

The
Greener Grass on the Other Side

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ACT I

SCENE ONE

Setting: Alexandria Louisiana in the year of our Lord 2012.

Lights up in Lyell's, an old, beat up lounge bar. Built in 1911, the lounge has an old American look. The bar itself is crafted from cypress wood; the light fixtures are of turn of the century designs - some working and some are not. There's an old beat up jukebox in the corner. It doesn't work either.

LYELL DEARBORNE (45) is behind the bar working on a laptop computer while talking to **NOOKSIE** (45). Also in the bar is **WILLIE**, sitting in the corner with his head down.

LYELL

Peabody the sorriest football team in the Parish!

NOOKSIE

That's not necessarily so.

LYELL

What do you mean that's not necessarily so, Nooksie? How bad do they have to be before you admit they're the sorriest team ever!

NOOKSIE

See you're stuck on the past! I'm looking towards the future!

LYELL

Well tell me this - what's their record this year?

Nooksie doesn't respond.

LYELL

Don't sit up there all quiet now. Not saying anything like Willie!

NOOKSIE

See there, Willie...he talkin' bad 'bout you again.

LYELL

Like that's gonna make Willie say something. He been sittin' in the same spot everyday for 5 years and hasn't said a word to me yet! Only reason I know what he drink is because he wrote it down the 1st day and that's all he drinks.

NOOKSIE

Crown royal with a splash of water.

LYELL

So stop changing the subject. Tell it like it is. What's their record?

NOOKSIE

Well, what you gotta understand is...

LYELL

What's their record, Nooksie?

NOOKSIE

They ain't even started the season yet, Lyell. If you was a real fan you'd know that!

LYELL

Uh-huh. What was they're record last year then?

NOOKSIE

3-7. But Kendrick Tanner got hurt early in the season!

LYELL

What about the year before that?

NOOKSIE

2-8.

LYELL

2-8.

NOOKSIE

2-8.

DEBORAH MALVEAUX (35) casually conservative in her style, she's a noticeably attractive woman carrying a dark cloud that casts a shadow over her.

Lyell notices her and tries to place her but can't.

LYELL

Hello, welcome to Lyell's!

She ignores him so Lyell just picks up...

LYELL

Nooksie, that don't sound sorry to you?

NOOKSIE

No!

LYELL

No?

NOOKSIE

No it doesn't.

Desiree sits at a table. (DRS)

LYELL

Then, in your mind, what does the sorriest football team mean?

NOOKSIE

The Sorriest football team would be a team that's going down! But Peabody's coming up! Their record last year was better than the year before!

LYELL

One game! They not better! They just lost less.

NOOKSIE

I'm just saying they got some good ball players on the team this year. It's all about the future!

LYELL

They can't be too good if they're losing, Nooksie! Past, present or future!

Lyell goes over to Desiree.

LYELL

What can I do you for?

DESIREE

I just want some water.

LYELL

Water?

DESIREE

Yes. Water. Thank you.

LYELL

Water. Yes. Water. Coming right up.

Lyell goes back to the bar and prepares a glass of water.

NOOKSIE

Naw, naw, listen to me now, Lyell! Just listen to me, now! Peabody played a brutal schedule in 2010, with five of their six losses coming to playoff teams. All of those teams had at least six victories.

LYELL

Do they win the game, Nooksie?

NOOKSIE

Well...no...

LYELL

Then they the sorriest team in the Parish!

NOOKSIE

Jalen Richard is the best player in Cenla!

LYELL

They suck!

NOOKSIE

Defensive linemen William Cowan and linebacker Gus Snowden, both of them made All-Cenla last year! They both coming back this year!

LYELL

So!

NOOKSIE

I'm just saying we gotta chance this time!

LYELL

That's what they used to say when we was playing, Nooksie! We had Clarence Spotsville and Ronald Silas, Jo Hammerhead!

NOOKSIE

Sed Bayone, Leon Gray, Big Gibbs!

BOTH

Fred and Cordy Carr!

LYELL

We had a squad back in 88! Just wasn't enough of us!

NOOKSIE

Well that was the problem then! We needed more than 12 players on the whole team!

