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Seflove

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts

by

Aisha Aku Jenkins

June 2014

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The Thesis of Aisha Aku Jenkins is approved:

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Acknowledgements:

SEFLOVE:

Seflove has been encouraged, supported and inspired by a diverse s tribe of people and entities which include: Abbey Lincoln, Professor StuartKrieger,HomselleJoy, Emory White, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, CarolynHimes, RuthForman,MegDeLoatch, ProfessorNaloHopkinson, Professor CharlesEvered, JuneBaucom, MaryPoppins, Professor AlanDundes, Katherine Dunham,Ifagbemi, and the home where my stories reside.

TAKEN: Taken came to life because of the support of professor CharlesEvered, encouragement of my motherAminaHassan,P.H.D, and inspiration from my grandfather, AlfredDeliveraHassan.

Dedication:

SEFLOVE:

Seflove was inspired by the beauty and intelligence of Smile Prosperity Jenkins, who is a star.

TAKEN:

Taken is dedicated to Anna Ball.

Table of Contents

SafeloveThesis (cover)	
Copyright	
Signatures	
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Dedications.....	v
Table ofContents.....	vi
Seflove(Screenplay).....	1
Taken Thesis (cover).....	125
Taken(Stage Play).....	126

EXT. COUNTRY SKY, LOUISANNA-1850S-NIGHT

An endless sea of brilliant stars sparkle in the dark sky. A single one room wooden cabin stands like a small pin point on the open land. A star falls from the sky. The star shatters and explodes like fireworks. Gold dust from the star falls like rain onto the shabby cabin below. A woman screams from inside the cabin.

INT. ALFREDO & ANNA'S SLAVE CABIN, NIGHT

A simple cabin with a few chairs, filled woven baskets and a row of wooden bowls filled with water.

Grey haired midwife SULA stands between young ANNA'S draped bent knees with the authority of Moses parting the sea. Sula's rough wide brown cloak billows and blends into the dark wood floor. ALFREDO, Anna's 24 year old life partner, stretches out on the floor like her personal lounge chair. She braces her brown body against his to summon another push for their coming child. He jams his feet into the floor for traction as CORA, Anna's Black, yet Irish-looking mother, paces back and forth. Sula's chubby brown arms move quick like a maestro, conducting a symphony.

ALFREDO balances the weight of Anna's body between his open knees as she receives another surprise contraction. His back hollows to curve, as she throws her head back into his chest. She screams in pain. He clenches her hands.

SULA

Yes!

Anna screams again. Sweat pours down Alfredo's face. Sula jumps like a preacher, high on Sunday service.

SULA

Yes! I seen it!
(to Cora)
You see that!

Old sturdy Cora scrambles forward to see for herself.

CORA

I heard about that. Never seen it
before...

SULA

I ain't never seen it either. But
I been taught, know what it's
supposed to look like. She's
yours!

ANNA

What that mean?

Sula's back and hands are in continuous motion as she
tends to the new born behind the veil of Anna's skirt.

ALFREDO

A girl!!!!

SULA

That's right honey, you asked the
right question. What, not who?
What you got here is more than
just somebody.

Baby cries as Sula turns her over to slap her bottom.

ALFREDO

She got all her fingers? Can she
see?

SULA

You ain't listening...

CORA

He ain't heard.

Sula hands the tightly swaddled baby to Cora. Smiling the
sun, Cora examines the tiny package in her hands.

SULA

Least thing you gotta worry about
this child, if she got all her
parts. Way she come out the womb,
things placed around her, she
packaged up, the only way royal
spirits walk out the door. (beat)
Who's gonna take her to Congo
Square?

Cora's eyes remain fixed on the infant.

CORA
Keys the only one to go.

FLASH IN:

INT. MASTER'S PLANTATION BIG HOUSE-NIGHT

Master's bedroom furnished by Crate and Barrel, circa 1880.

Two generations of worried family members Hoover around the large framed bed. Bright eyed and with the wise vigor of Jack La Lane, eighty year old slave KEYS, knocks at the bedroom door.

KEYS
Masa, I found the--

MISTRESS
Doctor!

DOCTOR
Get--

MASTER
(wheezing)
Let him in! He tended to my father
and my grandfather.

Keys sits on the bed to gingerly tip the master's youthful 25 year old head back to feed him the medicine.

KEYS
Drink this here, Masa.

KEYS
(to doctor)
His fever'll drop in about an
hour. He'll need to sleep till mid
morning. I'll be back then.

The young MISTRESS begins to cry. Cradling an infant girl, MISS, she follows Keys out of the room.

MISTRESS
Will he die? Doctor says, James
will die?

KEYS

Not while I'm here, Ma'am. I'll be
back in the morning. He'll be
fine.

Her body shakes as she shrinks two feet. The infant
cries. Keys touches the baby who calms and quiets.

KEYS

(to infant)
That's right, little Miss.

FLASH OUT:

INT. ALFREDO AND ANNA'S SLAVE CABIN-NIGHT

Anna groans as her pelvis involuntarily contracts.
Alfredo holds her tightly in his arms. He caresses her
brow as she rolls her tired head into his shoulder for
rest.

CORA

Masa let's him go whenever he
wants.

SULA

Tell him--

ALFREDO

He's not taking my child to New
Orleans.

Anna sighs, as she turns and curls into a fetal position
onto Alfredo. He tenderly rocks her back and forth. Cora
and Sula huddle around the sleeping infant.

CORA

This child belong to the sun.
Sooner you realize that, the
better we'd all be!

SULA

This child needs the drum.

ALFREDO

They use them drums to call war!

SULA

And heal...

ALFREDO

I don't want her getting caught in
some uprising.

CORA

(to Sula)

Congo Square the only place white
folks allow the drum.

SULA

(to Cora)

Only place you gonna find someone
can play the right rhythm for her
head.

CORA

Whole power of her destiny is up
in her head.

Anna lets out a long sigh. Alfredo gets up to bring a bowl of water and a cloth. He moves around Anna's body as he dips the cloth in the water to clean her body. Anna's face grimaces periodically in pain.

ALFREDO

I don't believe that ole mess.

SULA

Don't matter if you believe it or
not. That's the way it is, this
child is a part of the drum.

ALFREDO

Masa would split my family; for
taking her off that way. No. She's
mine. I made her.

Sula lays a small blanket to cover Anna and the baby as the baby lays on Anna to nurse.

SULA

Boy, you didn't make nothing. You
just rode the horse bringing in
the cart. This child got a lot
more to do than be your girl! She
got a whole world waiting for
her... Folks lined up in place--

Exhausted, Anna struggles to open her eyes to see her newborn child. Frozen in awe, Alfredo watches his family.

CORA

Like the first priest to play her
song--

SULA

They lined up, waiting on her
road. Sure you one of um; but you
gotta learn when to get out da
way!

ALFREDO

This is my family!

SULA

Anna?

ANNA

This is our family.

CORA

Damn him!

SULA

(to Cora)
She could try--

CORA

Try what!

SULA

Try it herself. She her mother;
carried her. She probably got a
direct link herself for the girl.

CORA

What you mean?

SULA

I mean, being her mama; she might
be able to open up a door, from
where the girl come from and pull
down what she need, without a
drum; if she love her enough.
Mother's love might do that?

CORA

Sit up, Anna. Sit her up!

Alfredo helps Anna position herself on the hard floor. He
sits behind her, becoming her chair.

They both carefully cradle the baby in their arms as Alfredo embraces Anna from behind. Weary, Anna listens. She fights to hold her neck up straight to focus.

SULA

You gone have to hear the song all by yourself; but it's out there. You breathe it on her head, let her crown soak it up, like one of them wise men trying to seal up Jesus in Bethlehem; with frankincense and myrrh.

ANNA

What's that?

SULA

Stones. You lucky. What she need you can pull out the air; just sound, the right sound. Her hair oughta soak it up, coil it around her head like a crown. Protect the true treasure inside.

CORA

That's why hair kinks and coils the way it do.

ALFREDO

Brujeria.

SULA

What's that?

CORA

He does that when he can't speak his mind... Any-who, The tighter the kink the more power it can store inside. Most of mine is straight, but I got one, right here on the top of my head.

Cora pulls on a tightly coiled hair on the top of her head of straight pepper grey hair. The hair springs back and bounces like a live wire.

CORA

It got an African Warrior in it; waiting to jump out!

Cora dances around the room like a warrior on the hunt. Sula, clicks her tongue and claps her hands to perfectly accent Cora's movements. Cora takes down her prey with a bow and arrow. The two women fall onto each other laughing. Tired, Ann slumps between Alfredo's legs to lay on the floor, resting her head on his thighs. He careful holds their child on her chest with both of his hands.

ANNA

I'll do it. After I rest a little.
(beat)
What should we call her?

ALFREDO

Seflove, so she remembers self-respect is the only protection a slave can ever have.

Anna's eyelids flutter as she drops deep into sleep smiling. Alfredo takes the baby from Anna's chest and disentangles himself from Anna.

CORA

She must be promised to someone high and mighty!

ALFREDO

Promised?

CORA

They already choose each other where she's from.

Holding the child with one hand, he places a folded cloth for support beneath her head.

ALFREDO

(indignant)
When she is grown, she will choose.

SULA

Already done.

CORA

He got a mighty name. You'll see.

ALFREDO

She is a slave!

Sula looks at Cora in disbelief.

CORA

He takes on slow.

Sula distastefully looks Alfredo up and down.

SULA

Where you say he's from again?

CORA

Cuba.

SULA

Oh.(beat) She'll be free. Has
to...

Alfredo sternly approaches Cora.

ALFREDO

It's dangerous to put such things
in her head!

CORA

That's what we've been trying to
tell you! They already in her
head!

INT. ALFREDO AND ANNA'S SLAVE CABIN-SIX MONTHS LATER-
NIGHT

Anna's golden breath falls like magical dust, settling into Seflove's curls. Anna smiles into the eyes of infant Seflove as she sings. Mother and child rock back and forth in a tattered old rocker. The gold dust dances and falls onto Seflove's eyelashes, as her heavy lids close. Anna rocks Seflove into sleep.

Anna's breath creates a warm golden hue of light in the dark, bare, wooden room with only two other chairs and numerous baskets filled with sewing utensils and fabric to be mended at Anna's feet.

Anna blows golden light onto Seflove's head. Her curls puff up, uncoil, and deflate as Seflove smiles in her sleep. The gold dust of Anna's breath circulates inside the curl like an electrical current. Seflove yawns and exhales the golden dust.

Alfredo tosses and turns, under the blanket on the floor. He pulls the edge of the cover over his head.

ALFREDO

You worry to much. You don't have
to pray-over her head every night.

Petite Anna turns her back to towering Alfredo on the floor, as she plays in Seflove's hair. The thick curl twined around Anna's finger reaches toward the sound of Anna's voice. Anna smiles with self-satisfaction as she kisses Seflove's chubby face. Underneath colorful, tattered, patch quilt blanket Alfredo kicks and ruffles the cover that is too short for his long legs.

INT. ALFREDO AND ANNA'S SLAVE CABIN- EIGHT YEARS LATER-NIGHT

Alfredo cuddles close to Anna under blanket on the floor.

ANNA

(yells toward the
half-open door)
Seflove, come to bed!

ALFREDO

(as he snuggles
closer)
Let her play...

Anna laughs O.S. From outside a silver flood of light seeps through the cracked open front door onto the wooden cabin floor.

EXT. FRONT PORCH-NIGHT

Seflove stands barefoot on the thick grained front porch under a luminous full moon. Her braids unweave, commanded by the sound of her voice as she sings.

Sections of her coily hair unwind, as they thin, and straighten to reach for the light of the silvery moon.

Seflove laughs and shakes with excitement, as her hair shrinks back into coils as it conducts the silver light from the moon. She watches her breath in the cold air like silvery dust.

ANNA (O.S.)
Seflove, get in here!

Seflove abruptly closes her mouth. In a split second her hair weaves into braids close to her head. She stands looking like she just got caught, wide eyed, and immobile in the shadow of the moon.

INT. ALFREDO AND ANNA'S CABIN-NIGHT (LATER)

Eyes closed, under the cover on the floor, Alfredo and Anna lay on either side of Seflove. Eyes wide open Seflove takes in a long deep breath.

SEFLOVE
We are one...

ALFREDO
(to Seflove)
Quit playing!

Seflove holds her breath and dramatically waves her arms in the air as if she will explode.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)
Let it out through your nose.

She exhales and giggles.

ANNA
(sarcastic)
She was just playing...

SEFLOVE
(tenderly)
Mama, sing me a song.

Alfredo pretends to snore loudly. He turns his body to steal all of the blanket. Anna pulls the blanket back to cover the family.

ANNA
(to Seflove)
Go to sleep.

Alfredo turns around to reach his arm to snuggle both Anna and Seflove.

EXT. PLANTATION BRUSH-DAY

A dense green thicket without any outlet in sight.

Bushes and branches almost swat Anna. She blocks them with her arms as she follows behind Keys. Keys quickly dodges through the brush like Briar Rabbit bouncing through the thicket.

He stops and starts in front of plants, snaps his head in multiple directions to survey the rich plant life.

ANNA

I come here--

The thicket opens onto an open field with a river shrouded by trees.

KEYS

Watch your feet!

Anna lifts the edge of her dress as they step onto muddy terrain. Keys jumps over a path of river rocks like a light footed Leprechaun in the forest.

Anna carefully finds her balance on each rock before she moves to the next. From across the river, Keys stares at Anna who teeters on a slippery rock. He bounds back to her, leaping on a succession of rocks as the water rushes beneath their feet.

KEYS

Gimmie your hand.

Holding hands, he helps her to cross. As soon as they step on land, he squats down to inspect a flower like a serious chemist. He crushes the petal between his fingers, smells the juice. He tests it's consistency.

KEYS

What you want?

ANNA

Masa thinking a sending me to New Orleans.

KEYS

He ain't gonna send you away.

ANNA

Gimmie your word, he send me away,
You bring Seflove to see me.

He stops inspecting his plant to look at her seriously,
then tenderly.

KEYS

Course I would... Here, help me
pick these, just the dark ones,
leave the light ones for later.

He places the delicate petals into her cupped open palms.

INT. ALFREDO AND ANNA'S SLAVE CABIN-NIGHT

Shadows falls upon the floor like ghosts as Seflove sobs
into Anna's waist.

SEFLOVE (CONT'D)

You can't leave me!

Seflove runs to barricade the front door. Alfredo moves
to stop Seflove. Anna motions "no". They watch Seflove
exhaust herself as she positions the three chairs and
sewing baskets in front of the door. Seflove falls to the
floor. Anna comforts weeping Seflove.

ANNA

Sing it out. Don't let that
sadness fester inside you.

Seflove drowns on air as she snivels and wails in
between sputters and spurts.

CORA

Let the child cry!

Seflove shakes and heaves as she sobs in Anna's arms.
Alfredo sits in a chair, his legs spread wide. His elbows
rest on his thighs, holding his head between his knees.
He speaks in a mad staccato which progressively becomes a
song that is interspersed with the sound of Sefloves'
crying.

Seflove takes Anna's open palm to kiss frantically.
Seflove opens her palm for Anna to kiss.

SEFLOVE

Kiss it all...

Seflove bows her head. Anna covers it with kisses.

SEFLOVE

Kiss it all.

She reaches out her arm and shoulders for Anna to kiss. Anna sheds tears as she covers Seflove in kisses.

SEFLOVE

You forgot, right here!

Anna covers Seflove's back and ankles. Seflove stops her, holds Anna's face with her grubby little hands. Seflove kisses every inch of her mother's face.

SEFLOVE

Bend down.

Anna kneels before Seflove. Alfredo slowly lifts his head as he finishes his song.

SEFLOVE

Shh. Shh...I gotta bless you.

Cora's heavy sobs are heard from across the room as Seflove sweetly sings over Anna's head. Anna closes her eyes as gold dust falls onto her lashes.

EXT. KEYS CABIN-DAY

Simple one room wood cabin. Herbs and dried plants hang from the edge of the roof. The vegetable garden in front of Key's cabin is filled with rows of collard greens, fat tomatoes and lush vines of green beans.

