

Wright Now Play Later: November

Stephanie R: The lights. And the smell of lavender. The spinning always starts with them. And when it does, only one thing can make it stop. How did I end up on the floor? Who are you?

High school

A short

By Tegan McLeod

NAHIMA - black high school student, 17

ABRIAL - black high school student, 17

Place: South, high school.

Classroom, afternoon.

The scene should be seamless, like a dance.

*Abrial sits at a desk three rows behind Nahima.
The class is packed, but we only feel the energy.*

Abrial leans on his desk, self-consciously cocky.

ABRIAL

Eh, Nahima?

He turns to his friends.

ABRIAL

She ain't payin' attention to anyone tho. Yeah yeah, you try then.

*Abrial gets up from his desk. But is told to sit
down by the teacher.*

ABRIAL

Me? I was just getting my pencil.

*He bends for an imaginary pencil and bumps
Nahima's chair.*

She turns lethargically.

NAHIMA

Where's your pencil?

Abrial shrugs.

ABRIAL

I guess I thought I dropped it.

Nahima nudges her pencil off of her desk.

NAHIMA

No, you did.

*Abrial smiles and picks up the pencil. He shows
it off to the teacher.*

ABRIAL

See, Miss. Can a brother live?

He walks back to his desk. Again leaning forwards on it, staring at Nahima.

Then he looks straight ahead.

ABRIAL

My boys kept sayin' *ask her! ask her!*, some said *you speak her language, right?* With that sigh of envy that only comes from white boys who think we got a secret language that makes things quick and hot and sexy like MTV--really, I'm speakin' faster than you because I'm gonna be cut off any moment now, I'm speakin' with more rhythm than you because that's how you'll listen, with that NWA bumping all the way home in your mom's SUV. You like to hear it clipped and slick and vergin' on that soul-to-beat-box swing *all day and night* because then you don't really have to pay attention to what I'm saying, right? Truth is, I'm from Miami and she's from Washington DC and if there aren't two, more different...

Nahima stands.

NAHIMA

Abrial?

Abrial, surprised.

ABRIAL

Yeah?

NAHIMA

My girls don't want me to talk to him--*date my brother in Kappa Sigma, date the quarter back, which one? The white one*, because you're too pretty. I'm too pretty to date black or I'm too pretty to really be black? I'm not so black you think I have hot sauce in my bag but I'm black enough for Suzie to call me *fam* and wait for me to say *craaaazy* things like *no you didn't* in the cafeteria to the lunch lady who gives me half fries instead of full. But I'll let you touch my hair if you just stop talking to me like you know that Tupac is still alive or that you see me or that I really listen to rock and roll and drink lavender wine because I like hear the whine of a guitar like I like to get myself drunk.

NAHIMA

You want to walk me home?

Beat.

ABRIAL
(whispering)

I want to say yes.

NAHIMA
(whispering back)

Then why don't you?

Abrial looks back at his boys.

ABRIAL
(whispering)

I'd have to ask *you* first.

NAHIMA

Then why don't you.

ABRIAL

Hey Nahima.

NAHIMA

Yes, Abrial?

ABRIAL

Mind if I walked you home?

NAHIMA
(playing)

Sounds like a *fantastic* idea, you see I often don't know the way...

She walks out in front of him. He watches her leave. The races to catch up.