

The Platinum Crucible
(excerpt)

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The Platinum Crucible

Dramatis Personae

Anne, white, late 40's, medium build

Brooke, white, late 30's, medium build, Anne's sister

Elena, Latina, early 40's, heavy, Anne and Brooke's cousin

Yvette, black, mid-late 30's, slender, cousin to Anne, Brooke, and Elena

Sergei, white, late 30s, an appraiser of old houses

Time

A weekend in September, present day

Location

The living room of an old house (circa 1900); in a small town in the foothills of the Cascades in southwest Washington State.

Running Time

110 minutes (*the page count is higher because of the parallel dialog*)

Production Notes

Set

The set can be as elaborate or not, as the designers please. Suggest an old house with a mix of older and newer furniture, rugs, etc.

Casting

In I, ii, Yvette says she is "73% cacao." You can change this number to fit the actress cast as Yvette, so long as it's between 60% and 85%.

The Platinum Crucible

Also in I, ii, Elena refers to herself as “50% cacao.” She means she’s 50% Venezuelan, and since Venezuelans come in all shades from light to dark, I have added optional dialog in case the actress playing Elena would look lighter, to Yvette, than 50% cacao.

Correspondingly, the actresses playing Anne and Brooke need to be white without hints of African American or Latin ancestry.

Script Notes

A “/” in a line indicates where the next speaker interrupts or starts talking.

Act I.

Scene 1. The living room of an old house, built circa 1900. It is well kept up, with an assortment of furniture, some of it antique, some of it new. Oriental rugs are on the floor, old books in the built-in bookcases, perhaps a nice painting or two on the wall. Anne is looking through old papers; Brooke and Elena are cataloging books. Anne and Brooke are arguing, Elena trying to get a word in edgewise.

ANNE	BROOKE	ELENA
It doesn't exist. It doesn't exist! Granddaddy never had it, Aunt Gabrielle never inherited it, it just plain never existed.	You don't know that.	
We don't know that.	We know Granddaddy had it. We know Aunt Gabrielle – – had it, we know it existed.	Maybe what happened is –
It does not exist. The platinum crucible just plain does not exist.		
Yes, I do.	You don't know that. You simply don't know that. Why would Granddaddy lie?	Maybe what happened is –
He never said he had it.	Why would he lie? Yes, he did.	
Did you ever hear him say that? Did you ever hear him say he had one?		
	Why would it have helped him to lie about this?	
So. You didn't hear it from Granddaddy. You heard from Aunt Gabrielle.		Maybe he didn't lie, maybe what –
	Of course I never heard it from Granddaddy. He died when I was five!	

ANNE

Aunt Gabrielle was no saint, you know. Maybe she heard it from Granddaddy and believed it.

How? Did you ever see it? Elena, did you ever see it?

Of course you didn't see it! It doesn't exist.

Where, in God's name, did Granddaddy get the money? Do you know how expensive those things are?

We don't know that! The whole family, poor as dirt, and suddenly Granddaddy has money to start a business and buy a platinum crucible.

And who, in the Depression, would even think to buy something like that?

BROOKE

So you're saying Aunt Gabrielle lied? That makes even less sense.

What's that got to do –

Oh, so if you don't see something, it doesn't exist?

It had to have existed at some point. Granddaddy had to have one. To run his business.

It's not like today, when you need billions of dollars from venture capitalists.

Granddaddy was a clever man. He was intelligent.

She would never have sold it.

ELENA

Nobody had to lie, what probably happened is –

No, but –

Maybe Aunt Gabrielle sold it.

Maybe what happened is, maybe Aunt Gabrielle sold it.

Maybe she did, when she closed down the business.

ANNE

She did not value it as
much as we did.

BROOKE

She valued it as much as
we did. She never would
have sold it.

ELENA

Not this again.

ELENA

Maybe she gave it away. Or threw it in the river, or the lake, or sacrificed a goat in it, or, I don't know, but because we can't find it doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

BROOKE

Right!

ANNE

But it doesn't mean that it does.

ELENA

Okay; what I'm saying is, there are other possibilities.
I hope it does exist, it's such a nice story.

ANNE

Yeah. It's a nice story.

*(ANNE looks through the last of the papers, then puts them
down.)*

ANNE

I give up. She must have simply gotten rid of them.

ELENA

There was more than one?

ANNE

The books. The ledgers.

ELENA

Yes, right.

BROOKE

It makes sense, if you think about it. Close the business, get rid of the books. Why keep them? She couldn't know you'd grow up to be a historian and be interested.

ANNE

Here's what I think. She didn't want any of her brothers to get the business. So she destroyed everything. She was in collusion with Granddaddy.

BROOKE

Where did you come up with that idea?

ELENA

Why would she do that?

ANNE

Why did Granddaddy give the business to the only one of his children who didn't have children of their own? He should have given it to my mom.

BROOKE

Our mom, you mean.

ANNE

I was the only one who wanted it.