LYELL

Yeah, but back then we had spunk! Or like my Daddy used to say, "Joie de vivre!"
(zhwah duh viv-re)
(The joy of living)

We were fighters! We could beat anybody!

NOOKSIE

Yeah, In the 1st half!

LYELL

Yeah, in the 1st half, but these kids here, they don't got no passion! No Joie de vivre!

NOOKSIE

I think you wrong, and I think they got a chance. That's my team, I believe in them and ain't nothing you can do about that, Lyell! I say they gonna show us all what the Mighty P. can do!
P-E, P-E-A, P-E-A-B-O-D-Y!

Nooksie dances while chanting the cadence.

NOOKSIE

P-E, P-E-A, P-E-A-B-O-D-Y! P-E, P-E-A, P-E-A-B-O-D-Y!

LYELL

Uh-huh, Yeah right.

MAXINE CHENEVERT (30) a waitress
enters the lounge to start working.

MAXINE

Hey Nooksie!

NOOKSIE

Hello Maxine. You sho is looking fine today.

MAXINE

(blushing)

Oh stop it, Nooksie...you really think so?

NOOKSIE

Why sure I do...Don't she look good, Lyell?

LYELL

She aight.

NOOKSIE

Don't you even pay him no mind. You look like a piece of caramel toffee. Haven't you taken a good look at yourself?

MAXINE

I don't know, Nooksie. I don't look at myself like that.

NOOKSIE

Well that's aight because I can do the lookin' for both of us!

MAXINE

Oh stop it, Nooksie! What y'all fusing about now? I could hear yall all the way out in Bethel Apartments!

NOOKSIE

Lyell's not showing the proper respect for our boys in kelly green and white!

Maxine goes to wait on customers.

LYELL

They suck!

NOOKSIE

Well we'll see this season! All of the starters are coming back this year. And they have there 1st game next Friday against Meynard! This is our year, baby!

LYELL

They gone lose.

MAXINE

Lyell, I need a crown and coke, and a water.

LYELL
What did you just say to me?

NOOKSIE
She say she need a crown and coke and a water.

MAXINE
Thank you, Nooksie.

NOOKSIE
You got it, baby.

LYELL
And a water?

MAXINE
Yeah, and a water. You know what water is don't you?

LYELL
Yes I know what a water is! A water is free! And I don't wanna be selling no free water!

MAXINE
Lyell, I done told you over and over again, they don't have to be.

LYELL
What you mean, it don't have to be? I can't go 'round asking money for a glass of water.

MAXINE
I told you to get the bottled water they got now. You can sell them for a dollar a piece!

LYELL
A dollar a piece?

MAXINE
A dollar a piece, at least. Maybe even \$2!

LYELL
\$2!

MAXINE
Um-hum.

LYELL
Ain't nobody gonna come up in a bar and buy no damn water for a dollar - much less \$2!

NOOKSIE
I've ordered a water from a bar before.

LYELL
You order water from the bar all the time, Nooksie! In fact, that water you sipping on right now gonna be \$2!

NOOKSIE
You can't charge me for a water I was already drinking for free!

MAXINE

I'm just sayin' Lyell, it don't have to be that bad. You need to be thinking of some new ways to make this place make some money.

Lyell motions for her to keep her voice
down.

LYELL

Well, I don't need nobody drinking water, I need them buying drinks!

MAXINE

Look Lyell, I can't make people drink what they don't want to drink. You should be glad you got 2 people in here buying anything at all.

NOOKSIE

Yeah...the place sure has gone down. Ain't that right, Willie?

MAXINE

Oh stop it!

NOOKSIE

I'm just sayin'. We have to start looking at the future in a positive way. We have to open our minds to what is possible. You can't see past right now, Lyell. That's your problem. Maybe \$2 water is the future!

LYELL

Why are you in here anyway, Nooksie?

MAXINE

I know what he in here for. And he might get it if he ask for it in a nice way.

NOOKSIE

Girl don't you play with me.

MAXINE

I ain't playin'.

NOOKSIE

You need to stop holding out on me, woman! If you gonna give it to me then stop playin' around and go on and give it!

