

## WHITE PICKET FENCE

Written by

Andrew Anthony

Jack Monroe(M) - 60, Rough; large farmer/politician  
Ken Sharpe(M) - Early 50's; a slight and bespectacled man  
Sochi Monroe(F) - Mid-Late 20's; Estranged daughter to Jack  
Adedewe Gharib(M) - Early 30's; Nigerian catholic minister  
Sheriff Fingle(M) - 30's; Has known the Monroe's for years

Andrew Anthony  
432 Westmount Ave.  
Toronto, Ontario  
M6E 3N5

## Scene II - Buried Bones

The natural daylight in the kitchen casts shadows in a single direction; if they reach to Down Stage Left they will suddenly shift to Down Stage Right (and vice versa) to signify time passing.

Punctuating this change, the toaster POPS! And the pan on the island stove SPITS and SIZZLES.

SOCHI comes into the kitchen and bustles to set up plates and utensils. She puts the toasted bread on a plate and turns down the heat from the stove (the SIZZLING subsides).

She bends behind the island for a moment and comes back up with a pie: the unseen Up Stage face of the island has an oven.

SOCHI  
(remarks the pie)  
Damn...okay. "Okay".

SOCHI then removes the pan from the stove entirely and burns her right hand when setting it back down on the counter.

SOCHI (CONT'D)  
Fuckin' sugardust!

ADEDEWE is at the entrance to the kitchen, he laughs.

SOCHI (CONT'D)  
Ah. Morning. Yes.

ADEDEWE  
Sugardust?

SOCHI  
Yeah, for "Shit". My mom had alternatives to swearing that I picked up through osmosis.

ADEDEWE  
You still said "Fuck".

SOCHI  
Didn't have one for "Fuck". That one's special.

ADEDEWE  
You've been busy.

SOCHI  
Peace Pie! Last night was pretty rough.

ADEDEWE  
Just confusing.

SOCHI comes around the island and extends a hand for shaking.

SOCHI  
Sochi Monroe.

ADEDEWE  
(accepts her hand)  
Adedewe Gharib. I didn't know you  
felt sorry.

SOCHI  
Well, the misunderstanding and all.

ADEDEWE  
This pie is an apology?

SOCHI  
No, me making it is. I don't  
normally do the atomic wife, "woman  
in the kitchen" thing.

ADEDEWE  
Oh, I...

SOCHI  
It's like ancient bowing; to lower  
your status and offer your neck for  
decapitation. I'm subjugating  
myself. You should feel very  
humbled right about now.

ADEDEWE  
Sharing food between kindred  
spirits or strangers is quite the  
opposite to subjugation.

SOCHI  
Well, however you take it: there's  
pie, bacon, pancakes, and eggs for  
you. I went with some variety  
because I don't know what you eat.  
What you like to eat-I don't- "you  
eat", I get that.

ADEDEWE  
Thank you. I also felt sorry last  
night. I will take the den this  
afternoon - I apologize for the  
complication.

SOCHI

No need to feel bad. Bacon?

ADEDEWE

It will upset my stomach.

SOCHI

Has a short temper, does it?

ADEDEWE

Sorry?

SOCHI

I'm being funny.

ADEDEWE

I didn't know you were funny.

SOCHI

I'm a riot. You'll come to see that once you're done being American-ized.

ADEDEWE

Where I come from, riots and subjugation bare different weight, so I am inclined to agree with you. "American-ized"?

SOCHI

Yes: Welcome! Land of opportunity; Opportunity knocks - The land where opportunity is from the school of hard knocks; The land of baseball and inside baseball: if you don't speak the lingo or share one of our fifty states of mind, you're "out".

(beat)

I'm a poet, by the way. Sorry for the freestyle rant, I'm not a very good one-

ADEDEWE

Oh?-

SOCHI

-Whatever-I'm just saying..."Welcome to America"...

ADEDEWE

Where making breakfast is degrading?

SOCHI

I think you're missing my point. I don't do the domestic housewife routine.

ADEDEWE

You made me a meal.