Wearing a too long men's dress shirt. Seflove's hair is a wild tangled mess, with branches and leaves stuck into it. Angrily she bangs then kicks on the front door. Keys opens the door as Seflove pushes her entire weight into kicking the door. She falls backwards as her foot misses the door like a stolen soccer ball. Keys reaches to help her up. She quickly pushes him away.

KEYS

Alright then.

SEFLOVE

When you taking me to see my mama!

KEYS

I--

SEFLOVE

You promised to take me to see her!

KEYS

I can't take you today, sugar.

SEFLOVE

Liar! You ain't nothing but a liar!!

KEYS

I can't just pick up anytime I want an head on to the city.

SEFLOVE

You a liar!! Everybody knows you do what you want!! I hope you die!!

KEYS

Well, that's not so smart, now is it? I go on an drop dead, whose gonna take you to New Orleans?

Scowling, she silently reevaluates the situation.

KEYS

You had one a these before?

He hands her a licorice root from his pocket.

KEYS

Gotta suck and chew.

Unsuccessfully, she tries to keep an angry face and enjoy the licorice root. He sits close to her on the front porch, examines the mess in her hair.

KEYS

You don't let your daddy fix your hair?

SEFLOVE

My momma plaits my hair. He don't know how!

KEYS

You show up to New Orleans looking
like that we all gonna be in
trouble.

He hands her a leaf that he pulls from out of her hair.
He examines the back of her head.

KEYS

Aw lord!

SEFLOVE

What?

KEYS

Possums been back here!

SEFLOVE

What!

KEYS

Look a here, they done built a
nest!

He takes her hand to feel the tangle of knots in the back
of her hair.

SEFLOVE

They did not!

KEYS

What do ya call this?

He puts her hand over a thatch of entangled hair.

KEYS

I'm surprised some bird ain't
dropped an egg up in that nest you
growing up there!

SEFLOVE

I don't have a nest!!

KEYS

I ain't taking you nowhere looking
like that, that's for sure. What a
folks say?

Embarrassed she starts to pull the twigs out of her hair.

KEYS

You fix yourself up. I'll see what
I can do.

EXT. ALFREDO AND ANNA'S SLAVE CABIN-DAY

Sitting on the front porch, Alfredo carefully sections Seflove's hairs into small quarters. Gingerly, he holds the ends of her hair with one hand to slowly untangle the ends with the other.

She winces and flinches. He slows down, making shorter passes with the comb across the edges. Each time he moves the comb Seflove makes a pained sound, sucking her teeth. Cora walks up.

CORA

You all still at it? Give her a
rest.

Alfredo puts down the comb, gently pushes Seflove to stand. He walks into the house following Cora who carries food. Seflove remains in the same spot. She opens her mouth to sing a rich vibrato which shakes a pile of leaves and dust from her hair onto the ground.

Like a violin rushing through a series of scales, her voice leads her hair in an unwinding maze to untangle her hair and then a decrescendo that tightly twists her hair into a series of neatly parted designs on her head.

Alfredo returns to the porch holding a full plate of food as Seflove pumps her arms to march away in the distance.

INT. KEYS CABIN-DAY

Without knocking, Seflove opens Key's front door with a single motion.

SEFLOVE

I'm ready!

Seated at his square table, Key's eyes bulge in surprise. He holds his fork frozen in front of his gapping mouth.

EXT. ALFREDO AND ANNA'S SLAVE CABIN-DAY

Angry, Seflove stirs dust as she stomps on dry yellow dirt road towards home.. Stepping loud and hard like a long shore man, she bullies up the porch to slam the door behind her. Alfredo and Cora exchange a look of surprise.

CORA

She still acting out cause Anna's gone.

ALFREDO

She don't respect adults.

CORA

Give her time...

The front door opens and SLAMS again. Seflove sits on the porch in between her father and grandmother.

SEFLOVE

How come nobody told me I gotta wait on Masa to ride to town!

ALFREDO

Se que, no me hablas!

Alfredo gives Cora an indignant, "I told you so," look.

SEFLOVE

Wha--

CORA

I think he's telling you to get a switch...

Angry, Alfredo stares at Seflove who scoots closer towards her grandmother.

SEFLOVE

I, I forgot. I won't slam the door next time.

EXT. PLANTATION BRUSH,-DAY

The dense green thicket without an outlet in sight. An open field with a river shaded by trees.

Seflove travels closely behind Keys as they hop, from rock to rock in the river, like nimble leprechauns.

She passes him to jump like a frog to squat in front of a blooming flower. She gently inspects the flower, crushing a petal between her fingers. Seflove picks the dark petals from the flower to place in her skirt pocket. Keys perches over her shoulder.

SEFLOVE

I got it.

She takes him by the hand, as they walk through an open field.

SEFLOVE

What else Masa need?

KEYS

That's it.

SEFLOVE

What we looking for?

He moves away from her to comb through the wild grass. She studies the grass carefully as she moves behind him, as if she knows what she is looking for.

SEFLOVE

Only thing he go into town for is tobacco?

KEYS

Mostly.

INT. PLANTATION BIG HOUSE-DRAWING ROOM-DAY.

A plush room with plush wide chairs and oriental rugs.

Seflove rubs a dust cloth along the dark wood tables and inside the creases of the wooden curves of the bottom edges and arm rests of the cushioned chairs. Miss and MARGARET a twenty-something house slave watch Seflove polish with furry.

MARGARET

I have never seen a that child love to clean so.

MISS

You should learn from her, Margaret...

Her dress is covered in dirt. Seflove smiles broadly as she dusts beneath a smoking pipe and moves a leather tobacco pouch.

EXT. PLANTATION GROUND-DAY

Seflove stands inside a crowded out-house. Flies swarm up towards her face as she opens the top of the toilet seat. She dumps handfuls of tobacco down the hole as she swats swarming flies away from her mouth.

EXT. ALFREDO AND ANNA'S SLAVE CABIN-DAY

Seflove sits on the front porch, chewing on a blade of grass. Alfredo bends over to kiss her on her head as he climbs the steps. He lingers to smell her.

ALFREDO

What's that smell?

SEFLOVE

What?

He smells her again.

ALFREDO

Tobacco! Why you smell like tobacco?

SEFLOVE

I picked up master's pouch when I was cleaning.

Satisfied with her answer, he enters the cabin.

EXT. PLANTATION GROUNDS, DIRT ROAD-DAY

Wearing a clean dress, Seflove walks with a slave toddler on one hip and three others following behind. Carriage approaches from the distance. Alfredo steers the carriage. Looking out of the carriage window, Keys waves to Seflove as he approaches. The road becomes a cloud of yellow dust as her father steers the carriage away from the plantation.

SEFLOVE

Urgghh!

TODDLER ON HIP

Urghh!!

SEFLOVE

(screams)

Urghhh!!

TODDLER GROUP AND SEFLOVE

(scream in unison)

Urghhhh!

The toddlers laugh, scream and chase each other as they follow her walking down the road.

EXT. OPEN FIELD ON THE PLANTATION-DAY

Seflove stands to balance herself on the rail of a wooden fence. She watches her father in the wide enclosed space train a horse. Seflove slips and falls off the fence as she waves to Alfredo. She quickly catches herself. Seflove laughs expecting Alfredo to join in. His face remains stone serious. Riding the horse, Alfredo stops in front of Seflove.

ALFREDO

Masa's tobacco!

SEFLOVE

Popi, I--

ALFREDO

I ever beat you before?

SEFLOVE

No, Popi.

ALFREDO

He beat Margaret for taking your tobacco.

FLASH IN:

Masa grimaces as he hurls the whip behind him to make it snap and crack in the air before it uncurls like a snake to reach forward. Margaret's O.S gut wrenching scream. Masa smiles subtly as he rears his arm back again.

FLASH OUT:

ALFREDO

Do it again, I'll beat you myself.

She drops her head and turns to walk away.

FLASH BACK:

INT. ALFREDO AND ANNA'S SLAVE CABIN-NIGHT

Anna kneels in front of Seflove so they can look each other lovingly in the eyes. Seflove holds Anna's face with her grubby little hands. Seflove kisses every inch of her mother's face.

SEFLOVE

Shh. Shh...I gotta bless you.

END FLASH BACK:

EXT. OPEN FIELD ON THE PLANTATION-DAY

Atop of the horse, Alfredo extends a hand to Seflove.

ALFREDO

Venga aqui.

Sadly, shoulders slumped, she stands next to him and the horse. He studies her in silence.

ALFREDO

Da me tu mano.

Alfredo gestures Seflove to step on his foot for leverage as he pulls her on top of the horse. He positions her to sit in front of him. He puts his arms around her to grab the reins. Seflove's frown slowly turns into a smile as he rides her around the choral. Alfredo places Seflove's hands behind his on the reins.

Alfredo and Seflove steer together. Alfredo stops to dismount. Alfredo gives Seflove a warm look of encouragement. He touches the horse's neck as he leads it by the reigns so Seflove can ride alone.

Alfredo begins to step away from the horse. Afraid, Seflove grabs his shoulder. Alfredo places his hand on Seflove's back as she nervously steers the horse herself. Unaware that Alfredo is inching further behind her, Seflove steers the horse with confidence.

Alfredo runs behind Seflove. One by one he slowly removes his fingers from her back. Alfredo watches with pride as Seflove rides alone. Surprised, Seflove turns the corner to see her father standing away from her.

ALFREDO

Go on.

Seflove dress trails behind her as she joyously rides with increasing speed. Beaming with pride, Seflove stops in front of her father.

ALFREDO

If I could ride you into town I would, but I can't. You gotta be patient; wait on Keys; for the right time. A safe time.

INT. BIG HOUSE KITCHEN-DAY

In front of the wide kitchen window, decorated with soft frilly curtains, Cora firmly restrains Seflove who kicks and screams. Window P.O.V: Alfredo walks sadly with his head down as he leads two horses away from the plantation and out into the road.

SEFLOVE

Let me say good bye!

The O.S. sound of hands slapping on the hard linoleum floor as Cora races to struggle with Seflove on the floor.

SEFLOVE

Popi!

Window P.O.V: Alfredo mounts one of the horses, holding the other by the reins as he follows behind a carriage that drives away from the plantation. Cora rocks Seflove on the floor as she bawls into Cora's shoulder.

SEFLOVE

That's my Popi!

CORA

He just gonna live up the road at the carrington's.

(MORE)

CORA (CONT'D)

Why, him being the coachman,
you'll see him every time he
brings Master Carrington to visit.
You'll see!

The sound of quick sharp clicking heels on the linoleum floor. Cradling Seflove protectively, Cora looks up from the black and white checkered floor like a pawn on a chess board. Miss stands above them, looking down at them coldly, as if they are savages on the floor. Cora gently pulls Seflove to stand as she whispers to Seflove.

CORA

Miss.

Seflove quickly quiets.

MISS

You heard? Daddy got rid of some
horses to build me a gazebo!

Seflove studies Miss with furious disbelief. Cora soothingly rubs her back as Seflove chokes back tears.

MISS (CONT'D)

Guess your daddy had to go with
the horses...Don't worry, you can
come have a lemonade in my gazebo
when it's done!

Seflove squints her eyes like she wants to murder Miss.

CORA

That's thoughtful, real generous,
Miss. Isn't it Seflove?

SEFLOVE

(eyes downcast)

Yes, ma'am.

Proud and perky, Miss skips out of the kitchen, making rapid fire clicking noises with her shoes on the hard floor.

CORA

Grandma's never gonna leave you
baby. I ain't never gonna leave
you.

INT. BIG HOUSE KITCHEN -DAY

Wearing aprons at the counter, Cora rolls out dough as Seflove follows behind grandma to cut out biscuits and place them on a pan. The clicking sound of heavy boots on the floor interrupts their silence. CHARLES the young, red haired- slave overseer, enters with the air of a military man checking his post.

OVERSEER CHARLES

Cora, Mas's lending you out tonight to cook for a party at the Carrington's.

GRANDMA

Charles, let me take Seflove with me to help with the preparations and such.

OVERSEER CHARLES

This is a grown folks event.

Cora motions Seflove to leave the room.

GRANDMA

She'll be nice and quiet all night long. She won't make a sound.

OVERSEER CHARLES

Cora, take what you need for fixing.

GRANDMA

You ever seen me cook without her by my side?

CHARLES

Right now.

GRANDMA

Charles, I done told you. I can't go with out my grandchile.

OVERSEER CHARLES

I ain't asking you.

GRANDMA

It's gonna take more than your skinny behind to move me outta this here kitchen.

Charles steps forward.

OVERSEER CHARLES

Cora.

GRANDMA

You wanna leave me alone.

OVERSEER CHARLES

Old woman... mind me!

Cora sharply turns her back to Charles and begins to concentrate on rolling a ball of dough. Protective, Seflove pokes her head in the door.

CORA

Close the door!

CHARLES

I ain't gonna ask you again.

Charles grabs Cora by her shirt collar and begins to drag her towards the door. As she passes face up, beneath the hanging pots, Cora grabs two caste iron skillets, one with each hand. She hits Charles from behind on both ears with the skillets. He falls to the ground.

GRANDMA

Like I said, I ain't leaving this plantation without my baby!

Cora stands over Charles. Seflove stands in the open door.

(to Seflove)

Go find Keys!

Seflove rushes away.

INT. BIG HOUSE DINING ROOM-DAY

The only items in the dark room are a formal dining table and an antique china cabinet. Keys listens with his ear against the kitchen door.

MASA (O.S.)

Cora, put the knife down! Drop the skillet I say!

From behind the closed door comes the sound of two bodies shuffling, metal banging. Plantation owner, MASA, screams. A shot fires.

Cora's body collapses on the hard linoleum floor. Cora's spirit hovers above, looking down on her body. She floats out of the kitchen.

CORA (O.S.)

Seflove?

INT. BIG HOUSE KITCHEN, YEARS LATER-DAY

Cora's spirit float near the kitchen ceiling, looking down on Seflove. Beautiful, shapely, sixteen year old Seflove wears Cora's apron as she stirs a pot on the stove. The sound of two bare feet moving toward her as they slap on the hard linoleum floor. She turns to smile at Keys as he looks at the contents of the hot pot from over her shoulder.

CORA

Give him a taste.

Without turning her head away from the pot, Seflove fills up the spoon to offer to Keys. He blows on the hot beans before he enjoys a bite.

KEYS

Mmm.

SEFLOVE

You want me to put some aside for you before I add more sugar? Masa likes it sweet.

CORA

Tell him you'll bring it to him.

He continues to chew. She offers him another bite.

SEFLOVE

I can bring it down to you, still warm.

KEYS

(still chewing)

Uh hum...(he swallows) Miss is going into town. She said you can come keep her company.

Seflove drops the spoon inside the pot.

SEFLOVE

You playing with me!

KEYS

We going into New Orleans tomorrow. She going to some event, don't need you there, but she get tired of my conversation in the carriage. Keep her entertained; mostly just listen like you interested.

SEFLOVE

What else you want with your plate?

KEYS

I wouldn't mind some biscuits.

She dances around the kitchen happily pulling out baking supplies.

SEFLOVE

Alright. Alright!

She rushes across the room to kiss him on the cheek.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW ORLEANS-DAY

Miss' carriage rolls into the crowded city. Tropical colored ornate colonial buildings line the streets. Blacks of every color bustle in the street with whites.

As if serving the queen of England, Keys invitingly holds open the carriage door for Seflove. Her open face widens with awe as she almost falls out of the carriage. She stumbles forward to get a closer look at black women who pass by proudly.

The women's colorful skirts sway from side to side as they prance forward. Each woman wears a cloth elaborately wrapped around their head and decorated with a signature style in jewels, feathers, shells or other adornment. Seflove stands frozen like pop star Madonna fresh from the Midwest taking her first glance at a Vegas show girl.

Seflove's P.O.V black women's feet stepping toward her, bare foot and in high heels, wearing high courture dresses and simple skirts; each proudly wearing their head wraps as if they were jeweled crowns.

FLASH IN:

INT. ALFREDO AND ANNA'S SLAVE CABIN EIGHT YEARS EARLIER-DAY

Anna tightly wraps Seflove's hair with a scarf. Defensively Seflove reaches both hands to cover her head.

SEFLOVE

Momma you covering my head 'cause my hair is bad?

ANNA

No child. I am covering your hair 'cause you not a baby no more.

Anna caresses Seflove arms so that her clenched fist relax.