MAXINE

Alright Nooksie. I think you've waited long enough. I'm gonna go on and give you some.

NOOKSIE

When Maxine?

MAXINE

Right now if you want it.

NOOKSIE

Heck yeah!

MAXINE

Come on in the back.

LYELL

Well hold on, now! I'm the last person to be stopping progress but y'all can't be doing that up in here!

MAXINE

Boy, get yo mind out the gutter! I'll be back.

Maxine exits to the storage room
behind the bar.

NOOKSIE

Sure is a fine woman.

LYELL

Is that why you be up in here all the time?

NOOKSIE

What, You don't want me to come up in here no more, Lyell? My business not good enough for you, now? Beside's where else am I gonna wait?

LYELL

Wait? What you waiting on? Some big fat woman to come up in here and give you a kiss?

Lyell laughs.

NOOKSIE

Don't you worry about what I'm waiting on. The future!

LYELL

What's gonna happen in the future, Nooksie? What you gonna do tomorrow that you didn't do yesterday? You're gonna climb Mt. Everest or start selling bottled water on the street or something?

NOOKSIE

Well what if I was to have my own business somewhere? Would that be so crazy?

LYELL

Come on, Nooksie! What can you do? You barely got any education at all! You didn't finish Peabody! What you gonna do with a business? Naw, I bet it got something more to do with a woman!

Nooksie looks at his glass.

LYELL

That's it, isn't it? A woman! Well hot dogs and cat nip, Nooksie got himself a woman! I'm proud of ya. But you know what I say, Don't put off for tomorrow what you can do today.

NOOKSIE

She's the finest thang in Alex.

LYELL

Ok so, where she at?

NOOKSIE

Well...you see, we not really together like that yet.

LYELL

You talkin' 'bout Maxine?

MAXINE (O.S.)

What's that you say?

NOOKSIE

Don't mind him!

MAXINE (O.S.)

Um-hum.

NOOKSIE

No! Not Maxine. I mean, Maxine's a fine woman...nice friendly smile...them womanly curves. And can cook! That woman know she can throw down. But she looks at me with the those kind eyes of hers. It's like she think I'm something I'm not.

Nooksie takes a sip of his water.

NOOKSIE

But there is a woman. And I think I can be what she needs me to be. As soon as... Look, Just know that things will be changing for me real soon! I got plans, Lyell. I got big plans!

LYELL

Ok, Big Plans! I'm just sayin', I've been knowing Maxine for years and even though I don't understand it...

NOOKSIE

...I just think a good woman like Maxine can do better than me. Yeah, she smile at me but she just bein' nice. Woman don't want me. Not to keep. She can have anybody she want.

LYELL

Like who, Nooksie?

NOOKSIE

I don't know! Somebody professional. With something going for himself. College educated. Not me. Naw, I know who I can fit with. As long as I can give her what she need, she'll be satisfied. All I have to do is take care of her and she'll be there forever.

LYELL

I can't wait to see this woman who got your nose wide open like this!

Beat.

LYELL

Waiting... It's like this whole town's waiting on something. Hell, I wish they'd come wait in here like you!

NOOKSIE

Oh so now you want everybody to be like me?

LYELL

No! I need everybody to come up in here like you!

NOOKSIE

I could go over there to Bone Shakers! I hear they have a nice crowd over there all the time!

LYELL

Yeah, Nooksie! Why don't you go on over there to Bone Shakers. Go on over there and leave me alone!

Nooksie laughs.

LYELL

That's funny, huh?

NOOKSIE

You're getting run out of business by a crazy man!

LYELL

He not running me out of nothing?

Maxine enters with a slice of her famous
lemon cake.

MAXINE

Calm down now, Lyell. He ain't mean nothing!

NOOKSIE

Yeah, Lyell. I ain't mean nothing.

MAXINE

There you go, Nooksie.

NOOKSIE

Oooweee! Homemade Lemon Cake! This looks goood!

LYELL

It's just cake.

MAXINE

That's why I don't give you none no more. You don't appreciate nothing! Nooksie, you know I've been knowing Lyell since I was a child?

