

I SPY FOR FREEDOM

Written by

Jeanell Allen

*This shit ain't real, but Mary Bowser definitely was.
Since Mary and I became our ancestors' wildest dreams,
I decided to pay it forward and give them another
hella wild dream.*

jeanell.allen@gmail.com
(407) 963-6736 (cell)
www.jeanellallen.com

EXT. ELEUTHERA, THE BAHAMAS - 1920 - DAY

A sea of the most beautiful shades of blue stirs softly. Its waves hit the sandy beach as small fishing boats scatter throughout the water. The Black men and boys, whose skin glistens in the blistering sun, wipe the sweat from their faces as they await the new crop of fish that will hopefully come their way.

A young girl CLOTEE (8), an observant and occasionally boisterous Black girl, picks up shells on the beach with her older sister BONNIE (10). They wave to their father when he pulls his net from the sea. He catches some fish and waves back at them.

Bonnie arranges the shells into a star formation on the sand as Clotee watches.

Note: all of the characters in the Bahamas speak with a Bahamian Creole accent.

BONNIE

Okay Clotee, take a good look at the shells 'fore I change 'em. I betcha you won't get this one.

Clotee studies the formation for a few moments.

BONNIE (CONT'D)

Alright, turn around, Clotee!

Clotee turns around while Bonnie scatters the shells. As she waits, Clotee looks at an abandoned food stand. She sees an elderly Black woman hiding behind one of the stands and looking out at the sea.

BONNIE (CONT'D)

Ready!

The elderly Black woman looks over to Bonnie and Clotee, and grins quietly. Clotee turns to Bonnie.

CLOTEE

Bonnie, look! It's old lady Garvin!

Bonnie stands next to Clotee and looks up. Suddenly, the woman is gone.

CLOTEE (CONT'D)

She disappeared into thin air!

BONNIE

Don't be silly, Clotee. She moves
like molasses. Let finish our game
'fore Mama search for us.

Clotee turns around to see the scattered display of shells.
Then she quickly rearranges the shells back into their
original formation.

CLOTEE

Done!

BONNIE

Gyal, if you can remember these
shells, you can remember everything
in the whole world!

They both laugh. Bonnie picks up the shells and Clotee looks
to the food stand again. The elderly Black woman nods in
approval to Clotee, and Clotee gasps. The woman swiftly
disappears.

EXT. CLOTEE'S NEIGHBORHOOD - ELEUTHERA - LATER

Makeshift colorful wooden shacks line the streets. Mothers
conduct chores outside of their houses (i.e. laundry,
sweeping the porch) with some of their children. The other
children play in the street. Some men walk down the road,
selling fruits and vegetables to the residents.

Clotee and Bonnie walk down the dirt road carrying their
shells in their dresses. Two little girls stand off to the
side playing a hand clapping game.

LITTLE GIRLS

You betta watch out, out, out/For
Lady Garvin, Garvin, Garvin/She'll
eat you whole, whole, whole/Mama'll
never find you, you, you...

INT. CLOTEE'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Clotee and Bonnie's mother PAULINE (30s), a stern and tired
Black woman, sits at the kitchen table scaling fish with her
gossipy friend DAHLIA (30s).

PAULINE

Clyde's cousin owns a hotel in The
Grove, so we go there. Me work as
the maid and maybe Clyde'll fetch
the food.

DAHLIA
 (sucks her teeth)
 Chile, you so lucky. Sugarcane make
 no money these days, Pauline.

Bonnie and Clotee run inside and tries to sneak past Pauline
 and Dahlia.

PAULINE
 Ummm...no ma'am! You both speak
 when you enter.

Clotee and Bonnie walk back gingerly.

CLOTEE
 Hello Mama. Hello Ms. Dahlia. BONNIE
 Hello Mama. Hello Ms. Dahlia.

DAHLIA
 Hello girls.

CLOTEE
 Mama, Papa caught some fish today.
 He be coming back soon. Also look
 at our shells!

Clotee spills the shells onto the table with the fish while
 Bonnie stands back. Both Pauline and Dahlia holler and suck
 their teeth.

PAULINE
 Clotee! The fish can't have shell
 in them. We must sell them to get
 to America. Move the shells now!

CLOTEE
 Yes ma'am.

Bonnie whispers to Clotee.

BONNIE
 I told you 'fore not to do that!

Clotee grabs the shells and carries them in her dress.

DAHLIA
 Why you girls want shells so badly?

CLOTEE
 To 'member home when we go to
 America.

Pauline goes back to scaling fish while Dahlia speaks.

DAHLIA

You know that Mama Garvin be
looking frail. I sent over soup
yesterday but she return whole pot.

Dahlia sucks her teeth.

PAULINE

She like bread. Clyde said she did
him a favor and to make her sugar
bread. (to Clotee) Clotee, take
that basket of bread to Mama Garvin
before it gets dark.

CLOTEE

Do I have to? She eat children! Why
can't Bonnie go?

PAULINE

Mama Garvin is a nice old lady--

DAHLIA

Ha she okay...

PAULINE

(ignoring Dahlia)
That you chillen bother! Also
Bonnie gotta scale fish. Don't back-
talk! Go now!

Bonnie grimaces as she looks at the dead fish. Clotee puts
her shells in a bowl near the door with other "souvenirs".
Then she climbs onto the counter to grab the basket of bread
on the window sill. She hops down as Pauline and Dahlia
continue talking. Clotee stands there listening.

DAHLIA

Awww Clyde too nice. Too too nice.

Pauline looks up to see Clotee.

PAULINE

Stop being nosy, gyal and go!

Clotee runs out of the house.

EXT. CLOTEE'S NEIGHBORHOOD - ELEUTHERA - CONTINUOUS

Clotee walks to the elderly woman's house. Clotee stands at
the foot of the porch stairs as the other kids look over.
Clotee gingerly walks onto each stair as quiet as possible.
Then she hears a crash from inside the house.

Clotee quickly jumps down from the stairs and runs to the road when MAMA GARVIN (80s; the elderly Black woman) stands in front of Clotee.

Mama Garvin is a real beauty, but she wears a floppy hat that covers it all. Mama Garvin speaks with a Southern American twang.

MAMA GARVIN

What you doing on my porch, girl?

Clotee is frightened and stunned silent.

MAMA GARVIN (CONT'D)

Answer me! Whatcha doin'?

Clotee listens to Mama Garvin and looks at her peculiarly.

CLOTEE

Ummm...my mama want you to have some sugar bread...'fore we leave.

Mama Garvin snatches the basket from Clotee and taps the bottom of the loaves. She rips out the bottom of the loaves to only find bread innards. Mama Garvin is crestfallen.

MAMA GARVIN

Damn!

CLOTEE

Where you come from? You don't sound like no one here.

Mama Garvin looks down at a frightened Clotee.

MAMA GARVIN

Come. I must finish bread before it go bad. You help me.

CLOTEE

But my mama is expecting me back!

MAMA GARVIN

She scaling and your father is fetching. I'll send a message.

CLOTEE

But how did you--

Mama Garvin quickly ushers Clotee inside the house. Even Mama Garvin moves slowly, she moves with a force. The kids gasp.