ANNA (CONT'D)

I'm telling you Seflove. Every Black woman hasta cover up her hair, don't matter if she free or slave. It's the law.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS STREETS-DAY

Seflove's P.O.V: a light skinned black woman walks towards her and smiles. The woman is dressed in the latest fashion. She sports a small hat cocked to the side and attached to her Tignon, as a another woman follows behind her carrying bags and boxes from shopping.

Self conscious, Seflove touches her simple head-wrap to readjust. Keys pulls on her elbow, signaling for her to start walking.

Seflove's P.O.V: a black mother and her six year old daughter lovingly walk hand in hand. The little girl's hair is a package of curls and puffs.

FLASH IN:

INT. ALFREDO AND ANNA'S SLAVE CABIN EIGHT YEARS EARLIER-
DAY

Anna cinches up little Seflove's Tignon like a corset,
then looks her squarely in the eye.

ANNA

Don't you ever let folks see how
your hair behaves, you understand
me?

FLASH OUT:

EXT. BAKERY AND SHOP LINED STREETS- DAY

Sweat drips above brow, slipping into his eye. He wipes
the sweat as the sun beats down. Shading his face with
his hand from the sun, he leads Seflove beneath the shade
of a Bakery awning.

KEYS

Come on.

He leads her through a cool alley way to the back
entrance of the shop. He knocks on the door. A friendly
pot bellied older slave BAKER with salt and pepper hair
opens the door.

BAKER

Afternoon, Brother Keys!

KEYS

Shore is hot today.

The baker rushes to return with a glass of water. They
laugh as Keys sips water.

BAKER (CONT'D)

You heading to Congo Square?

KEYS

The music is the Magic!

BAKER

(laughs)
Sure you right!

They smile and wave goodbye. Keys walks and sings about
how the music is the magic.

A singing chorus of slave shop workers of various professions step onto the street to greet Keys. Seflove looks in admires the slaves dressed in uniform for various professions.

KEYS

Some is free.

Keys waves to a house painter, who waves back.

SEFLOVE

(whispers)

He free?

KEYS

(proudly)

Um hum.

Keys nods hello to a black jockey who passes by, carrying his saddle. Keys speaks after the man passes.

KEYS

Everybody knows about him!

The jockey's brightly colored Satin outfit glistens in the sun.

EXT. HABERDASHER'S SHOP-DAY.

A brightly colored satin banner waves upside down above Ms. Haberdasher's dress shop, where Anna works.

Keys and Seflove knock on the door. MS. HABERDASHER, a thin, frugal, white woman in her thirties, who would lend a friend her left arm, leans from the second story window.

KEYS

Afternoon Ma'am. I brought Anna
her girl.

Ms. Haberdasher yells from the second story window.

MS. HABERDASHER

She is at Congo Square, selling
her wares.

EXT. CONGO SQUARE-DAY

In a wide open space, rows of vendors and artisans laugh and bargain with dramatic flirtatious third-world market flare. Groups gather in tribal affiliations. The sound of a variety of tonal languages and clicking tongues, as Keys passes each distinct group, some carry banners and flags. Two elderly women dressed in all white greet Keys warmly at the entrance.

KEYS

You seen Anna?

ELDERLY WOMAN #1

Not yet.

Keys pushes Seflove through the crowd. A seated healer runs a feather along a standing patience's body.

SEFLOVE

Where is she?

Two men approach each other. One of the men lays on the ground to prostrate in front of the senior man's feet. Keys carefully navigates Seflove around the two men.

KEYS

Relax.

She bites her lip as she tries to contain her impatience. The standing man touches the lower man, signaling him to stand. Two other men respectfully greet each other to shake hands and touch opposite soldiers. Seflove almost trips over a child who runs into her mother's arms.

Keys P.O.V: a group of girls take turns dancing in the center of a circle to the call of many drums.

SEFLOVE

Let me go look.

One girl boastfully challenges the drummers. Distracted like a fan watching the NBA play offs, Keys nods, "yes," to Seflove's demand. The athletic girl responds in perfect rapid fire to each of their tricky musical changes.

Seflove disappears into the crowd. The dancer repeats the phrase to the musicians with added complexity. Keys laughs at the girl's quick wit as the men scramble, like feeble players trying to catch a goalie.

NEIGHBOR

She's something else!

Seflove pushes past bodies in the crowd.

KEYS

A high spirit. (beat) bothers me something awful when white folks dance.

The girl suspends in the air to sculpt space.

NEIGHBOR

What you mean?

KEYS

Mixing they essence in public, touching each other when they spirit is high. It's uncivilized.

Seflove dramatically gestures Anna's size to a seated fat woman selling fried croquettes. Keys chats like old chums with his new found friend.

NEIGHBOR

Oh, they don't know no better. I don't think they doing much anyway when they moving around, nothing that could disturb a body with a spirit.

Frozen, Seflove concentrates in a sea of moving people.

KEYS

Problem is, our young are starting to pick it up.

A hand taps on Key's shoulder. He turns around to a smiling young woman's face.

KEYS

I got your medicine right here!

Keys fumbles in his leather bag to pick out a small satchel to place in the woman's hand. She places something in his hand.

KEYS

Take it with food. Before you sleep. Should do the trick.

He turns his head to the increasing sound of a crowd clapping a rhythm. He follows the sound to find a closed circle of people. Keys wiggles his way into the circle to see a group of drummers standing behind a man who leads them in song. The leader plays a single stringed instrument with a bow.

KEYS

(to his neighbor)

What they doing?

NEIGHBOR #2

I don't know. They from the same place, doing what ever they do, where they from.

Seflove's eyes rapidly evaluate the crowd of people. A man passes by. She approaches a man.

SEFLOVE

Anna, the hat maker?

MAN

She over there.

Seflove follows the direction of the man's pointed finger. Keys P.O.V from the circle: the singer stands above GODWORKSMYHANDS who has the physical intelligence of Bruce Lee coupled with the common sense of Eleanor Roosevelt. He kneels looking straight into the eyes of his opponent, another muscular man in his twenties.

Seflove pushes through the thick crowd like molasses. Her head-wrap turns from right to left as she carefully surveys the crowd for her mother.

The two men wait with their heads solemnly bent for the singer to wave his bow above their heads. They clasp hands, in an act of good sportsmanship, before they cartwheel into the center of the circle to play a slow game of the dance-martial art, Capoeira. GWMH escapes a kick with a low tumble that turn into a head stand. He spins on his head to scissor kick his opponent who back flips away.

A drummer turns his head in slow motion as the crowd freezes. Drummer's P.O.V: Seflove's bobbing head moves in slow motion through the frozen crowd. All sound disappears except for the rhythm that the drummer hears when he closes his eyes.

When he opens his eyes Seflove's bobbing head hits each accent of the rhythm. The closer Seflove approaches the louder the rhythm becomes.

The drummer picks up a gourd decorated with yellow beads and begins to play what he hears, as Seflove joins the circle. The lead singer looks annoyed at the drummer. The drummer gestures to Seflove. The singer understands and gestures in agreement. The singer uses his bow to halt the capoeira game and call GWMH and his opponent to kneel again.

The gourd player steps forward to summon Seflove into the center of the circle with his playing. Mesmerized, she begins a sensual solo. Gourd player's P.O.V: A GOLD SILHOUETTE OF LIGHT DANCES INSIDE OF SEFLOVE'S DRESS.

Circle of on-lookers P.O.V: Seflove dances without the gold silhouette. Godworksmyhand leans forward. Godworksmyhand's astonished P.O.V: THE GOLD SILHOUETTE DANCES INSIDE HER DRESS.

Godworksmyhand's heartbeat rapidly increases. His loud beating heart drowns out the sound of the music. A bell player steps forward to tap out the rhythm of GWMH heart on an iron bell. GWMH steps into the circle to seamlessly join Seflove in her dance as the music changes to accompany the rhythm of Godworksmyhand's beating heart. Keys watches from the circle next to an old man who balances on a walking stick.

OLD MAN

(to Keys)

Every being has its own song but
when a king and queen enter, the
musicians are obliged to play
their rhythm.

KEYS

Same in my country.

Keys knowingly smiles at his neighbor. The dancing couple weave in and out of each other. GWMH inches closer to Seflove. Their bodies almost touch as the dust rises from their feet. Moving behind her, his cheek nearly touches Seflove's.

Keys grabs the old man's cane to thrust between GWMH and Seflove. Keys jumps into the circle to push Seflove way from GWMH with the stick. Her gold silhouette vanishes.

GWMH grasps at the empty air where Seflove stood. The look of relaxed ecstasy melts from Seflove's face.

KEYS
(shouts to crowd)
Jump in!

A trio of tambourine players take up Key's call. Keys taps the stick on the ground to speed up the music's tempo. Dancers jump into the circle. Keys pushes and propels Seflove further away from GWMH.

KEYS (CONT'D)
Don't be shy!

The entire circle of on-lookers jump into the circle to dance a Mardi Gras party rhythm. Keys encourages the crowd with screams and shouts. Bodies swirl and weave in and out to prevent GWMH and Seflove from dancing together.

Keys links arms with Seflove to rush her out of Congo Square, as the party gets louder. Keys stops to study Seflove who looks at him blankly. The sounds and images of Congo Square blur behind them. He leads Seflove by the arm down the streets of New Orleans in silence.

EXT. SHOP LINED STREETS-NIGHT.

The bright shop lined street is deserted.

KEYS
I never knew you could dance.

SEFLOVE
(slow, introspective,
confused)
Me neither. I never danced before.

KEYS
What you call your dancing
partner?

Deep in thought Seflove stops mid-stride.

SEFLOVE
I dunno? I never met him.

KEYS

No, you met the man. You just met him with a part of yourself you ain't never met before.

SEFLOVE

Is that what happened?

KEYS

That's just what happened. Romance.

SEFLOVE

(giggles)
Romance? I didn't have no romance.

KEYS

Whatever you say. Let's head home.

He takes her by the arm to resume their walk.

SEFLOVE

Did I have a romance?

KEYS

You would know.

SEFLOVE

(proud)
I had a romance!

She begins to strut.

KEYS

Don't get yourself all worked up. Likely you won't see him again.

SEFLOVE

Why not...

KEYS

How long did it take for me to get you this far off the plantation? He's not even from here.

SEFLOVE

But how will I see him?

KEYS

You supposed to meet, you'll see him again.

SEFLOVE

But how?

KEYS

I promised your daddy I'd keep you
out of trouble!

SEFLOVE

I'm not a child.

KEYS

We could all see that...

SEFLOVE

My mama!

KEYS

Gotta head home.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW ORLEANS 1800S-NIGHT

A long, grotesque shadow of Miss's bustled skirt and
pointy gloves stretches onto the empty sidewalk and
street. Her shadow anxiously fidgets next to the
carriage.

Miss' tense face relaxes as Keys performs a smile.

KEYS

How ya been, Miss?

He stands in the dirt road to open the carriage door.
Her delicate, high buttoned, leather-gloved boot steps
onto the carriage.

MISS

(bursting with
enthusiasm)

I had the most wonderful
afternoon... Opehlia sang off key
at the recital. She made a
complete fool of herself!

INT. CARRIAGE-NIGHT

Quilted leather seats are surrounded by velvet walls.

Sefloves' P.O.V: Seflove tunes out the sound of Miss' voice as she watches her speak with dramatic facial expressions. Seated next to each other, Seflove and Keys smile cordially at their mistress.

Sadly, Seflove watches the world of the city rush past her window. They approach the Haberdasher shop. The lamp dims in the second story window. ANNA's silhouette, with a tall rectangle head wrap, passes the window. Seflove cries silently. Seflove mutes the sound on Miss as silently mime's her story with rapid gestures and sharp, punctuated, facial expressions. Keys squeezes Sefloves's hand.

KEYS

(whispers)

You' ll see your mama...

Close-up of Seflove's blank stare as she looks out the window, as the colorful world of New Orleans races by the window.

EXT. PLANTATION GROUNDS-DAY

Rows of tall green sugar cane stalks part. Their short leaves rustle as a brown hand bends the stalks to clear a walkway for a procession of bare feet. In the distance Seflove stands over a cauldron big enough to feed a battalion. An middle aged FEMALE FIELD HAND watches as Seflove as she maneuvers a spoon her same height within the pot.

Seflove angrily scrapes the inside of the cauldron. Like a fisherman reeling in the line on his poll, she pulls up the end of the spoon to find just a few inches of porridge on the edge of the spoon. Disappointed, both She and an Female Field hand bend their torsos over into the pot to further investigate.

With the cane fields behind them, the marching crowd of FIELD HANDS carrying metal cups approach Seflove. Seflove pulls her head out of the cauldron like a mechanic coming out from under the hood of a car to scowl at the on coming crowd.

SEFLOVE

This ain't livable!

FEMALE FIELD HAND

All you can do, honey, is add some water and get us back out in the field.

SEFLOVE

You should a seen what I feed Masa for lunch, enough to feed you all for lunch and dinner!

The field Hands in line motion her to quiet and shush her mouth.

FEMALE FIELD HAND

Every since you come back from Congo Square, you been forgetting yourself.

SEFLOVE

I been remembering myself...

FIELD HAND #1 (O.S.)

She complaining over the food again?

Seflove quickly tightens her lip to begin to quickly dish out Barbie Doll size portions of food to the field hands. A skinny, long limbed girl races across the cane field to stop out of breath in front of Seflove.

LONG LIMBED GIRL

Your, daddy. He, he at the house.

Seflove and the Female Field Hand exchange a quick knowing look. Seflove hands the spoon to the Female Field Hand as she runs side by side with the short, Long-Limbed Girl to the front of the plantation home where Alfredo waits next to his carriage.

ALFREDO

Come here.

He grabs her by the elbow to lead out of sight, behind the carriage.

ALFREDO

Just took him into town. They got visiting family staying there.

She looks over her shoulder.

SEFLOVE

They not staying at the house?

He examines her, proudly taking in how much she has grown. He crouches down further, so as not to be seen. She follows his lead and crouches down to sit next to her father, behind the carriage.

ALFREDO

Cousin is a funny gentleman, got a some special slave, makes jewelry, he won't put him in the Slave Quarters. Masa Carrington pretend he's not insulted cause the man some kind of royalty. Mrs. Carrington tolerate it cause, she trying to marry him off to somebody over this way.

He puts his arm around her as he stretches out his legs.

ALFREDO

How's my girl?

SEFLOVE

I went to Congo Square.

ALFREDO

(angry)
What!

SEFLOVE

To see Mama--

ALFREDO

Shh!

Sound of laughter from inside the house. Alfredo hugs Seflove with urgency then pushes her away.

ALFREDO

Go on...

He grabs her again quickly to kiss her, then push her away from the carriage. Alfredo steps to stand at attention in front of the carriage. Seflove rushes up the back steps of the kitchen door. Rough, sun-burnt, Masa and MASA CARRINGTON a soft-handed, lean, bookish man, share a congenial conversation as they walk out of the front door to the Alfredo's carriage.

INT. BIG HOUSE KITCHEN-DAY

Laughter from the dining room as, Seflove works at the long counter. She weaves together the dough strips of a lattice covered pie. Keys pulls up a stool to watch.

SEFLOVE

I got your plate covered in the oven.

He inspects the plate brimming with food.

SEFLOVE

When we going back?

KEYS

I gotta see.

SEFLOVE

I heard Masa is going to a party in town...

KEYS

We'll see.

He begins to walk out the room.

SEFLOVE

What you mean?

She walks to him to give him a handful of herbs from her skirt pocket.

SEFLOVE

I seen these. I know you been looking for um.

He silently gazes at the contents in his hand for a long time.

KEYS

Listen, I can't take you for a while. We gotta wait.

SEFLOVE

Wait for what?

KEYS

I ain't taking you back while he's there. He's disrespectful and I ain't having it.

SEFLOVE

Who?

KEYS

He'll be gone in a minute. He's just visiting?

SEFLOVE

What are you talking about?

KEYS

Your friend. The one you met at Congo Square. I won't have nothing to do with it. Until he takes his high horse outta town, I ain't taking you nowhere.

Keys walks out the room.

EXT. ALFREDO AND ANNA'S SLAVE CABIN-DAY

Seflove sits on the front the cabin steps. A little girl stands behind her happily entertained as she twists Seflove's hair. The toddlers sit in the dirt watching a colony of ants move.