NOOKSIE

Yep, I knew that.

MAXINE

Did you know that I've been cooking & baking ever since I was a child?

NOOKSIE

Yep, I knew that too.

MAXINE

People have always said that I had a special touch when it come to food. Some even say that my Gran-Mama, rest her precious soul; they say her ghost came down on me when I was coming out of my Mama and kissed me on the hands to bless me with the gift to cook. And then she kissed me on the tongue to bless me with the gift to taste for that magical combination of sugar and spice to make everything nice.

NOOKSIE

Blessed by an angel.

MAXINE

Yeah! I know, right? And this one has never had anything good to say about any of it! Never! So I stopped giving him any.

LYELL

It's been so long since I've had any of her cooking, I don't know if she got it anymore!

NOOKSIE

Lyell, you know you could let Maxine sell her pastries in here!

LYELL

Oh no! Not that again! You hear that, Willie! They wanna turn this into a bakery now.

NOOKSIE

She can sell a few cakes and pies here and again. I know it would sell. I'd buy it.

LYELL

This is a bar, not a coffee shop!

MAXINE

Forget it, Nooksie! Lyell is as blind as a one eyed mule!

LYELL

It would take a crazy man to turn his bar into a halfway house for cookies and cakes!

MAXINE

Whatever, Lyell! You don't have vision like Nooksie here. At least he can see potential in letting me do my thing.

NOOKSIE

I know a money maker when I see one.

LYELL

Then why don't you start your own money maker and leave the planning to what happens with mine to me!

NOOKSIE

Fine.

LYELL

Fine.

MAXINE

Fine.

Moment of silence.

NOOKSIE

You know they had one of them hippity hopity groups at Bone Shakers last night. It looked like crime alley out here.

LYELL

I guess he like that kind of element. It's crazy.

NOOKSIE

Anybody crazy enough to kill his own wife should still be locked up. 10 years in a crazy house don't fix you of that kinda crazy.

MAXINE

Don't talk about that around me, Nooksie.

NOOKSIE

I know yall was close and everythang, Maxine, but crazy is crazy!

LYELL

Um-hum.

NOOKSIE

Seriously, How'd he get them folk to let him out?

LYELL

I don' know but I wish he'd go back.

MAXINE

It wasn't his fault.

NOOKSIE

What you mean, it wasn't his fault. Who's fault could it be that he killed his wife but his?

MAXINE

Look, I said I don't want to talk about it!

Beat.

NOOKSIE

Ok, Maxine. Whatever you say.

Maxine exits to the storage room.

NOOKSIE

Man, what I say?

Desiree steps up to the bar.

DESIREE

Where's the rest room?

Lyell looks at her. She's attractive.

LYELL

Just around there to the back.

Desiree exits to the rest room. (USL)

LYELL

I need some money. A benefactor. Someone to put some money in this place. Then I can expand. Maybe make it a hip-hop club like Bone Shakers!

NOOKSIE

I don't know, Lyell. You need to leave well enough alone.

LYELL

Nooksie...I need something to happen or I'm going to end up just like my Pop. The man worked his whole life and died an alcoholic drunk with nothing to show. Not me. I tell you, not me.

ADELE' OKELOUSA, (30) wearing a nice blouse and non-flattering slacks and **TANGINIQUE SANFORD**, (30ish) wearing a dress that only a hooker would wear, enter.

ADELE'

Girl, I might need to be getting home.

TANGINIQUE

Chile, relax! Marcel ain't getting off work until 2 o'clock in the morning. You're fine. Besides, I need a night cap before I go home to that cold bed of mine.

ADELE'

It's just that I don't want to push it. You know?

TANGINIQUE

You said you're ready to leave him, right?

ADELE'

Yeah...but...

TANGINIQUE

And didn't we have fun with Pat and Mike tonight?

ADELE'

Well yeah...but...

Desiree enters from the rest room. She notices Adele' and Tanginique and is about to speak to them but as she approaches, she's able to do a little ear hustling so she decides to just listen.

TANGINIQUE

I think Mike was really diggin' on you too. And them military men at Fort Polk love to spend money on their women!