(Smiles)

I don't tidy my room and call it my maid routine.

SOCHI

So now everyone's a comedian.

ADEDEWE

Am I funny?

SOCHI

No. And it's my room.

ADEDEWE

Cooking is relaxing. Sharing food is beautiful.

SOCHI

It was a woman's duty for too long.

ADEDEWE

So you take no pleasure in making it your own? I think it's a kind and beautiful way to address the things that used to rule us.

SOCHI

Like taking back the "N" word?

ADEDEWE

The what?

SOCHI

(Gestures)

Come on. Don't make me say it.

ADEDEWE

(Gestures to himself)

Nigerian?

SOCHI

What? No. I...

(The penny drops)

So you are funny.

ADEDEWE eats his toast with a smile.

ADEDEWE

Am I to expect breakfast all week for that one?

SOCHI

Nope.

ADEDEWE

I don't think wifhood equates to slavery.

SOCHI

And I don't think only the 20th century encompasses a woman's history. But I'm not a bra burner and I'm no slave.

ADEDEWE

Nor am I. Let's appreciate this meal for such.

SOCHI

I'm sorry.

ADEDEWE

Yes, there is food.

SOCHI takes a piece of toast.

SOCHI

No, I'm more sorry. I was talking out of my hat with that women's lib rant.

ADEDEWE

I have learned this expression from Jack, "talking out of your hat". I don't know as many American expressions as I would like to; your idioms are interesting.

SOCHI

You're speaking just fine - it's not pretty, but polished.

ADEDEWE

The English I learned back home in the South Sudan was from Australian and British tutors. However interesting phrases like "talking out of your hat", I still learn from Jack.

SOCHI

He'd be the person to learn that from, for sure...

ADEDEWE

Full of wisdom.

SOCHI

Full of sugardust.

ADEDEWE

Jack is a genuine man.

SOCHI

And what is life like, having no sense of bowing your head? Having no need to subjugate to say "thanks" or apologize?

ADEDEWE

No man can say for certain if he is living life a certain way, only what he strives for.

SOCHI

What do you strive for?

ADEDEWE

(smiles content)

To be generous and transparent to others, as I hope the lord will be to me.

SOCHI

(enthusiasticly)

Good boy - good, good boy.

ADEDEWE

Pardon?

SOCHI

Nothing, just..."dogs". I'm just being a bitch. Fuck, now it's layered hilarity.

ADEDEWE

What? - Oh!

(pointing)

There is a flap on the door.

SOCHI

Good eye. It was for our actual dog, "Kennedy". Passed a long time ago, though.

(MORE)

## SOCHI (CONT'D)

Noble like the guardians of Athens, he was. I visited the city last year and it was littered with dozens of feral, shabby dogs that lay out in the sun all day, and survive on the charity of others. They seemed depressed, or tired; they seemed like they were weak and dying; covered in flies and everything. It wasn't until the protests and riots escalated (and mind you, I was there in this blissful two week window without anything like that), but when passions flew, and riots happened, it was then that you'd realize those dogs were all the while conserving their energy. They would only bark and stand ground at men in riot gear; ever-protective for the common persons of the city - which the people needed at the time. It was so nice believing there was something bigger at play, you know? It was so nice thinking some cosmic force made something that beautifully random so organized and meaningful. One sunny day, on a hilltop amongst the Cyprus trees, a man pointed to the foggy; mountain-laced horizon with lightning and thunder booming in the distance and remarked: "No wonder they believed in Gods".

## ADEDEWE

Where I grew up, between Tonj, and the Boma state - the struggle to live would deconstruct our humanity. I have seen the blade that carves a God-shaped hole in us. I have been challenged every day to believe in something bigger at play. There was the rich, and there was the poor, nothing in between. The rich in fact had guard dogs who lived better lives than we. Dogs that ate every day; rode in cars, and had shelter. Dogs of the rich with their own beds to sleep on while others in our village fit ten to a floor.

(MORE)

ADEDEWE (CONT'D)

I don't much like dogs, it is silly but so...If you looked at certain corners and horizons of my life, you would wonder: "What if more believed in God?".