SEFLOVE

He ain't nothing but a sour old man!

The little girl pushes and repositions Sefloves head so she can get a better angle. The little girl stands in front of Seflove to study her work with the seriousness of Vidal Sasson.

SEFLOVE

(to herself)

I don't need him!

Seflove's P.O.V: A toddler tries to place a mobile ant in his mouth. The ant easily escapes the toddler's clumsy fingers. The little girl shapes Seflove's individual hair twists into a single tower to look like Marie Antionette.

SEFLOVE
(talking to herself)
I'm a near grown woman. I don't
need to wait on him!

The little girl positions wild flowers in Seflove's hair. The toddler drops a moving ant into his mouth. He chews then jumps up and screams, waiving his hands rapidly in the air.

TODDLER
Hot! Hot!

INT. MISS'S PLANTATION BEDROOM-DAY

Miss' bedroom is decorated in the ornate Southern colonial style of Louis the 14th. She and Seflove sit in front of a gold leaf vanity mirror.

MISS (O.S.)
Ouch! Ouch!

Seflove pulls little baby hairs near Miss' temple from out of the tight bun that sits atop her head.

SEFLOVE
You want the ringlets, Miss?

MISS
Don't mind me. Go ahead. Put more
around my eyes.

SEFLOVE
Yes, Miss.

Seflove carefully applies a cream to her Miss' hair then uses her finger as a curler to wrap her Mistress' hair around. They both wait for the hair wrapped around Seflove's finger to set and dry.

MISS
I don't know why I bother?

SEFLOVE
What cha mean Miss?

MISS

Everybody's married off, for a hundred miles. I going to be a spinster...

Seflove carefully uncoils the curl from her finger to reshape it around Miss' face.

SEFLOVE

You ain't heard about the new gentleman in town, Miss?

MISS

What do you mean?

SEFLOVE

He's extra handsome. Some kind of Earl or something. Masa Carrington's cousin.

MISS

How did you hear this?

SEFLOVE

Mrs. Carrington has been making arrangements to marry him off.

MISS

She didn't call on me?

SEFLOVE

He has a slave that makes some pretty jewelry. Can't you get some new earrings or something Miss?

MISS

Oh, Seflove!

SEFLOVE

I mean, if she ain't gonna introduce you, you gotta think for yourself.

MISS

Without an introduction, that would be so forward...

SEFLOVE

It ain't a social engagement. I'd be with you.

MISS

That's right, just in town
shopping with my slave girl.

SEFLOVE

That's right, Miss.

Seflove embraces Miss's shoulders as they smile together
looking into Miss' vanity mirror.

INT. ALFREDO AND ANNA'S SLAVE CABIN-NIGHT

Seflove sleeps covered by her family blanket which has
become a colorful quilt due to the years of patching its
holes. Her long thick braids create a web which splays
onto the floorboards like a spiders web.

In a dream she approaches the Haberdasher shop in New
Orleans. GWMH walks towards her. He tries to get
Seflove's attention but she cannot see him. Seflove
stands inside the shop grasping for Anna's body. Anna,
who appears as a ghost walks unable to see Seflove.
Seflove's arms move through the fleeting apparition of
her mother when she attempts to hug Anna. Seflove tosses
and turns in her bed, brushing an imaginary thing away
from her ear. In her dream Godworksmysmyhand's mouth
whispers close to her ear.

GWMH

If you need anything, call my
name.

SEFLOVE

Wh--

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Godworksmysmyhands.

His mouth closes and vanishes as she turns sleeping, on
her side. She wakes up sprawled on the floor, feet away
from the crumpled blanket. Seflove rises to open the door
to see the darkness of the pre-morning sky.

INT. ALFREDO AND ANNA'S SLAVE CABIN, LATER -NIGHT

Dressed for the day, Seflove carries a bundle of fire
wood and a kerosene lamp to exit the front door.

EXT. OPEN PLANTATION FIELD-DAY

Seflove struggles to stir the large iron cauldron with a spoon half her height. The Kerosene lamp hangs above her on a post, as the fire crackles at her feet. The light of dawn slowly opens the sky.

Silhouettes of hundreds of strong, stooped, tired bodies trudge in Seflove's direction. The sky brightens as shadows become men and women Field Hands, carrying cups towards Seflove. Charles trails behind carrying a riffle and a whip. Seflove's P.O.V: A half empty pot of grits.

The line of field hands seems to stretch out to the horizon. Seflove scoops a ladle into a bucket of water behind her. Disappointed, she thins the broth.

SEFLOVE

I can't do this no more. I ain't doing nothing!

The grits bubble, thicken, and return to the meager portion she started with. The sky bursts into colorful hues of orange and pink. Grandma Cora's voice is heard but her spirit is not seen.

GRANDMA (O.S.)

Add a pinch of sun.

Following the voice, Seflove turns.

SEFLOVE

Grandma?

GRANDMA (O.S.)

What you think give the plants and food such power?

SEFLOVE

Huh?

GRANDMA (O.S.)

The sun, baby. Every living thing takes it's food from the sun!

Seflove grows angry. The crowd approaches. The colors of dawn disappear.

GRANDMA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Nobody can work from sunrise to
sunset on a spoonful of grits...We
been doing it for years. Only I
didn't have your hair. I just gave
em a piece of my heart.

Cora's invisible hand pulls off Sefloves' head wrap.

CORA

It's your birthright child.
Sing ! Use your hair and pull down
the sun!

Seflove quickly grabs her head wrap floating in the air.
With worry, she drops the head wrap to the ground.
Seflove takes a deep breath. Her exhale untwines her
braids. Her hair extends to reach out in a 180 degrees
arch around her head toward the sun. The yellow rays of
the sun shoot through her coils of hair like the coils on
an electric stove top. The electrical current stretches
and puffs her hair into long tiny crinkly waves. The
waves fluff into a cottony Afro.

Field Hand's P.O.V: A yellow halo forms around Seflove's
head. She pulls down a steady stream of light from the
sun to circulate through her hair and sing out as gold
dust into the pot of grits. The Field Hands stop to watch
Seflove's spectacle. FIELD HAND #1 is a young pregnant
mother and FIELD HAND # 2 a middle aged woman, with deep
lash scars on face and bare arms.

FIELD HAND #1

Midwife always said to watch out
for that girl.

FIELD HAND #2

(motions to Charles)
Shh.

FIELD HAND #1

Said she can heal like the drum.

FIELD HAND #2

Hush up!

Charles stops dead in his tracks. The field hands stop
behind him.

CHARLES

Go on..

Charles plants his riffle in the ground to watch from a distance. Seflove's hair changes from yellow to the crimson colors of the rising sun. She easily stirs the pot and sings. The Field Hands approach Seflove.

FIELD HAND #1

Even Charles afraid a that.

With her free hand, she uses the water ladle to tap a rhythm on the outside of the iron pot. Seflove's P.O.V: the grits bubble, thicken and expand to the top of the pot. The Field Hands join Seflove sing, In the Morning. They stomp their feet in time with Seflove's ladle as they near the cauldron. They tap their spoons against their metal cups in counter time to her beat. Seflove reaches deep into the pot to dispense a single spoonful to each Field Hand that stands in front of her.

Field Hands 1 & 2 sit to eat. The deep grooved scars on Field Hand #2's bare shoulders spread into an intricate lattice design as she hunches forward to scrape the last spoon of grits. The scars on her shoulders, slowly melt into a geometric design on the surface of her smooth brown skin. The pregnant woman startles with surprise as she moves her hand to follow the kicking of the infant in her stomach. She watches scares disappear on Field Hand #2.

FIELD HAND # 1

Your run-a-scars done gone!

Field Hand #2 lifts up her skirt hem.

FIELD HAND #3

My dog bite is itching.

She reveals an old ankle wound in the shape of dogs mouth, as it repairs like new.

FIELD HAND #2

My flesh! My run-a-way flesh the dog ripped out--

FIELD HAND # 1

It grown back!!

Charles walks over from his post as Seflove's hair deflates and recedes. He puts his gun down. With care, Charles picks up Seflove's head wrap to hand to her.

CHARLES

Morning.

SEFLOVE

Morning, Charles.

CHARLES

Go ahead, now. Cover it up.

INT. MISS'S PLANTATION BEDROOM-DAY

A smooth wool blanket. A female shape completely covered beneath the blanket. Seflove's hand carefully pulls the top of the blanket to uncover Miss' head, tightly curled into her body.

SEFLOVE

You sleep alright?

Miss furiously re-covers her head with the blanket. A middle aged female HOUSE SLAVE opens the door carrying a package.

HOUSE SLAVE

(to Seflove)

Where she at?

Seflove shakes her head as she points to the mound of covers.

HOUSE SLAVE (CONT'D)

(upbeat)

Package arrived for you from town.
It's mighty big...

The covers fly off of the bed as Miss sits up.

MISS

Give it here!

Miss aggressively tears through the wrapped package. She screams in anger when she sees the contents then throws the package on the floor. The House Slave picks up the dress to hand to Miss..

HOUSE SLAVE

Why Miss, it's the dress you had
Anna make special for you. Mighty
fine.

Miss tosses the dress to the floor. Seflove quickly moves to carefully pick up the dress.

MISS

Nobody's ever gonna love me!

SEFLOVE

How can you say that, Miss. Sure that Mr. Don is gonna take to you just fine! You all going to be dancing at the Mardi Gras ball.

MISS

Mardi Gras gives me the shivers!

SEFLOVE

Miss?

MISS

Ash Wednesday; the day afterward. gave me nightmares as a child.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH, TEN YEARS EARLIER-DAY

Six year old Miss kneels at the alter in front of a fully robbed catholic priest.

CATHOLIC PRIEST

We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength.

He uses his finger to mark the sign of the cross in black soot on her white forehead.

CATHOLIC PRIEST (CONT'D)

We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

Young Miss blanches white with fear.

CATHOLIC PRIEST (CONT'D)

Have Mercy on us lord.

EXT. MISS' SITTING/BEDROOM-DAY

Wearing her bed clothes, Miss examines herself in the full length mirror.

MISS

I have not done a single bad thing
to anyone; ever! She lies!

SEFLOVE

Who Miss?

MISS

Let me see that dress! Anna put
the darts on the shoulders. She
did that special; just for me.
(smiles at Seflove)
She always did cotton on me.

Miss disdainfully eyes Seflove up and down..

MISS (CONT'D)

(gloats)

A Don...that's like an prince or
something. Tomorrow, he will be
all eyes on me!

Miss presses the dress against her body as she admires
her reflection in the full length mirror.

MISS (CONT'D)

Slave like you won't ever wear a
dress fine as mine. Even if your
mama made it! It's the law. Law
says; you'll never marry. Who
would love you anyway?

Miss hands Seflove the dress and motions her to leave.

MISS (CONT'D)

Press it.

INT. BIG HOUSE KITCHEN-DAY

Standing in front of an ironing board Seflove buries her
nose in the dress as the iron heats up on the stove. She
tests the iron by licking her finger and touching it. The
iron sizzles as she places it on the board. She admires
the perfectly stitched seams as she turns the dress
inside out to position on the board.

Expertly, she sprinkles water on the dress with one hand
and navigates the iron with the other. Steam rises from
the dress. She fans the rising steam to inhale deeply and
smiles.

SEFLOVE

Mama.

Seflove returns to ironing, wipes the sweat and steam from her brow. As she smells the steam she begins to cry.

(whispers)

Mama.

Her tears fall onto the dress and rise up as steam from her iron. She plants the iron on the dress to use the back of her hand to wipe away tears. Carrying the dress, she swings the kitchen door open.

INT. BIG HOUSE DINNING ROOM-DAY

Seflove stops in front of the mirror to blotch the puffiness around her eyes. She takes a long look at herself. A glimmer of gold light flashes in her reflection. She moves closer to follow the light that disappears. She steps back to hold the dress in front of her body and admire her reflection.

She sings. The braids beneath her head wrap slide out to drape around her shoulders and the collar of Anna's dress like a mink stole. Golden dust sparkles shimmer in her hair. Seflove spins in front of the mirror. In the mirror's reflection a golden silhouette of her body spins. Seflove stops in front of the mirror. The image of light disappears. She holds the dress to frame her body, then lets it fall to hang over her arm, as she stares squarely in the mirror.

SEFLOVE (CONT'D)

The dress you making for me; is so
fine. When you see me; well, well
look at me; I'm grown...

She smiles to admire herself in the mirror's reflection.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW ORLEANS- DAY

In the blazing sun, full of composure Miss, Seflove and Keys approach the Jeweler's workshop. The shop is one of many businesses which inhabit the short, long, rectangular, one story plain building. This building without signs, is a tropical rainbow of colors, each shop is distinguished by a its own bright color and door.

INT. WORKSHOP-DAY

Miss in her wide dress narrowly fits through the doorway frame into the dark, cool, cave of the small workshop. In the room is a large work table covered with silver ware, gold rings, and tools. In the corner is a potter's wheel, kiln, and fire pit near an anvil. A wide array of tools hang on the wall. Across the room is a wood cabinet with multiple drawers.

Seflove follows behind Miss into the doorway. Wearing an apron, GWMH sits at the end of the table, facing the front door. He bends a fine piece of wire with a tool as the muscles ripple through his working arm.

His arm and hand freeze when he sees Seflove. Seflove's eyes meet GWMH, she stops in the doorway like a deer in the headlights. Low drums play the song "Where Are the African Gods," from the Congo Square dance duet. With the air of an art dealer, cosmopolitan DON ESCONDIDO, steps forward to bow his black head and present his dark olive hand to Miss.

MISS

Pleasure to make your acquaintance.

DON ESCONDIDO

The pleasure is mine. How can I be of assistance?

In discomfort, Keys, leans on the exterior wall of the building as the sun beats down on him. He wipes the sweat from his brow. Seflove stands in the doorway, her eyes locked with Godworksmyhand's. Keys coughs loudly, signaling to Seflove to move forward. Keys pushes Seflove forward. She stumbles into the room landing at the edge of Godworksmyhand's long, rectangular, work table.

Keys freezes in anger disbelief when he steps forward to recognize Godworksmyhand's.

MISS

The reputation of your artwork is quite famous.

DON ESCONDIDO

Is there something in particular that you found of interest?

She follows Don Escondido to examine the book of sample drawings.

MISS

Oh, yes!

Godworkshmhands nods and smiles at Seflove. She returns his smile. A spark of PINK LIGHT travels across the room from his eyes to her heart. Startled; Seflove gasps.

MISS

You can make this?

DON ESCONDIDO

As you like.

Still holding onto his tools, GWMH steps forward to Seflove. GWMH P.O.V: Seflove moves forward to meet him. Her full skirt cascades in layers from her narrow waist to frame her shapely thighs and hips. The hem of her too short hand me down dress reveals her soft naked ankle and simple shoe as she steps to him. His tool sizzles as she clenches it in his hand.

MISS

Oh, the enameling is so exquisite!

Keys stops Seflove from moving to GWMH by grabbing her by the elbow.

KEYS

(prudently whispers
to GWMH)

You need permission.

Keys quickly leads her away from GWMH to stand behind Miss. Sparks fly as GWMH turns his back to beat a piece of metal on his anvil. The fire beneath flickers aglow.

MISS (O.S.)

That's just what I was gonna do. I
want enamel?

DON ESCONDIDO (O.S.)

Of course. A crown? A brooch for
your costume?

The changing fire light reflects in Godworksmhand's eyes as he bends forward to strike. In slow motion; as if he were a hunter, discriminating the sounds of his prey; Godworksmhands discerns the movement of Sefloves feet.

MISS

Well, you're the expert...(O.S)

The hem of her skirt twirls and flares as she turns to follow the sound his anvil .

DON ESCONDIDO (O.S.)

I saw a relic in Paris. Blue
turquoise on the crown, beveled
necklace, encrusted with jewels.

His chest swells as his hammer rises above his head. From beneath his shirt, a glimmer of pink light races from his chest to reflect in his eyes as he strikes his hammer down.

DON ESCONDIDO (CONT'D)

I've been thinking about it ever
since!

Godworkswmyhand's thighs hold the floor with the determination of John Henry swinging his hammer to lay down rail.

MISS (O.S.)

That's what I'll have!