BROOKE

She's still *our* – I was a little young.

ANNE

All I'm saying is, he guaranteed the business would be closed.

ELENA

He never even asked my mom.

ANNE

I wanted it.

BROOKE

You never said anything.

ANNE

Yes, I did. You just don't remember.

BROOKE

I would have remembered.

ANNE

You were, what, in grade school? You wouldn't have remembered.

BROOKE

I would have remembered.

ELENA

(To ANNE.)

Have you looked through all the boxes in the attic?

ANNE

Yes. This is the last.

BROOKE

I remember a lot more than you give me credit for.

(BROOKE gets a text message. She reads it, but doesn't reply to it.)

ELENA

And all the boxes in the basement?

ANNE

Yes.

BROOKE

I don't know why you're looking so hard for stuff from the business when you're really interested in the nuns.

ANNE

I can't find anything about the nuns, can I?

ELENA

You mean those nuns who made moonshine during the Depression?

ANNE

During Prohibition. Yes.

(ANNE, restless, gets up and goes to the window.)

ANNE

Where is she?

BROOKE

It's a long drive.

ANNE

Yeah.

BROOKE

It is.

ANNE

She was supposed be here an hour ago.

BROOKE

Go dig up the yard. Maybe the crucible is buried there.

ELENA

Who knows, it might be, we've looked everywhere else.

ANNE

I still say we should go down to that bank in Centralia.

(BROOKE looks closely at a book she has just taken down off a shelf.)

BROOKE

Oh my God!

ELENA

What?

BROOKE

(Showing them a book.)

I get dibs on this. You guys have to let me have it.

ELENA

What is it?

BROOKE

"The River of Golden Sand." It's by the first European to ever explore major parts of China. I want to give it to Janice for a birthday present.

ELENA

It's fine with me, go for it.

BROOKE

Anne?

ANNE

I don't care.

BROOKE

This is wonderful. This is absolutely wonderful.

ELENA

(To ANNE.)

What were you saying?

BROOKE

Oh, my God, it's in really good condition.

ANNE

(To ELENA.)

We should go down to the bank in Centralia.

ELENA

We could, but that Web site could be wrong, you know; even if it is a government site.

(BROOKE gets another text message.)

ANNE

It wouldn't hurt to go down there. If she had another safe deposit box, then we'll find it.

BROOKE

Oh, for goodness sake.

ANNE

(Continuing.)

If not, well, it's just on our way home anyway.

ELENA

Sure, we can do that, if you want.

(To BROOKE.)

What's wrong?

BROOKE

Marcel texted me that Trey was bugging him, and now Trey texted me that Marcel is being mean.

ELENA

What are you saying to them?

BROOKE

I'm telling them to complain to Janice.

ELENA

Very clever, because you know they won't, cause she's the stern one.

BROOKE

Exactly! That's what I always do.

(BROOKE and ELENA return to cataloging the books.)

ELENA

Do you think we can ask her what happened? Yvette, I mean.

BROOKE

Maybe she doesn't know.

ANNE

We can't ask her.

ELENA

Why not? why can't we ask her?

ANNE

It would be tactless.

ELENA

I don't think so; we could say, we're sorry...

ANNE

... we're sorry what?

ELENA

We're sorry that our families lost touch, / or –

ANNE

She's here!

(BROOKE and ELENA join ANNE at the window.)

ANNE

That's not her.

BROOKE

Probably someone who's lost.

(ANNE goes to the front door, BROOKE following.)

ANNE

Hi, can I help you?

YVETTE

(Off.)

Hey! How you doing?

BROOKE

(Automatically, in Southern style.)

How you doing?

YVETTE

(Off.)

I'm so glad I made it. I'm sorry to keep y'all waiting. It is okay if I park my car here?

ANNE

Uh... sure.

YVETTE

(Off, continuing.)

I just had so much fun, on the drive up here, I kept pulling over to take photographs. I must've filled my memory card.

(YVETTE enters, with suitcases and a small cooler.)

YVETTE

You must be Cousin Anne.

ANNE

Yes.

YVETTE

How you doing? You look just like Granddaddy. Just like.

(To BROOKE.)

Now, one of you is Cousin Anne's sister, but is your name Helen or Brooke?

BROOKE

I'm Brooke.

YVETTE

How you doing?

BROOKE

How you doing? And this is our cousin Elena.

YVETTE

Elena.

ELENA

It's nice to see you.

YVETTE

How you doing? Nice to see you. It's good to see y'all again.

My goodness, that was a long drive. Long drive. Ooh! Y'all got a cool place I could put something perishable in?

BROOKE

There's a fridge in the kitchen.

YVETTE

Well, no, not a fridge, too cold, but maybe a cupboard or something...

(YVETTE exits to the kitchen with the cooler. Stunned silence.

They speak quietly.)

BROOKE

That's Yvette?

ANNE

She must be adopted.

ELENA

Why must she be adopted?