SOCHI

Kennedy was a good dog in his prime, you'd have liked him. I grew up hearing legends of his pup days before bed but only ever got to meet him as a heavy, old hound. He was a lot like my gramps near the end; which is adorable: when dogs act like people, you know? Less cute the other way around.

ADEDEWE

People are not all so. I'm obedient to my beliefs and the lord. Piety and devotion are not subjugation.

SOCHI

Are you kidding? You're Jack's new pet.

ADEDEWE

I'm his friend.

SOCHI

Yeah, his "best friend".

(beat)

You won't know it till you hear more American expressions, but I'm still being funny.

ADEDEWE

Jack and I are our own men with our own agendas and we respect boundaries. One does not obey the other.

SOCHI

(shrugs)

He collected you; the farmer, he is. He plucked you from the dirt you lived in and brought you into this house. He's not interested in anything he can't chew on or consume.

ADEDEWE

I am not his new harvest.

SOCHI

He checked your teeth, cleaned you  
up, and now you're best in show;  
the Jack Monroe show: Vote for Jack  
Monroe, God and Africa like him!  
You should too!

ADEDEWE

Your apology has made me lose my  
appetite.

ADEDEWE begins to leave the kitchen.

SOCHI

I'm sorry.

ADEDEWE

And please don't apologize to me  
any more; you will have less to  
apologize for.

SOCHI

You're a good man - at least you  
seem to be. I just don't want you  
to be abused or taken advantage of.  
I don't want you to unwittingly be  
under Jack's thumb just because he  
rescued you-

ADEDEWE

(Hot, but not viscous)

The Sudan is not a dog pound. It is  
God who will save me when I need  
it.

SOCHI

Jack thinks he is God.

ADEDEWE

Then you don't know Jack!

SOCHI

(Beat)

Are you being funny?

ADEDEWE

No.

SOCHI

Sorry, it's just - never mind, I'll  
tell you the phrase later - after  
you explain how you could possibly  
know my father better than me.

ADEDEWE

I tried. I spent time with that in mind and made an effort. You have spent a life time trying to do the very opposite. It was not hard to make more progress than you.

SOCHI

That's not how you get to know someone, that's how to buy what they're selling. You know someone by observing; seeing them when they don't know if you're watching.

ADEDEWE

Then I hope I still have a chance to properly meet you.

SOCHI

So I'm not good at first impressions!

ADEDEWE

This was your second.

SOCHI

And what was your first impression of Jack?

ADEDEWE

I made up my mind only once about him, and it wasn't immediate.

SOCHI

No, how did you meet? You're defending his motives and I bet you haven't even thought of what they could be. Use your brain, damnit! Why do you think he brought you here? Are you oblivious to the nature of a political campaign?

ADEDEWE

Jack is not lost in translation for me. I was not born yesterday. I may not have the charming expressions and phrases in American to describe it, but I do know what a villain is; I know manipulation, treachery, and falsehood.

SOCHI

And you know desperation. Jack fed on it.

ADEDEWE

Jack did not want me here!

SOCHI

What? But you're-

ADEDEWE

Ten months ago, an abundance of food was gifted to my village. Despite the red tape of what was allowed to be imported, and the spoils from the trip itself, there was still: an abundance. "Compliments of Jack Monroe". There were blessings, and those who could write, wrote thanks.

SOCHI

"God bless the American farmer"?

ADEDEWE

"God bless! - Jack Monroe." We did not wonder who he was, his name and that very slogan were written everywhere. There were men with cameras capturing the event, but none would answer my questions or explain.

SOCHI

Explain what? It's simple: Free food.

ADEDEWE

The struggle to live is not simple! The problems of our world and the desperation it boils is not simple - the solution to world hunger is not simple. We make helping seem so because simple means "easy" and if it is easy, people will do it, and it is something that needs doing.

SOCHI

So you didn't thank him.

ADEDEWE

Thank who? Where was this man? This was not charity, it was a transaction.

