

La Belle
by
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Based on a Caribbean Folk Tale

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INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

FADE IN

A semi-modern country bar with wooden inside walls and a sky-light roof. A weekend moon-lit night. Patrons drink, dance, or lounge.

LA BELLE (31) enters. She wears a flowing, long, white ankle-length linen dress with a white handkerchief tucked between her fingers. Her hat conceals part of her face and reveals her wavy hair. She walks towards the bench.

NIAGE (40) an African American woman dressed in jeans and buttoned-down long sleeves sits at the bench scrolling through her phone.

She reads a text from ROB (35) a white male, colleague and Friday night hang out partner.

ROB (TEXT)
Still coming? On my way!

NIAGE (TEXT)
Already there.

ROB (TEXT)
Same plans?

NIAGE (TEXT)
Yep. See you soon.

Niage raises her head and notices La Belle's dropped kerchief.

NIAGE (CONT'D)
You dropped something!

Niage reaches for the kerchief.

LA BELLE
Never mind, I got it!

The women's hands collide.

NIAGE
Sorry!

LA BELLE
Oh, No, that's ok!

La Belle's hand brushes the end of her dress and reveals her one bare foot.

Niage's countenance drops. She looks away, retreats to the bench and sighs.

LA BELLE (CONT'D)

Is everything ok?

NIAGE

Sure, sure.

Niage extends her hand to La Belle.

NIAGE (CONT'D)

I'm Niage.

LA BELLE

La Belle.

Rob dressed in jeans and white turtle-neck, long sleeves enters the bar and walks in on the introductions.

ROB

Ladies! Whom do I have the pleasure of meeting?

Rob extends his hand to La Belle.

NIAGE

New girl on the block.

ROB

I am Rob. Welcome to The People's Taj.

LA BELLE

What's it like in this square?

NIAGE

Usually intense. First time?

LA BELLE

Yeah! Heard of it. Decided to check it out.

NIAGE

Fridays, one free drink. Probably attracts more camaraderie. We chit-chat and hope for a memorable night.

LA BELLE

Perfect night for camaraderie. I just let the chips fall where they may.

ROB

Sounds like a promising night to me.

Niage motions for La Belle to follow her and Rob to the drink bar.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

INT.DRINK BAR-NIGHT

Rob sits between the two women. He turns to the woman on his right.

ROB

So what brings a girl on this side of town, alone at night?

LA BELLE

I suppose for the same reason a handsome beau is.

ROB

Then, your first drink's on me.

LA BELLE

No, thank you!

NIAGE

What drink r' y'all having?

ROB

La Belle is on hold. So am I.

Niage orders and sips on her drink.

Niage turns her attention to the BARTENDER (30).

ROB (CONT'D)

I admire a girl who ventures out on her own. Strong, independent!

LA BELLE

A girl can't always sit around waiting for someone to create her moments.

ROB

That's my kind of girl. A toast to strength.

La Belle picks up the glass, clinks Rob's glass and drinks.

Niage drinks and leans forward to hear better.

La Belle leans her left arm on the bar, and reveals two cow-hoof tattoos one above the other between her elbow and shoulder.

Niage flinches as she connects the woman to the folktale of La Diabliesse or female devil. She looks up the term on her phone.

Search result: *Mulatress, Creole or biracial woman known for luring men either to humiliate them or to father her child.*

ROB (CONT'D)

You look even more beautiful than when I set eyes on you earlier.

LA BELLE

Thank you.

Niage makes occasional eye contact with Rob, and attempts to mouth the words, "be careful."

Rob locks eyes with Niage, but turns before she signals and takes La Belle by the hand.

ROB

Shall we dance?

He leads her to the dance floor.

Niage flinches.

FADE OUT

INT. DANCE FLOOR-NIGHT

FADE IN

The TEMPO increases and Rob and La Belle cha-cha. La Belle's dress lifts as she dances.

Niage grimaces when she notices La Belle's odd feet. One human, and one cow. She rubs her eyes and sighs.

NIAGE

He will not be her third tattoo!

BARTENDER

What was that?

NIAGE

Oh, Nothing!

Niage turn towards the dancers as The MUSIC changes from fast to slow.

Niage and the other patrons applaud.

ROB

Your beauty matches your dance skills.

He looks into her eyes.

She blushes, stares back at him, and leans her head on his shoulder.

FADE OUT

NIGHT CLUB BAR-NIGHT

FADE IN

From the bar, Niage texts Rob in quick succession. She sends images of a hoof, bits of research about the folktale.

NIAGE (TEXT)

To break out of spell turn any part of clothing inside out. Or ignite any fire such as cigarette or the like.

Rob ignores his phone.

LA BELLE

I am getting tired.

ROB

We can leave if you want.

LA BELLE

Uhuuum.

Rob and La Belle leave the bar.

Niage's uneasiness increases. She tries to alert Rob. Her texts go unanswered.

FADE OUT

EXT. WOODEED AREA - NIGHT

FADE IN

Rob and La Belle walk a wooded trail towards the parking area until they stop on a wooden bench. La Belle gazes up towards the sky.

LA BELLE

Tonight is beautiful isn't it?

Rob moves closer to La Belle.

ROB

Not as beautiful as you.

La Belle turns towards Rob and gazes into his eyes.

ROB (CONT'D)

So, where has this beauty been hiding?

LA BELLE

I wouldn't say hiding. Sometimes I just lay low. How 'bout you?

ROB

Work as an engineer and have fun when the opportunity arises.

Rob stands.

ROB (CONT'D)

Speaking of rising, shall we continue?

Rob reaches out. He takes La Belle's hand and she leaves the bench with him. Together they walk the path, holding hands. As they approach one of the mahogany trees, Rob pulls La Belle towards him. He leans his back on the tree. They kiss. La Belle's hat falls off her head.

FADE OUT

The phone in Rob's pocket vibrates repeatedly.

He reaches for his pocket. La Belle places her hand on Rob's hand and he resists, pulling out his phone. The inside cloth of his pocket comes out along with the phone. His hand is no longer on La Belle's hips. It rests on a another tree. His shirt hangs on the low branch.

FADE OUT

EXT. WOODED AREA-NIGHT

FADE IN

Still holding the inside of his pocket, he shakes his head in dismay.

ROB

Dang! She got me! How could I be so gullible?

A PARK RANGER approaches. He shines his flashlight on the half-dressed Rob.

PARK RANGER

What's going on?

Rob lowers his head. He places his head in his hand.

ROB

I'll be fine.

Rob reads a series of texts and images from Naige. He whispers to himself.

ROB (CONT'D)

How could I have been so dumb? Besides, I gave up Niage for a total stranger.

ROB (TEXT) (CONT'D)

Niage, I am so sorry. I am on my way.

FADE OUT.

INT. THE BAR-NIGHT

FADE IN

Niage notices a white kerchief tucked in her left, front jeans pocket. Her countenance drops. She clutches her chest and falls to the floor.

Patrons rush to Niage.

FADE OUT

EXT. THE BAR-NIGHT

FADE IN

Sirens blare. Red and blue lights flash. Rob struggles with the paramedics as he yells.

ROB
NIAGE! NIAGE!

They shove him off and the ambulance races off. Rob weeps. He heads to his car.

ROB (CONT'D)
Please Niage. Hang in there. I am on my way.

THE END