GWMH crosses behind Seflove to open one of the cabinet drawers to take out a case of cut gem stones.

DON ESCONDIDO (O.S.)

How daring!

He drops the stones behind Seflove. She turns her head to glance over her shoulder.

MISS

Keys, what do you think?

Keys walks away outraged. Prisms of colored light splash onto Seflove's plain dress as the gems fall at her hem. GWMH kneels at her ankles to collect the fallen stones that lay just beneath her hem.

KEYS(O.S.)

Just right for you, Miss.

Seflove reveals her glistening shin as she raises her skirt, just before she kneels to place its edges on the floor.

She join him on her knees to help recover the rolling stones. Facing each other, they place the stones back into the box he carries.

DON ESCONDIDO (O.S.)
For Mardi Gras? The only place to
display such opulence.

GWMH offers Seflove his open palm. Colored prisms dance in his hand as she places one stone at a time into his palm, careful her fingers do not directly touch his hand. The stones reflect prisms of colored light onto her face.

MISS
I like the set in your drawing.

DON ESCONDIDO
The crown and necklace. We will
have them made before the ball.

Godworksmyhand's P.O.V: the slow motion reach and bend of Seflove's arm and the retraction of her shoulder as she reaches for the stones. The graceful opening and closing of her fingers as they grasp the stones.

MISS
Wonderful! So, you will be there?

DON ESCONDIDO
Unfortunately, I must return home
just before, but you will have the
set before the ball.

MISS
(angry)
Oh.

DON ESCONDIDO
Is there something wrong?

MISS
Oh nothing. Seflove (Brash) Let's
get out of here.

Disappointed, Seflove looks up from the floor. GWMH gestures to help Seflove stand. Keys pulls up the back of Seflove's sash of her skirt to move her away from GWMH.

SEFLOVE

Miss?

MISS

It must be time for supper. Come on.

SEFLOVE

Yes, Miss.

GWMH smiles broadly at Seflove. She returns his smile.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS STREETS/RESTAURANT ENTRANCE-DAY

In front of an upscale restaurant, Alfredo waits with other black coachmen and their horse and carriages. In full uniform, Alfredo urgently steps forward to open the door for Miss as her carriage arrives.

ALFREDO

(oozes charm)

Miss, what a lovely sight to see!

MISS

Is Mrs. Carrington taking lunch with her husband?

ALFREDO

She just arrived, Miss.

MISS

(to Seflove)

I'm gonna find out what's wrong with that cousin of hers.

SEFLOVE

Can I visit with my Popi?

MISS

Suit yourself.

ALFREDO

Mihija, Let me look at you!

SEFLOVE

Popi, we gotta talk.

She leads him away from the other coachmen.

SEFLOVE (CONT'D)

I am in love with a man!

Alfredo chokes on his own spit.

ALFREDO

Tell me, mi amore, what's his name?

SEFLOVE

Not sure.

ALFREDO

NOT SURE? What kind of name is NOT SURE?

SEFLOVE

Godworksmyhands? Dunno? I dunno his name.

ALFREDO

Dunno. Alright, where's he from?

SEFLOVE

(gleeful)
Dunno.

ALFREDO

This nobody from nowhere, Señor Dunno from Dunnoville. Why you think you love him?"

SEFLOVE

He make me feel myself, like I never felt before. Big, like I can fly Popi. You felt like that before?

ALFREDO

Oh yeah. I know that feeling. Better than hot biscuits, ain't it?

(They laugh.)

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

So what does he say to you?

SEFLOVE

(leans in to tell a precious secret)

(MORE)

SEFLOVE (CONT'D)
Really...He ain't never said a
thing. But it sound like love,
don't it Popi?

ALFREDO
(nervous)
Sure it sound like love. You stand
next to him and you feel your best
self. He look at you and he feels
his best self, sure that's love.

SEFLOVE
So, what do I do?

ALFREDO
(overwhelmed)
Whatch ya mean? What you got to
do! You mean your mama never talk
to you about men and women?

She looks at him like he just plunged a dagger in her
heart.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)
I forgot... been so long since I
been in love.

SEFLOVE
It was magical, Popi!

ALFREDO
Magical?

SEFLOVE
Oh yes Popi, I saw a shooting
star!

ALFREDO
I don't care if angels called out
your names. He gotta show you who
he is.

SEFLOVE
But when we danced--

ALFREDO
He put his arms around you?

Seflove freezes in fear.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

Did he?

She nods her head no.

ALFREDO

This love thing, it's special every time, just like ice cold every time. You move too fast it'll melt in your hands. You gotta take your time. Study a man.

SEFLOVE

Study him. How I do that?

ALFREDO

Well, besides learning his name and where he's from, we got to see what he do... How he treat the people around him.

SEFLOVE

We; Popi?

ALFREDO

We... You; I mean you. Course I do!
But let me teach you...(beat) some dance!

SEFLOVE

What!

ALFREDO

Getting to know a man is like a dance.

SEFLOVE

(Embarrassed)
Popi?!

ALFREDO

How'd I teach you to tighten up the carriage?

SEFLOVE

Righty tighty, lefty loosey.

ALFREDO

Same thing. This dance lesson is short little sayings to remember.

Alfredo reaches his hand to invite Seflove to dance. He holds her close as they begin to dance and the music for a Cuban Danzon, a slow parlour dance plays.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

You think I'm gonna learn anything, besides what's up your nose, studying you this close?

Seflove laughs and nods her head, no.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

Go ahead, step away to fan yourself. Sometimes you need some distance to know the difference between me and you.

Seflove fans herself. He takes her by the hand to resume dancing.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

If you too far away for too long, we ain't dancing and you not gonna learn how I'm gonna act

SEFLOVE

What am I looking for?

ALFREDO

Is he bossy? Give him a chance to lead.

He dominates her on the floor without giving her a chance to breath. She pushes him away. They start again.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

Does he listen?

Alfredo returns to leading her aggressively. She walks away.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

Good girl.

They begin dancing again he leads her to bump into one of the coachmen. Alfredo leads Seflove like a unskilled speed hungry teenage boy driving his first car. She stops to put her head between her knees for air.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

What kind choices does he make? Do ya get sea sick just following him?

SEFLOVE

He's not like that!

ALFREDO

How do you know? You floating so high from seeing that flash of light... Go ahead fan yourself.

SEFLOVE

What?

ALFREDO

How ya feel?

SEFLOVE

Sick.

ALFREDO

You see what I'm saying?

SEFLOVE

He don't make me feel sick. You do!

ALFREDO

You won't know what you feeling if you don't stop to recognize what's coming at you.

Alfredo, takes his imaginary skirt by the hem and fans himself with an imaginary fan. With a feminine air he slowly dances a circle around Seflove.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

Stop. Recognize. Remember what you want. Say it after me.

SEFLOVE

Stop. Recognize. Remember. (beat)
But I love the way he makes me feel!

ALFREDO

Feeling is one thing. How does he behave? Go ahead. Tell me to slow down.

SEFLOVE

You're going too fast.

Alfredo smiles with charm deeply into her eyes. He moves her much faster with effortless grace. She smiles back into his eyes.

ALFREDO

How ya feeling?

SEFLOVE

Fine.

ALFREDO

We didn't slow down one bit.

She giggles without a care.

SEFLOVE

We didn't?

ALFREDO

You feeling so good. You forgot to-

-

She takes a slow twirl around him and re-approaches Alfredo with the deliberate decelerated calm of a Tai Chi Master.

SEFLOVE

Stop. Recognize. Remember.

He smiles with approval. They begin to dance slow.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

Go ahead and solo.

She begins to solo. He walks over to talk to the coachmen. She looks sad and dejected.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

Stop and Recognize. What that feel like?

SEFLOVE

Hurt.

ALFREDO

He need to be able to pay attention to you when he not being the boss. Got that?

SEFLOVE

What else?

ALFREDO

Watch him dance with somebody else.

SEFLOVE

What!

ALFREDO

See if he's kind and generous.

SEFLOVE

What does that have to do with me?

ALFREDO

Everything. Watching him will tell you what he give himself permission to do.

They return to dancing effortlessly.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

Sure fire way to see what he's made of is to step on his feet a few times.

SEFLOVE

That don't sound so smart.

ALFREDO

Pay attention. It ain't a crime to be clumsy. Somebody who will work with you, you can dance with over and over again.

SEFLOVE

Ohhhhhh.

He steps on her feet purposefully two times. She winces.

ALFREDO

Tap, tap. No flack. Say it after me. Tap, tap. No flack.

SEFLOVE

Tap, tap. No flack.

ALFREDO

What else?

SEFLOVE

Stop. Recognize. Remember.
(Sarcastic) Righty tighty, lefty
lossy.

ALFREDO

That last one don't work with a
man!

He playfully twists her nose. She grimaces and laughs. He takes her by the arm to sit on his carriage beneath the shade of a tree. Deep in thought, he stares off into space.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

Now a days, a man can't even walk
down the street and look another
man in the eye. You need a man who
can love himself no matter what,
when life is up or down.
A man like that always got love
for you. (mad) Any slave can't
look in the mirror and see his own
worth is lost in this world!

SEFLOVE

You alright, Popi?

He lifts her chin to look lovingly into her eyes.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

You gotta remember to look at
yourself in the mirror and see
what I see.

He turns away from her to collect his emotions.

SEFLOVE

I almost seen Mama.

ALFREDO

But did you?

She shakes her head no.

ALFREDO (CONT'D)

You need a plan.

SEFLOVE

Miss is having a necklace made
here in town.

(MORE)

SEFLOVE (CONT'D)

The jeweler- "Dunno"- didn't get the measurements. I figure I run back, stop by mama's to give him the measurements.

Face flushed red, Miss walks over tugging at her corset.

MISS

(whisper to Seflove)

Oh, I ate too much. I need to loosen my snaps.

SEFLOVE

Don't you worry Miss, I'll do it for you.

Miss hurries to the back of Miss' dress, as they walk to the carriage.

MISS

No... in the carriage.

SEFLOVE

Course, Miss.

MISS

This dress is so tight, no way in heaven, I'd return to see Don Escondido today.

SEFLOVE

He expecting you, Miss?

Miss blushes to dramatically re-enact meeting the Don.

MISS

Well, you know, he and I, we just got to talking... He was looking me straight in the eye, and well, I, I mean, we, we forgot to tell his man to take my measurements!

SEFLOVE

That's what happens when you're sweet on somebody. I'll take care of it, Miss. We don't want to slow things down, the date of him getting the necklace to you.

MISS

Heavens no! I wouldn't want to push back that day, who knows what might happen!

SEFLOVE

He's got to get on that ship. You push things back, he might have to leave the necklace with his cousin to give you.

MISS

Oh Lord!

SEFLOVE

I'll do it for you right now, run up there, take some side streets, much faster than this here old carriage.

MISS

Hurry, before he closes up for lunch!!

Seflove runs away from Miss, down the street, her skirt flapping like wings in the air.

MISS (O.S.)

We'll find you in the street.

INTERCUT BETWEEN EXT. AND INT. OF WORKSHOP- LATER/DAY

Seflove eavesdrops near the front door. They stand eye to eye, speaking in Portuguese with English subtitles. Seflove perks-up when she hears the command in GWMH voice as he speaks to the Don as an equal.

DON

Is she the one you plan to set free?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Maybe.

DON

That girl is worth all your years of working and saving?

(MORE)

DON (CONT'D)

(beat)

You could entertain a thousand girls with your money and be a happy man!! I never understood why you are so bent on setting a woman free?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

When my son's mother was sold away from me, I swore; I would never fall in love with a slave woman again. The next woman I love must be free, free to be with me forever!

DON ESCONDIDO

I never thought this day would come... I mean, where would we put her?

Angry, GWMH storms back to his desk.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

You gambled all your money away.
(beat) We live because of the talent of my hands.

DON ESCONDIDO

Well, that was--

GODWORKSMYHANDS

We must stay for the ball. I have to meet her.

DON ESCONDIDO

Impossible!

GODWORKSMYHANDS

If I don't finish our orders we'll never leave this town.

DON ESCONDIDO

When I found you, you were rotting in a cell, with that band of run-a-way slaves you corvorted with. A fool, you were a fool, to make a sword they used to kill a white man!

GODWORKSMYHANDS

You should have left me there.

DON ESCONDIDO

But I didn't! I bribed the judge.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

I know, because you saw the
brilliance of my talent, when you
saw my sword. I know, I've heard
it a hundred times, it was your
duty as a art historian.

DON ESCONDIDO

You're uneducated. You wouldn't
understand! (beat) I saved your
life!

GODWORKSMYHANDS

I save your life everyday I work
and put food in your mouth! But I
won't do it anymore, not without
love.

Don Escondido ignores GWMH by reading a book. GWMH
returns to his workbench.

Putting on his gloves to pick up a long handled tool,
GWMH picks up an intricately decorated silver platter to
melt in the burning fire. It shrinks like a marshmallow.

DON ESCONDIDO

What have you done!

GODWORKSMYHANDS

What you cannot undo.

He hands Don Escondido the tool then, crosses his arms.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Invite her mistress to the ball.

The Don's face drops as he inspects the ruined platter.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Have your cousin request the
presence of the slave girl at the
ball.

DON ESCONDIDO
What will people think?

GODWORKSMYHANDS
You like a good game, say it
offends you to visit with a woman
who attends to herself.

DON ESCONDIDO
(chuckles)
That is rather ingenious...

GODWORKSMYHANDS (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Say the sight of perspiration
disturbs your calm.

The Don leans in like thief smelling a good heist.

GODWORKMYHANDS
Say, the last woman you courted
always had a slave who fanned her.
No one will call your bluff.

Seflove slowly eases into the room, unseen by the men.

DON ESCONDIDO
(laughs)
Your right, it is just like a good
game of cards, without the pot of
money of course...

Tentative, She advances to their intense conversation.

GODWORKSMYHANDS
But all the thrill...

DON ESCONDIDO
Why, I'll do it.

SEFLOVE
Excuse me, Sir. My Miss forgot to
give your man her measurements.

Startled, the men jump to turn around.

DON
How unfortunate...

He gives a triumphant look to GWMH.

DON ESCONDIDO

We may have to cancel the order.
He have obligations abroad in ten
days.

SEFLOVE

Oh sir, it would be no trouble, no
trouble at all to get the
measurements. Why, the dress
maker's got every size and part of
my miss recorded in her book!

DON ESCONDIDO

(disappointed)She does?

SEFLOVE

Yes, Sir. I can take your man
myself. He'd be back before you
could swat a fly!

DON ESCONDIDO

A fly?

GWMH gestures "money" when he rubs his fingers together.
The Don nods his approval.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS STREET- DAY

Ornate, bright colored, colonial buildings line the
street. Tropical plants, blooming in rich magenta,
orange, and gold cover the wrought iron fences that
protect each business and residence.

Attentively keeps him close by her side as she brushes
past black bodies in the street. He admires her beauty,
as she focuses ahead and he falls in sync with the rhythm
of her stride. She slows down as she becomes self
conscious of his gaze.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

The jewel of New Orleans...

SEFLOVE

What's that?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

You, the loveliest thing I've set
eyes on in this city.

He smiles at her. She smiles back.

Slaves accompanying their master's step off of the sidewalk and into the street to let whites pass. Together they notice as an elderly black woman steps into the street to make way for a young white boy. GWMH frowns. Embarrassed, she looks down at the ground.

SEFLOVE

It's the law here...

GODWORKSMYHANDS

I know. They have so many fearful laws. Senseless.

SEFLLOVE

What cha mean?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Can't look a white in the eye, a black man can't hold a book. They must be afraid if we hold our heads up and learn how to read, we will take control of the country.

SEFLOVE

(encouraging)
Never say never!

GODWORKSMYHANDS

You sound like my mama, back in Virginia!

SEFLOVE

I thought, I thought, you was from far away...

GODWORKSMYHANDS

We live in Brazil but I was born in Virginia.

SEFLOVE

Never heard of that. Ginya, I heard of. My mama's like you, has a trade.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

What is her trade?

SEFLOVE

She's a dressmaker, and hat
maker...

A well dressed black man passes and tips his hat to the
couple.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

There are many free blacks in New
Orleans?

SEFLOVE

Folks can sell as they like Sunday
at Congo Square, lots save to buy
themselves free.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

I would set you free.

