KATHY

Yes. You sit right there and have some tea with us. She's been working herself to death. C'mon, have a seat.

Anna sits reluctantly. They drink their tea in silence for a moment. Carmen frowns and puts her cup down.

KATHY

What's wrong?

CARMEN

Actually, might be nice to have a little somethin' to go with it.

KATHY

What are we missing?

CARMEN

Got any cognac? If not, Jack'll do. Or just about anything..

KATHY

In your tea?

CARMEN

Hell, we can skip the tea. And do like the Romans.

KATHY

I love it! Anna, bring over the liquor cart. Never mind, you sit there. I'll get it.