(MORE)

ADEDEWE (CONT'D)

A white American bought the appearance of generosity, and those he used to do it with would keep their mouths shut with food. Enough food to last his photo shoots, at least.

SOCHI

So, what? Bringing you to America was...?

ADEDEWE

It is I who brought Mr. Monroe to the Sudan.

SOCHI

Fuck off!-Sorry! Just..My dad did not go to Africa.

ADEDEWE

Africa is a continent, Sochi - He came to South Sudan.

SOCHI

Oh-er-sorry. Whatever.

ADEDEWE

Frustrated with blind eyes and ignorance; defeated by charity without humanity, charity wrought with selfishness: I began a hunger strike.

SOCHI

That must have ruined the press release a bit, eh.

ADEDEWE nods.

SOCHI (CONT'D)

Well done.

ADEDEWE

I only aimed for understanding.

SOCHI

And people did?

ADEDEWE

I requested Jack Monroe come to meet us. I offered to break my first bread with only him.

SOCHI

And he came.

ADEDEWE

That he did, and bread we broke. My intention was not to be ungrateful. My point is that people need to be charitable with their humanity; otherwise philanthropy will dare to be a cold business, and those fed today are left hungry and more so ignored tomorrow.

SOCHI

Had a nice dinner with him?

ADEDEWE

I wanted to connect. I saw pain in him, and emptiness. I offered to help.

SOCHI

You can't help him. He's stubborn and set in his ways.

ADEDEWE

He came to my village - a grand and expensive gesture.

SOCHI

Yeah, you played him. People were watching, and he didn't want to be embarrassed; my point is that peop--

ADEDEWE

No, I played no game.

SOCHI

Sure you did, Addy. You're not Ghandi and you're no saint, are you? You're an American after all!

ADEDEWE

Excuse me?

SOCHI

A capitalist American who knows an opportunity when he sees one.

ADEDEWE

My people-

SOCHI

You don't have people, Tutu! You were all starving already and you "made it your own" and simply called it a protest. You're right! It's beautiful to own what rules us. Then you saw the power of an anonymous White American; you saw the cameras and food, and thought "Let's see what else he can do..."

ADEDEWE

I saw my home being bought off with a one time donation. The sick and hungry of the world are not whores that will give you good publicity for an apple.

SOCHI

You saw your ticket out of there!

ADEDEWE

I saw my God's design! His intention! I saw my path; a calling for love and guidance my soul could answer.

SOCHI

Excuse me if I don't believe you.

ADEDEWE

Then excuse me, for I am a believer.

SOCHI

(Beat)

Well don't make me out to be some kind of asshole, here, I was just trying to be nice. I personally don't think the best way to serve God is by serving a sub-human like Jack. "He's safer here". That's what Ken said to me. I take it last night wasn't the first time you've pled in front of a knife?

ADEDEWE

It is not.

SOCHI

It's worth noting, that: the common denominator for people who run to God; they're often chased.

(MORE)

SOCHI (CONT'D)

You had nothing, then you found safety in The Lord; you were faced with life-threatening living conditions, then you found Jack, and here you are in America. Keep your God and ditch Jack. Ditch him for the American dream, and when you finally get that, don't worry about ditching God as well - he won't be on your mind.

ADEDEWE

You think me a parasite?

SOCHI

I "think you" a man. A human - with all the dings, scratches, and meekful inheritance. Do good things, Addy! Go off and find your dream and if it's one with God, go with him and make the world a better place. I'm just saying it's not gonna be in the Monroe residence. I think you should leave.

ADEDEWE

I am not a user.

SOCHI

Wouldn't it be blasphemy or something to suggest you're some higher being? Since there's only one God? Because you're a human just like the filthy rest of us and it comes with a certain nature you can bet money on. And make money on, if you're smart enough.

ADEDEWE

(Leaving)

I will pray for you.

SOCHI

I will need it.

SOCHI goes to the doorway and looks out to where ADEDEWE left.

Behind her, coming in from the backyard door, is JACK.

JACK

"Somebody's been eating my porridge"...