SEFLOVE

(laughs)
You don't even know me! Why'd you
do that?

An elderly slave woman who is a FRUIT VENDOR walks
towards them. Tipping her head to greet the handsome
couple. She drops the fruits from the basket she balances
on her head. GWMH scoops up her rolling fruit. Gracefully
he places the fruits into her basket. She receives the
attention with delight as he helps her balance the basket
on her head. Nervous, Seflove watches.

FRUIT VENDOR

Merci, merci.

GODWORKMYHANDS

Obrigada.

A carriage approaches, Seflove turns to the sound.

SEFLOVE

We gotta hurry.

He moves quickly. The woman remains transfixed smiling at
the harmonious couple.

SEFLOVE

Come on.

With single determination, Seflove walks briskly. He
follows.

As if in a trance, GWMH walks toward a vine covered building with an ornate iron fence. She runs behind him as if chasing a run-a-way puppy.

GWMH P.O.V.: Tropical flowers vine through heart shapes of rusted iron in the fence. A rampart lion bears it's claws at the center of the fence.

He stops frozen in front of the low gate. Reverently, his hands caress the air above the symbols.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Abomey...

SEFLOVE

The lion?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

It's a leopard. A sign of the king of my people.

She tries to move him along by pulling on his sleeve. He won't budge.

SEFLOVE

They say, a clan of men go around putting prayers from they homeland in any piece of metal white folks tell um to make.

Impressed, his eyes light up. Delighted by her knowledge, she leads him to resume their walk.

SEFLOVE

Folks say, they can breath life into iron or gold.

Eye glued to Seflove, GWMH bursts into an uncontrollable smile.

GWMH

You believe that?

SEFLOVE

(laughing)
I ain't seen it yet...

She moves close to his side. He picks up his pace to stay close to her.

SEFLOVE

(exited)

We almost there.

Seflove's P.O.V: The Haberdasher shop. She begins to jog toward it. He jobs along side her.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

It would pleasure me to see you again.

She sprints to look back at him and smile coquettishly.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Would you dance with me at the Mardi Gras ball?

Surprised and amused by the fleeting view of her fluttering skirt, he catches up with her to playfully block her path.

SEFLOVE

If I could...We gotta hurry!

Like a quick running back, she dodges around him.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

What's wrong?

Seflove's P.O.V: the dress shop.

SEFLOVE

Nothing. I don't want to get you in trouble, we gotta get you in the shop.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

There is no rush...

Seflove runs away from him toward the shop. She trips. He catches her.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Are you in trouble?

SEFLOVE

My mama's in that shop. I ain't seen my mama in eight years!!

He hooks his arm into hers.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Come!

Triumphant, they speed walk together.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Promise you'll dance with me, once
I get you to the ball.

SEFLOVE

(Enthusiastic)

I promise.

Godworksmhands reaches for the door knob.

MISS (O.S.)

There you are!!

Terror stricken, Seflove turns around in the dress shop's doorway. Miss stares disapprovingly at Seflove.

MISS

Come here.

Frozen, Seflove whispers to GWMH.

SEFLOVE

Tell mama I'm coming back.

Tears streams down her checks. He gently touches her arm.

MISS

Right now!

Seflove's head hangs down as she moves like an old tortoise toward the carriage. Teardrops hit the loose dirt. With a pained look on his face, GWMH watches Seflove slump into the carriage. She rides away without looking up.

EXT. DRESS SHOP - DAY

Two large wooden cutting tables touch to form an "L" shape. Scattered about the room are dress forms, long rectangular rolls of fabric lean against the walls.

GWMH silently enters to watch Anna as she works. She carefully shape the wires of a hoop skirt hanging from a mannequin. Her copper bracelets, shimmer and clang as she bends the wire between her thumb and fore fingers. With her back to him she speaks without looking up.

ANNA

You have to come around this way
to speak.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Miss--

ANNA

They call me, Anna.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Miss Anna, I had the pleasure of
recently meeting your daughter.

Her face lights up in excitement. He steps forward
smiling at her. Anna's P.O.V: young, rugged, handsome
GWMH approaching her with confident familiarity.

She stops him in mid-motion as she squints hard to meet
his eyes, then study his face in silence. He complies by
keeping still for her examination.

ANNA

(business like tone)

You somebody I ought to know?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

I would like to be someone you
should want to know.

ANNA

But you not that somebody, yet?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

We just met--

ANNA

Seflove is a real special girl,
not just anybody--

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Just like her mother, clearly, She-

-

ANNA

You don't know a thing about me. I
can't stand when somebody plays
with me. Don't play with me.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

I am very serious.

ANNA

What kinda serious, you mean?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

I want to take care of her, I want to--

ANNA

The only way to take care of her, if you serious, you said you was serious? (beat) is to take her up North where she can be free. Can you do that?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

I was planning on going North.

She studies him again with her eyes. She appreciates his balanced features and confident posture.

ANNA

You look like you could be somebody for my Seflove but looking and doing is two different things.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

She was just outside your shop today,

ANNA

(excited)

Today--

GODWORKSMYHANDS

She got just to the doorway but her mistress called her away.

Anna's face drops.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

She said to tell you she will return.

ANNA

(disbelief)

Course she will...

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Next time, I will bring her to
you.

ANNA

You can do all that?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

And more.

ANNA

(she pleasantly smiles to herself)
What's she look like?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Just like you.

ANNA

Boy, please! I ain't seen my child
in years. How tall is she, what's
her shape. What's she like!

GODWORKSMYHANDS

She is the most beautiful woman I
have ever seen.

ANNA

Woman?

GODWORKMYHANDS

She carries herself like she
belongs to herself. I like that.

She moves in closer to listen to him

ANNA

I like that too. Go on...

They huddle up close together.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

She is smart.

ANNA

How you know?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

She convinces her Mistress to let
her travel alone, in the street.
Her mind is like a razor!

ANNA

Yeah, she was quick like that as a babe. Turn your head, she be gone in a minute, doing as she please. What else?

He studies her silently for a long time.

GODWORKMYHANDS

She has a something I have never seen... I do not have a word for it, A light I felt when I saw her move. Brilliance.

ANNA

Brilliance? What does that mean?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Like a star...

ANNA

You seen right. She is a star! Brilliance... Fell out the sky and into my womb. She did! I like that... Brilliance.

She looks at him approvingly. Anna reaches into her pocket to pull out a green spool of thread.

ANNA

Give her this. Next time you see her.

Her copper bracelets clang as she reaches for his hand. Their eyes meet. She places the thread in his open palm.

ANNA

Tell her it's from me.

He nods his head, yes. She smiles and nods her head yes.

INT. DRESS SHOP-EVENING

Light reflects off of a gold coin that Anna places underneath the upturned hem of a dress. Unseen by Anna, Ms. Haberdasher enters the room. Anna folds the fabric over the coin to stitch the hem closed.

MS. HABERDASHER.

The dress is done?

ANNA

I hung Miss's dress in the closet.

MS. HABERDASHER

You ought to not put all of your saving into that dress.

ANNA

She's my only child. She deserve to be free.

MS. HABERDASHER

You could save half of the coins. Buy your own freedom.

ANNA

She needs money for living. I hear it's costly up North.

MS. HABERDASHER

I'd pay you the same wage as I pay your master.

ANNA

She got her whole life ahead of her... I'll start saving again this Sunday, what I sell at Congo Square.

MS. HABERDASHER

Miss expects me at ten. Your daughter's dress must be finished by eight.

ANNA

It'll be done. Please, don't forget to tell her--

MS. HABERDASHER

To use the coins to buy her freedom. I won't forget.

ANNA

I appreciate it Ma'am. So much.

Alone in the room, Anna sings. She places gold coins that shimmer and sparkle under the candle light into the hem. A gold coin blurs. She holds a note.

EXT. MISS'S PLANTATION BEDROOM-DAY

Miss' thumb pushes beneath an envelope sealed in gold dusted wax.

MISS
(screams)
Seflove! Seflove

SEFLOVE
Yes, Miss?

Miss happily waves the envelope in the air.

MISS
You were right!

SEFLOVE
Yes, Miss?

MISS
His cousin, that Carrington who
wouldn't tell me a thing at lunch.
She's changed her tune...Don
Escondido asked her if I'd be
coming to the ball!

SEFLOVE
Oh, Miss!

MISS
He inquired about me specifically!
She told me so, told me all about
his preferences. You know what
that means??

SEFLOVE
What, Miss!

MISS
He's smitten with me, because
normally, usually, she can't stand
me!

SEFLOVE
Aw, Miss...

MISS

No, its the truth! She only tolerates me because of our daddy's, but listen, you're coming with me!

SEFLOVE

To a ball?

MISS

You don't have much time, go on and figure out what you are going to wear...

SEFLOVE

To the ball, Miss?

MISS

Yes, you heard correct. You are going to the Mardi Gras ball!

EXT. PLANTATION GROUNDS, LAKE - DAY (REFINE)

Standing in the lake, Seflove scrubs the dress she wears. She swirls a circle to rinse the dress. Her ragged and torn dress puffs up like a parachute in the water. She stretches her arms to send ripples in patterns across the lake's surface. Her hair mimics the rippling water by stretching into crinkles and waves as she opens her mouth to continue Anna's song. Out of know where Seflove screams like an enthusiastic rock star fan.

SEFLOVE

Godworksmyhands!

INT. WORKSHOP-DAY

The golden afternoon sun fills the small smith's workshop. GWMH sits in front of a pottery wheel smiling. His hands trace the shape of a globe as the clay spins underneath his cupped hands. The Don sketches in a pad. GHMS crafts Miss' crown and necklace. The room is silent.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

(Whispers to himself)

Gold... like the shinning light of Seflove.

GWMH places the clay globe into the kiln of fire. Later, lost in thought, GWMH layers hot yellow wax on top of the fired clay. He closes his eyes. Absorbed in thought, he hears Anna's voice.

ANNA (O.S.)

She is a star. Fell out the sky.

He smiles. GWMH pours liquid gold into a wax mold shaped for the necklace and tiara.

ANNA (O.S.)

Can you do that?

He blows to smooth and even the bubbling and congealing metal. Curled up in a ball in the corner, Don Escondido intently copies a drawing from an open book.

GODWORKSMYHANDS (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Let her eyes see light where there
is darkness. Let her voice be
heard when others are silenced.

An array of tiny colored jewels cover the work table. Godworkmyhand's fingers picks through the cut stones.

INT. WORKSHOP-DAY

MEMORY FLASH:

Godworksmhands and Seflove kneel close together on the workshop floor. Colored stones scatter in front of them. Colored prisms dance in Godworkmyhands palm as Seflove delicately places one stone at a time into his palm.

RETURN TO SCENE:

A flash of Pink Light shoots from his heart to his fingers. He picks a stone. In rapture, his face relaxes.

MEMORY FLASH:

Prisms of colored light splash onto Seflove's plain dress as the gems fall at her hem. They smile at each other.

RETURN TO SCENE:

Godworkmyhands holds his breath as he carefully places the stones in the tiara.

The Don turns a page in his book. The sound startles Godworkmyhands. He drops a stone on the table as the page drops. The sunlight hits the stone causing a colored prism to cast on the wall.

MEMORY FLASH:

The stones reflect prisms of colored light onto Seflove's face as she kneels on the floor.

SEFLOVE (O.S.)
Folks say they can breath life
into iron or gold.

RETURN TO SCENE:

GWMH exhales, The PINK LIGHT rises in his chest as he blows. Light moves through his arms to his finger tips. His face registers compassion and tenderness. With each change of emotion, he deepens the brilliance and color of each stone he touches. He sets them on the tiara.

GODWORKSMYHANDS
Cover her in a rainbow. Shine her
light down from the heaven. Heaven
always walks with her on Earth.

DON ESCONDIDO
You said something?

He holds a necklace with a cross between his fingers.

SEFLOVE (O.S.)
Ginya.

He smiles remembering the sound of Seflove's voice.

MEMORY FLASH:

Seflove moves forward to meet GWMH. The hem of her too short hand me down dress reveals her soft naked ankle.

SEFLOVE (O.S.)
Ginya. Ginya.

RETURN TO SCENE:

As he replays her voice his hands heat up to glow red. He places the necklace on the worktable.

MEMORY FLASH:

The back of Seflove's ankle. He kneels at her dress hem.

ANNA (O.S.)
What kinda serious, you mean?

RETURN TO SCENE:

The sound of sizzling. Steam rises as his thumb melts the thin metal to make a beveled imprint. Sizzling. Rhythmic staccato loop of Seflove's voice.

GODWORKSMYHANDS (V.O.)
I am somebody you ought to know.

Sizzling. A section of the necklace is dimpled and indented PINK by beveled imprints from his thumb. The metal glows with a PINK HEW. Sizzling.

GODWORKSMYHANDS (V.O.)
Ought to know.

The necklace lights up play an ascending scale as he waves his palm above it. He closes his eyes to isolate the sound of her breath. She inhales before she speaks. He exhales. The necklace vibrates a musical chord like a wind instrument. In his mind he manipulates time. Her breath sings a single word in harmony with the chord.

SEFLOVE (O.S.)
Ginya.

FLASH IN:

EXT. PLANTATIONS GROUNDS, LAKE-DAY

Seflove's torso emerges from beneath the surface of the lake. Her hair lays sleek next to her skull, then takes the shape of spaghetti sized waves that float around her like seaweed above the water's surface.

FLASH OUT:

INT. WORKSHOP-DAY

He closes his eyes to enjoy the change in the pitch and tone of her voice, as it follows the singing necklace.

SEFLOVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Ginya.

He shuts his eyes tightly closed.

FLASH IN:

EXT. PLANTATION GROUNDS-DAY

In a splash. Seflove re-submerges into the lake water.

FLASH OUT:

INT. WORKSHOP-DAY

GODWORKMYHANDS

You are beautiful. Brilliant.

INT. MISS' BEDROOM - DAY

Seated in front of the vanity mirror, Miss moves her head to different angles to admire the necklace on her bust. Frustrated, Seflove fiddles behind Miss' shoulders.

MISS

Latched the clasp?

Her fingers slip and slide over the smooth gold latch.

SEFLOVE

I am trying, Miss...

The back of the necklace releases a pink hue as Seflove's breath passes over it when she speaks. The sound of a high metal ring.

MISS

What was that!

SEFLOVE

What?

MISS

As much as this cost, it had better not slip off.

Seflove secures the latch. A knock at the door. They turn around to see Ms. Haberdasher waiting at the door. Miss almost knocks Seflove down as she stands at attention.

MISS

Good Afternoon, Come, let me see!

Ms. Haberdasher waves an elegant gown on a hanger like a ghost to Miss. Miss quickly catches the dress from the air.

MISS

Look at that!

Miss presses the dress against her in the fulllength mirror to admire herself.

MISS

Oh, yes, look at that!!

Her eyes sparkle with excitement. From the mirror's reflection Miss sees Ms. Haberdasher pass a package to Seflove.

MISS

Thank you. I'll open it. What else did I order?

MS. HABERDASHER

If you don't mind, Anna made a dress for the girl. I had hoped you let the girl accept it.

MISS

On whose time did she make this...

MS. HABERDASHER

On Sunday Miss, on Sunday.

MISS

Well, go on and give it to her.

MS. HABERDASHER

But, I was... I mean, she.

Miss widens her eyes and bats her eye lashes in outrage.

MS. HABERDASHER

Oh, course. Here you go, your mother wanted you to have this.

Ms. Haberdasher scurries out of the room, as Miss stares her down. Seflove holds the package dearly.

SEFLOVE

I bet it's a dress, Miss.

(dreamy)

One I can wear to the ball, to met
GWMH...

MISS

Who...

Seflove laughs self consciously.

SEFLOVE

The jeweler, Miss. Don Escondido's
jeweler...

With a tight lip, Miss looks suspiciously at wide eyed Seflove.

MISS

Well, open it up...

Carefully not to wrinkle or rip the package, Seflove tenderly unwraps the package. Impatient, Miss snatches the package from Seflove's hands. She quickly tears the outside package to shreds.

MISS

Let me see this dress!

Miss holds the beautiful gown up in the air. She sits and places it on her lap, spreading out the fabric over her own dress. Miss runs her hands along the intricate embroidered stitching that covers Seflove's gown. She turns red as she traces her hand down the front of her own satin gown, which is smooth without a single embellishment. Scowling, Miss stands in front of the fulllength mirror to place Seflove' gown in front of her own.

