



## **Carnelle**

From *Miss Firecracker Contest*

By Beth Henley

Age Range: Young Adult, Adult

Style: Comedic, Contemporary

### Monologue:

“I don’t know what got into me. I honestly don’t. I was just standing there under the fluorescent lights at the Rexall, and I saw this poster stuck up on the community board — a great big picture of last year’s Miss Firecracker waving from a red, white and blue float. She had this long white dress on and a crown and that little scepter thing, and she just looked so—so proud and pleased with herself, like she was somebody important, like she was walking on air! And I thought, ‘Now that’s what I need. That’s just what I need.’ I mean, everything’s gone to hell in a handbasket this year. Mama’s gone. Cousin Elain’s up and moved back. And I got fired from the Dairy Queen. Again. For lateness. And I thought, if I could just be Miss Firecracker, then everything would be different. People’d say, ‘Why, there goes Miss Firecracker—ain’t she something!’ Not, ‘There goes that Carnelle Scott, didn’t she get caught necking behind the bowling alley with Danny Lewis and his cousin from Baton Rouge.’ Which, for the record, I deny completely. That cousin was seventeen and had a face like a woodpecker. That wasn’t even me. But people don’t forget stuff in this town. It sticks. You try to change your hair, walk a little straighter, wear clothes with buttons—but it don’t matter. They still see that same girl who ran around in tube tops lighting cherry bombs out the car window. So I entered this contest. I borrowed this dress from Tessie at the thrift shop, and I signed up for baton twirling lessons from a guy who works at the tire center. I been practicing my talent routine in the backyard every night until the mosquitoes carry me off. But I’m gonna get up on that stage. I am. Even if I fall flat on my face, I want to know what it feels like — to walk across that stage, people clapping, thinking I’m somebody worth looking at. Even just for one minute.”

### Play Synopsis:

Carnelle Scott is rehearsing furiously for the Miss Firecracker Contest—hoping that a victory will salvage her tarnished reputation and allow her to leave town in a blaze of glory. The unexpected arrival of her cousin, a former Miss Firecracker winner, complicates matters a bit, as does the repeated threat of Elain’s eccentric brother, to sell the family homestead and decamp for New Orleans. But, aided by a touchingly awkward seamstress and several other cheerfully nutty characters, Carnelle perseveres.

Read the Play Here:

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