MISS

(mocking)

Yes, look at that!

SEFLOVE

(hesitant)

You like it, Miss?

MISS

Your mother has a lot of free
time...

SEFLOVE

Everybody has the lord's day off.

MISS

(bitter)
I am sure they do.

She hands Seflove the gown.

MISS

It is just not possible. You to
wear that, in front of Don
Escondido, with me at the ball.

Seflove sucks in her breath.

MISS

That is why we have laws for
slaves. Slaves cannot wear fine
dresses. Negresses must always
cover their hair. And love, slaves
cannot love. The law prohibits you
from marrying, why would you even
think of courtship? I see, this is
a grand mistake. I cannot take you
to the ball. It would be illegal.

SEFLOVE

But Miss, he says, he wants me to
fan you.

MISS

Well, what a silly request! Why
should he need to see you? I am
the ball guest. And I don't want
you to be sad, when you see this,
this slave you can never marry. We
just have to accept the way things
are, now don't we?

SEFLOVE

But, but Miss, you gave me your
word, as a lady. Ain't you
Christian?

MISS

How dare you!

Miss slaps Seflove across the face.

MISS

Question my actions! I am a fine
Christian woman!

She walks to her desk to sit down to write.

MISS

You can go to the ball. On your
own two feet. Return in time to
feed the slaves at sunrise. There.

She signs it elaborately.

MISS

Signed in my christened name! My
My Christian word. Christian
bond. Who would dare question if I
am a god-fearing woman!

Knock at the door.

MISS

Come in...

KEYS

Miss, we waiting on you. The
carriage is downstairs.

MISS

Oh, yes, daddy is allowing you to
attend.

KEYS

Yes, Miss. I'm gonna bring my
salve to the senior Master
Carrington. His bones, you know.

MISS

We might see Seflove at the ball.
She's in love you know.

Keys' eye bug out in surprise.

MISS

Oh yes! She going to walk all the
way to the Carrington's in hopes
of seeing some slave!

He starts to wag a damning finger at Seflove but halts when he remembers Miss' presence.

KEYS

She only liable to get in trouble,
Miss, best she stay home.

MISS

That is what I said, but she
insists on walking along that
thief infested road at night. I
can't help her...

KEYS

They always finding bodies on that
road!! Don't let her Miss! Your
daddy'd be awful mad she turn up
dead!

Keys flashes a challenging look at Seflove.

MISS

First she'll have to get past the
dogs, anyway. The dogs have never
let a Negro pass, have they Keys?

He shakes his head in furry at Seflove, as Miss walks towards the door.

KEYS

No, Miss...

MISS

Keys, don't keep us waiting.

Miss exits.

KEYS

(to Seflove)

You stay put, I tell you. That boy
ain't nothing but trouble. I
already told you!

(shaking his finger)

Don't even think about leaving
this house. You hear me!!

Keys slams door. Seflove talks defiantly to the door.

SEFLOVE

Like you somebody! You never did
nothing for me!! Sour old man.

Seflove studies herself in the fulllength mirror. She holds her dress against her body.

Seflove's P.O.V: IS A MONTAGE OF FLASH IN IMAGES.

She looks at herself in the mirror with curiosity as she positions the dress on her body.

MONTAGE/FLASH IN:

1. In bliss, Anna intently sews Seflove's gown.

SEFLOVE

You don't know nothing about love.
You so old you ain't got a mama!

She spies herself coquettishly in the mirror. She moves in closer as she studies herself from different angles.

MONTAGE/FLASH IN:

2. GWMH' eyes light up with attraction as Seflove approaches him wearing Anna's gown.

SEFLOVE

Old man, you so wrinkled don't
nobody love you!! And Miss; Gawd!

Seflove looks at herself proudly in the mirror.

MONTAGE/FLASH IN:

3. Anna, nods off to sleep by the candlelight, with Seflove's dress on her lap.

SEFLOVE

My mama been thinking on me
everyday, planning my special
dress, for me to meet my man! I,I
don't need none of you. For
nothing! Not a darn thing, I do!-

Furiously she throws the dress to the floor to fervently unhook the snaps.

SEFLOVE

You and that sorry girl belong
together! She ain't got no
friends... All you got is tired
old plants!

MISS'S PLANTATION BEDROOM-LATER

She opens and closes her eyes in the mirror. Seflove's P.O.V: Wearing the dress she is drop dead gorgeous.

SEFLOVE

Can't spend the rest of my life
with my eyes closed.(smiling)
Can't nobody stop the sun from
shinning, no matter what kind of
shades he puts up!

Her golden silhouette appears in the mirror. She snatches the travel pass from the desk to storm out of the room.

EXT. PLANTATION GROUNDS-NIGHT

The sound of her breathing as her cold breath materializes in the dark night air. The decorations on Seflove's dress dance and sparkle in the dark. A faint tinkling sound. Startled, she defensively turns around in fear. The darkness is silent: no one is there.

Frustrated, on the verge of tears, she almost sits down on the ground but remembers her dress. She hears a sound. She stops. The sound quiets. She presses against a tree, as Charles paces by on his nightly rounds.

Lifting her hem to keep it from the ground, she bolts forward with determination in the pitch black night. The chiming tinkling sound becomes louder. Ready to attack, Seflove spins around in a circle as the sound increases.

Sefloves P.O.V: refractions of moon light reflect from her decorated dress onto the ground each time she moves. The sound follows her movements. She quietly laughs-out-loud as she realizes her dress is making the sound.

INT. PLANATION STABLES-NIGHT

Yellow and green hay cover the long hallway floor. Seflove carefully steps over horse and cow droppings as she moves past empty stalls. Seflove holds her nose. A hen flies towards her, escaping an aggressive rooster. The screaming sound of goats arguing. She follows the moonlight on tip toe.

SEFLOVE

Come on.

Holding the reigns, she pulls a horse out from its stable. Ducks and geese scatter and scream as Seflove rides the horse out of the near empty stables. She races forward then quickly pulls the horse to stop.

FLASH BACK:

Bare armed Field Hand # 2, with lash scars on her shoulders, lifts up her skirt. She reveals on her ankle an old wound in the shape of dog's mouth, as it repairs like new.

FIELD HAND #2

My flesh! My run-a-way flesh the
dog ripped out--

END FLASH BACK:

EXT. PLANTATION GROUNDS-NIGHT

Slowly, she silently leads the horse to the front gate. The glistening nose of one of the seven laying pit bulls sniffs the air. In fear, the horse refuses to follow move forward. Two pit bulls lift their heads to inspect the air. With rubs and pats, she leads the horse away.

EXT. PLANTATION GROUNDS-LATER

The horse struggles with Self-love. She leads him to face the dogs. He neighs loudly as Seflove pushes him to gallop toward the gate. Suspended in the air, Seflove atop of the horse, they leap over the snarling, drooling, snapping dogs. The dogs jump at the hooves in the air. One by one the dogs are violently pulled back 25 and 40 foot long chains that bind them to the front gate.

EXT. PLANTATION ROAD-NIGHT

Seflove arrives at the fork in the road. Unsure, she go right. In the distance, glimmer of light floats on the path. Seflove slows the horse down, as the approaching light grows larger. She leads the horse into a bush off the path. A white man traveling with a lantern passes.

She continues to travel through the bush. She smells smoke. In the distance she sees the rising smoke. Five straggly dressed white men sit around a camp fire. She turns away from the smoke.

She crackles a branch on the ground. Hearing the sound, the men freeze, then run toward the sound. A man carrying a lantern sees Seflove.

STRAGLY MAN #1

A horse! Go catch it!

Running, the men fall over each other. Seflove moves slowly, trying to navigate silently through the bush.

STRAGLY MAN # 2

A slave!!

The men run faster with excitement.

STRAGLY MAN # 3

Hot damn!

Two men take out a large net.

STRAGLY MAN # 1

Be quick!!

They move low and quick to surround Seflove on the horse. Men throw rocks at the horse who rears in the air. The horse narrowly escapes the flying net which lands on the ground. Seflove shifts to rebalance and calm the horse. An invisible hand swings a tree branch. The sound of a loud slap. A man falls. Cora's spirit appears.

STRAGLY MAN #2

What the! Who hit me?

Seflove skillfully zigzags the horse away from the men who corner her in a circle. They reach and jump attempting to snatch the reigns from Seflove. Cora's spirit hits a man on the knee with the branch. The man falls.

STRAGLY MAN # 3

Who hit me!

Getting up angrily, Stragly Man #3 gives the man next to him a Charlie horse in the thigh. Cora chuckles.

STRAGLY MAN # 4

I didn't touch you!

A long branch slaps Man # 4's back. Seflove dodges Men # 1, 2 & 3. The men turn to the sound of the slap.

CORA (O.S.)
(whispers)
Get ready to ride hard.

The man with the lantern holds the light high. The men see a thick tree branch swing in the air as if moved by invisible hands. It comes crashing down on a man's toe. The branch waves in the air moved by invisible hands.

STRAGLY MAN #3
What the heck!!

Spooked, the men look at each other in agreement to run.

CORA (O.S.)
(to Seflove)
Don't ever do that again!

SEFLOVE
Grandma; where you at?

CORA
Follow my voice. Get back on the main road. Crazy fools is everywhere!!

Seflove finds her way back to ride on the wide main road, lit by the moon.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO CARRINGTON PLANTATION - DAY

The Carrington Plantation is grand mansion with lush grounds. The garden looks out onto a pair of French Windows which open onto the ballroom. Music plays.

In the dark, Seflove's dress sparkles beneath entrance of the wisteria covered archway. She walks next to the horse. GWMH and Alfredo stand near the carriages. GWMH notices the glimmer.

GODWORKSMYHANDS
Do you see that?

ALFREDO
Somebody sneaking in?

Seflove is clearly seen walking out of the shadows. GWMH and Alfredo run toward her.

ALFREDO
What you running for?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

She is why I came!

Alfredo runs faster.

SEFLOVE

Popi!!

They embrace. Alfredo stands back to admire her beauty.

ALFREDO

Por que estas?

SEFLOVE

Miss said I could come.

Alfredo distrustfully examines the travel pass and Godworkmyhands arriving out of breath.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

(to Seflove)

I have been waiting for you.

ALFREDO

Waiting for what?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

My master requested her presence.

Seflove smiles at GWMH. Alfredo frowns. GWMH hands Seflove the thread from Anna.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Anna asked me to give this to you.

Seflove admires the thread like a living miracle.

ALFREDO

Anna?

Seflove and GWMH admire the thread together.

ALFREDO

Que Cholera!

SEFLOVE

You met my daddy?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Sir--

ALFREDO

Go ahead, sit on that bench. Where
I can see you...

Seflove and GWMH sit beneath a tree, near a small
fountain. The low branches shape a framed canopy around
the lovers. In the background, costumed white guests
waltz pass the glass French Windows of the ballroom.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Your mother says you were born
from a star.

SEFLOVE

A star?

GODWORKSWMYHANDS

I told her I would bring you back
to her.

SEFLOVE

Hold on, hold on, I need some time
to study you.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Study me all you like...

He posses in various positions. She laughs.

GODWORKSMYHANDS (CONT'D)

(flirting)

You like what you see?

SEFLOVE

Not exactly sure what I am looking
at.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

You squint at any creature made
from God long and hard enough,
eventually you'll find beauty...

GWMH leans in close.

GODWORKSMYHANDS (CONT'D)

(challenging)

Come in and take a closer look... My
ugliness is what you really need
to see!

SEFLOVE

Your what?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

(bragging)

My ugliness is a fine thing!

Seflove crosses her arms in disbelief.

GODWORKSMYHANDS (CONT'D)

When I'm sad, I fashion something
beautiful to feel better.

He pulls the handkerchief from inside sleeve to shape a
luscious flower. She watches in amazement.

GODWORKSMYHANDS (CONT'D)

When someone I love vexes me, I
know to slow down, be extra
careful, the same as when I work
with a precious metal or gem, to
make sure I don't break what can
never be mended.

He reshapes the flower into a bird, blows on a wing,
hands it to Seflove.

GODWORKSMYHANDS (CONT'D)

If I had a gem of a woman, I would
always be mindful of her heart,
even when I was mad or hurt. If
you gave me your tears, I'd give
you back a pair of sparkling
diamond earrings...

SEFLOVE

That so?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Certainly.

SEFLOVE

You so high and mighty with ugly,
what you know about love?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

I love your freedom.. The light you
shine on me.

SEFLOVE

We shared all that, already?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

(Looks sadly)
You don't remember?

SEFLOVE

(enthusiastic)
Course I do... felt like my heart
was gonna burst!

GODWORKSMYHANDS

I saw you. You shine like gold.
Like a star...

She laughs.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

You have no idea how pleased I am
you are here. You are beautiful...

GWMH points to the starry sky. He speaks as they admire stars. He points to a single star shining bright in the sky. His words slowly evolve into a song about the depth of her beauty.

GODWORKMHANDS

That's where you came from, right
there.

He looks at her with admiration. GWMH points to the reflection in the fountain. In the water Seflove sees a dazzling show of lights. He gently moves her body from side to side to demonstrate she is the source of the colored lights. She laughs in delight.

He holds Seflove still. The light show calms to a golden glow. The glow becomes Seflove's face. Enamoured with her own reflection she twirls in front of the fountain. The light swirl and change colors. He leads Seflove to sit at the fountain's edge.

SEFLOVE

You see me!

Together, they gaze at their gold reflections. Smiling, he nods yes. He continues to sing. Images of Seflove and GWMH appear and disappear. An image Seflove and GWMH dancing at Congo Square appears in the water.

SEFLOVE

Look, you and me! Together.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Not the first time. I know you;
forever...

SEFLOVE

Forever?

GWMH' hand makes ripples in the water, dispersing the
image. She shivers.

GODWORKSMYHANDS (CONT'D)

You were not meant to be a slave.
If I had my way; you'd be free.
I'd take you up North.

She sways, mesmerized, drunk by his presence. Leaning on
the tree, Alfredo coughs loudly.

ALFREDO

(to Seflove)

Tap tap, no flack.

Together, Seflove and GWMH look at Alfredo as he stands
with crossed arms, angrily tapping his foot.

ALFREDO

(Starring down Godworskmyhands)
Vamos a ver..

SEFLOVE

(to GWMH)

I promised you a dance.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

So you did!

GWMH flashes an inextinguishable smile to Seflove, as he
follows her to the sound of music, toward the big house.

EXT. GLASS DOORS OUTSIDE BALLROOM-NIGHT

A gathering of good looking, young, male and female
slaves huddle in a circle. In the center, The
flamboyantly dressed slave MASTER OF CEREMONIES with a
BOB FOSSEY FLARE, pairs the slave into couples. He ushers
the couples to line up by the outside the doors. From his
peripheral vision, the MC notices GWMH and Seflove.

MC

Handsome couple! Look like you all
ought to be dancing! Don't be shy!

The MC motions them closer. Taking GWMH by the elbow,
Seflove leads him closer. They arrive in front of the MC.

MC

You all know Contra Danse?

She shakes her head no.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

I know it.

She looks at him surprised. The MC motions them to fall
in line with the group of slave couples.

MC

Master Carrington!

CARRINGTON

Ready?

GWMH laughs confidently as they stand in the line.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

It's very simple, actually quite
fun.

SEFLOVE

(worried)

How you do it?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

You just imagine you are the most
arrogant, self righteous white
person you can think of...and
then, mimic the way they move,
their whole attitude.

Unsure, Seflove looks at him.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

You know, walk like you have
something stuck up your rear, so
worried about your composure you
can't look where you are about to
step.

SEFLOVE

(laughing)

Oh, I can do that!!

GODWORKSMYHANDS

We can have fun and be silly about it...

SEFLOVE

White folks won't get mad?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

They are so self righteous, they earnestly believe, we want to be like them. Think we are trying to behave like them! The completely miss our joke.

SEFLOVE

Serious!

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Serious. It works every time!

SEFLOVE

My goodness!

GODWORKSMYHANDS

There is one tricky part. The violinists will change their instruments to drums, that's when we really dance; the way we like; for pleasure, with vigor!

SEFLOVE

(confident)

That's it?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

That is all there is.

The French Windows thrust wide open. JUDGE LAWTON, a handsome middle aged man, hands a drink to Miss.

MISS

Judge Lawton, you're too kind.

JUDGE LAWTON

Shall we watch?

Lawton directs Miss to the gathering crowd. The MC straightens his coattails to strut to the center of the ballroom. Carrington claps. The low hum of English and French chatter. White costumed men and women circle around the MC.. Carrington hushes the guests.

MC (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen- Le dames et le monsieurs,
Please allow me to present to you-
permettez moi sil vous plait, Our
gift and celebration - de vous
presenter notre cadeau et
celebration, of Mardi Gras, for
your entertainment - de Mardi Gras
pour votre amusement.

Guests clap with enthusiasm.

MC (CONT'D)

Enjoy - Aprecier!

The Congo Square musicians enter through the French doors dressed as European court musicians. The single line of men, including GWMH, enter along side the single line of women, including Seflove. The guests tactfully applaud.

INT. BALLROOM PARTY-NIGHT

Holding GWMH hand, Seflove subtly turns her chin towards him. She looks up from his shoulder to see the inside of his nostrils, as she looks down at her.

ALFREDO (O.S.)

You think I'm gonna learn
anything, besides what's up your
nose, studying you this close?

Seflove laughs out loud.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

What?

Smiling, Seflove widens the space between them. The lines of dancers curtsy and bow to each other with exaggerated attitude. Seflove butts the top of her head into GWMH's chin, as they bow to each other. He discreetly repositions himself and motions a slight diagonal change to her so they can bow again, without a collision.

The couples gracefully move in and out of each other. Seflove steps on Godworksmyhand's foot. He discreetly gestures with his eyes when and where to place her foot. The next step she avoids his feet. A haughty white couple approvingly point to the slave performance. Seflove and GWMH smile at each other proud of their teamwork.

Seflove and GWMH keep in step and time with the couples. Holding hands, they twirl in a circle. The room behind them becomes a moving blur. She pulls on his wrist. He meets her gaze to follow her as they both slow down. The blurring room refocuses behind them. They look into each other's eyes as if no else is in the room.

The drummers interrupts the violins. The rhythm changes to a saucy dance with gyrating torsos and pelvic thrusts. Couples inter-change, and trios turn into circles as individual dancers solo. Unsure, the white guests, look at each other, questioning the change in entertainment. A few guest tap their feet and bob their heads to the infectious music.

Seflove stops near the Bell Player to fan herself. She motions to a passing woman to continue dancing with GWMH. Surprised, GWMH obliges. Seflove's P.O.V: Godworksmyhand's dance partner bumps into the neighboring couple. He recovers her gracefully.

SEFLOVE) (V.O.)

Stop. Recognize. Remember...

In bliss, Seflove watches GWMH. He brings the neighboring couple and his new partner to tears of laughter with his apology. Overjoyed, Seflove applauds his behavior.

The Bell Player encourages the dancers with calls in Haitian Creole. Enthusiastic, Seflove yells back in English. GWMH claps and stomps to egg Seflove on. The Bell Player chokes on his own spit, as tears roll down his face, when he laughs uncontrollably at Seflove's sparkling authority. A party guests focuses her looking glasses on Seflove. A male guest takes off his mask to see Seflove better. Standing in the crowd, Miss spits out her drink as she recognizes Seflove.

The Bell Player initiates a flirtatious song of call and response between himself and Seflove. The guests form a tight circle around the slave performers. Livid, Miss pushes her way to the front. GWMH picks up a beaded gourd from one of the musicians. Miss' eyes furiously pop out their sockets.

Playfully, the slave dancers sing replies to Seflove and the Bell Players shouts. Proud and boastful, Seflove dances in place as she sings to the Bell Player's challenge.

In solidarity, two white women, BFF's, link arm and arm, as they gesture and chatter about Seflove's thrilling audacity. The two men standing on either side of outraged Miss, make room as she puts her hands on her hips. Master Carrington gloats at his party's success.

MALE PARTY GUEST

Impressive show.

CARRINGTON

We do it every year...

MALE PARTY GUEST

Sidney, I have attended your parties for the last fifteen years. You have never hosted an event like this...

Carrington and the Male Party Guest laugh. GWMH drops to his knees. BFF's P.O.V: GWMH shakes the gourd to the swaying rhythms of Seflove's multilayered dress. Like titillated Elvis Pressley fans, the BFF's clutch each other. Seflove uses her hands to gesture towards the Bell Player that she is gathering up a storm of rhythm from her skirt. Thrusting her hand open, she throws the sounds at him as she sings. GWMH shakes the gourd furiously at her rolling hips. Over excited, the BFF's fan themselves profusely. Angrily, Miss steps to the performance. A tall party guest stands in front of Miss, blocking her view.

Seflove lifts the hem of her dress to fan and cool GWMH. Playfully with her dress, Seflove calls GWMH to dance a solo. The white female guests move their torso's slightly off beat, like young 1950s AMERICAN BANDSTAND FANS. Seflove and GWMH dance together. The white male guests, move closer to the white female guests, who begin to move their hips to the drum. The white male guest rock to the music. Miss pushes forward. The crowd pushes Miss back.

The slave dancers form a tight circle around GWMH and Seflove. Enthralled by the show, the white guests, integrate the tight slave circle by squeezing in. Black and white on-lookers sway in unison as they watch the lovers. Two sweaty bodies squeeze into Miss. Disgusted, Miss steps out of the circle to slump on the stairs.

From the balcony stair case, Keys sees a sea of bodies in motion, black and white, costumed and plainly dressed.

MISS
(bitter to Keys)
Seflove...

He quickens his pace. Keys P.O.V: Seflove and GWMH dancing in the center of the circle. Angry, he rushes down the stairs to the first floor. He pushes past the wall of bodies with urgency. The musicians play the music from the Congo Square duet. Keys makes his way into the center of the circle. GWMH and Seflove dance their original CONGO SQUARE duet. The guests and slaves stand frozen watching. Key's mouth falls open as he halts.

KEYS (CONT'D)
(angry)
Seflove!

Keys P.O.V: GOLDEN SILHOUETTES SENSUOUSLY DANCE INSIDE THEIR BODY FRAMES. THEY COME CLOSE TO EACH OTHER BUT NEVER TOUCH. THEIR GOLDEN DANCING SILHOUETTES EXPAND INTO EACH OTHER'S BODIES WHEN THEY TOUCH FOR THE FIRST TIME.

KEYS
(amazed)
Seflove?

A white Male party guests turns to Keys to point at Seflove.

WHITE MALE PART GUEST
Seflove?

KEYS
(proud)
Seflove.

GWMH and Seflove stop, meet eye to eye at exactly the same moment. THEIR EYES FLASH A SPARKLE OF LIGHT TO EACH OTHER. The crowd's eyes sparkle with wonder. The Lovers bow. THEIR GOLDEN BODIES DISAPPEAR. The music stops. The sound of Seflove and Godworksmyhand's heavy breath fills the silent room. The on-lookers inhale and exhale as if one body, their gaze focused on the lovers. Miss stuffs her mouth with pastries at a banquet table.

MISS
Hussy...

Miss wipes her soiled fingers onto her dress.

MISS
Defiant little whore!

Miss eats messily, soiling her dress. A DRUNKEN WHITE MAN wearing a king's costume stumbles past Miss. He taps out the Congo Square duet rhythm on his scepter as he moves into the circle toward Seflove and Godoworksyhands. He dramatically throws his cape onto the ground in front of the lovers. The Drunken White Man gestures to Seflove and GWMH to step onto the cape. Surprised, the crowd watches.

COSTUMED KING
King and queen of the Mardi Gras
ball!

The crowd applauds and cheers. Shocked, Miss drops her full plate of food.

PARTY CROWD
The king and queen!!

MISS
What the hell!

Miss storms into the crowd. Miss's P.O.V: Happy Seflove under the adoring eye of Godworskmyhands.

MISS
What nerve...That dress!

Angrily, Miss marches toward Seflove. A party guest looks at Miss like a crazy woman. Miss stops to smooth her hair then screams bloody murder. Wailing hysterically, Miss points accusingly at GWMH.

MISS (CONT'D)
He entered my home! Broke the
locks. Carried her more than forty
miles from our home. (beat) He
stole my slave!!

Miss stands in front of Carrington.

MISS (CONT'D)
Ran off with my property to hide
her here at your residence, Mr.
Carrington. How will you correct
this wrong?

Doubtful, Carrington looks at the sympathetic the crowd.

MISS

Judge Lawton!

Two men recognize Lawton. Lawton disappears in the crowd.

MISS

Carrington!!

Carrington motions to his male slaves dancers to grab GWMH. GWMH escapes blows from the slaves by flipping backwards and rolling away in a tight Capoeira ball on the floor. As his hands fall behind him on the floor, he braces himself, then propels a kick into the chest of the man who stands above him. The drummers play a fight rhythm. Together, the white and black guest clap in support the call of the drum. The guest lean forward, gasp and make other sounds of support as GWMH subdues the attack.

MISS

Get him!!

Moving like a spider, hands and feet on the floor, GWMH swoops his leg along the floor. He hooks his ankle into the approaching slave's ankle. The slave tumbles to the floor. Spinning out to balance on one hand like a break dancer, GWMH kicks another man who falls to the floor.

MALE PARTY GUEST

(to Carrington)

How ingenious! You planned this whole show?

FEMALE PARTY GUEST

For a moment, I believed it true.

GWMH flies through the air, turning upside down to knock two men down with a swing of his leg.

CARRINGTON

The idea came to me from a party I attended. They had circus performers...

The entire crowd claps in exuberant applause as they step back to make more space for GWMH.

MISS

Stop it! Stop It!! (beat)
\$1,000! Are they worth that much
to you? Mr. Carrington! \$1,000
fine for harboring just one
slave... You are harboring TWO!!

Like a tennis match, the heads snap back to Carrington to see how he will respond to her brutal serve.

CARRINGTON

(to guests)

Excuse me.

Carrington steps across the long ballroom hall. Tentative, he slowly throws off his costume jacket and rolls up his sleeve to fight GWMH. A white woman covers up her eyes.

MALE PARTY GUEST

Don't worry, it is all a show.

The woman uncovers her eyes. Keys whispers to the slave next to him.

KEYS

He'll hang if he touches a white
man!

From across the room Seflove screams. Her scream becomes a musical note. The force of her voice stops Carrington in his tracks. Like tiny fingers, her hair unwinds her head-wrap from the inside out. Curious, the crowd moves into Seflove. She catches her breath in rhythmic spurts. She exhales. Carrington frantically moves in place as she blows on him like a fierce wind. Her head-wraps spirals and flies off like a tornado in the air. The crowd gasps.

Spitting out beats, Seflove scats like an African drum. A young drummer picks up his drum to accompany her.

BELL PLAYER

Let her solo.

The drummer acquiesces to his elder. The eyes of the party guest smile and sparkle on Seflove in awe.

BELL PLAYER
(to drummer)
She calling rhythm from a place,
don't nobody but her know.

Her voice and hair sculpt the air in perfect unison.

DRUMMER
From where?

Drummer's P.O.V: Her hair weaves into a million braids
that Hoover in the air.

BELL PLAYER
From what ever world she from...

Guest converse and confer like judges for American Idol.

PARTY GUEST #1
Lovely!

PARTY GUEST #2
Captivating.

PARTY GUEST #3
Rather regal..

Angry, Miss marches to stop Seflove. Seflove shoots out
her breath, in stutters, like a beat box vocalist firing
bullets. Miss falls, stands, then raises her hand as if
to strike Seflove. Seflove dishes out rapid Jazz scat
progressions that make Miss stumble backwards like an
onslaught of flamboyant pimp slaps. In slow motion
Seflove's braids climb into a Marie Antoinette bee hive.

SLAVE PERFORMER #1
Sass it up, girl! Sass it up!

SLAVE PERFORMER #2
Lord; Mercy!

As sound exits Seflove's mouth, the necklace on Miss'
neck, rings and vibrates. Miss frantically grabs her
necklace. THE NECKLACE HARMONIZES WITH SEFLOVE MAKING THE
SOUNDS OF A JAZZ XYLOPHONE. THE NECKLACE GLOWS. THE TIARA
TUMBLES FROM MISS HEAD ONTO THE FLOOR. Miss cringes like
the Wicked Witch of the West. She falls to the ground
grasping her neck. In misery Miss rolls and thrashes on
the ground. The necklace glows brighter. Guest watch in
frozen horror. Seflove sings a tender lullaby.

Miss sputters and chokes as if trying to spit out a bitter medicine.

GWMH

She is chocking on love. Our love!

Miss lulls into sleep on the floor. A flash of pink light radiates from the necklace to rush through Miss' body. Her body convulses as if in an epileptic seizure. She rolls over into fitful sleep. Sleep Montage:

1. GWMH and Seflove dance at Congo Square.
2. GWMH and Seflove admire the starry sky.

In vicious protest, Miss screams in her sleep.

MISS

Impossible! Slaves don't love.
They can't even feel!!

Violently quivers jolt and race through Miss's body. She huddles and curls into a fetal position.

MISS (CONT'D)

Nobody, nobody loves me. I am
nobody. Just nobody!

Miss weeps in her sleep. She wakes choking on her on saliva. Seflove's golden glow intensifies as she sings. Seflove raises her arms high above Miss' body as if she giving a benediction. The necklace smokes and sizzles around her neck. Miss screams. The cross on the necklace singes Miss' skin. GWMH claps his hands. The necklace falls to the floor. Looking down, wide eyed and in shock, the crowd gasps in horror. Crowd's P.O.V: black cross on Miss' flesh.

CROWD WHISPER

Sinner. She's tainted. Doomed.

Embarrassed, Miss fumbles to stand. In the French Windows she sees the cross imprinted on her flesh. She screams.

CROWD WHISPER

She'll burn. Go straight to hell.

MISS

I'm a good Christian!

A female guest costumed as a QUAKER kneels at Miss side.

QUAKER

Pray with me sister. We have not
loved our neighbors as ourselves.
Have Mercy on us lord.

Miss rests her head on the woman's lap.

MISS

I'm sorry.

QUAKER

Of course you are, dear.

GWMH holds his purse above Miss' head.

GODWORKMYHANDS

Purge your sins. Set her free.

QUAKER

Yes, Sister, repent. Set her free.

Miss sits to touch her black singed skin. Her white
fingers are stained by ash. Using her finger she marks
the black cross of Ash Wednesday on her forehead.

MISS

Forgive me, Lord. She is free.

He drops his purse in front of Miss on the floor. Seflove
smiles at GWHM. He picks up the tiara and struts towards
Seflove as if she is the only person in the room. She
only sees him.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

(to Seflove)

You are always free.

GWMH exhales over each inch of the tiara. The jewels
sparkle.

GODWORKSMYHANDS (CONT'D)

You belong with me, not to me.

Never again will you be a slave..

He gently places the tiara around Seflove's tower of
hair. The jewels light up in the crown.

GODWORKSMYHANDS (CONT'D)

My protection and love are
eternal.

Lights from the crown flood Seflove and GWMH in a rainbow display. The party guests jump up in jubilation.

KEYS

He's a somebody. That's for sure!

Cora's spirit appears. Keys hears the air swoosh quickly past his ear. He swats at the air near his ear, as if there were a buzzing bee. Cora's spirit laughs at him as she pushes him. Frantically his arms swat at Cora whom he cannot see. Party guests fall out of his way. He propels forward as Cora pushes him from behind.

CORA

Keys? Keys!

He totters off balance. Cora pushes him into Seflove. He trips and breaks his fall by grabbing Seflove's hem. The sound of clanging metal coins. Coins spin and splatter on the floor. The guests gasp. Haberdasher steps forward.

MS. HABERDASHER

Your mama saved them for you, to
be free. There is enough for two,
to be free.

SEFLOVE

My mama?

MS. HABERDASHER

I wanted to tell you.

Seflove drops to her knees to touch the fallen coins.

SEFLOVE

Mama!

Hundreds of gold coins fall out as she shakes the hem.

SEFLOVE (CONT'D)

Me...

Seflove's P.O.V: Sparkling gold. She holds her thread to cry over the coins. She looks up determined.

SEFLOVE

(To Miss)

Mama! My mama; how much!!

The Quaker helps Miss stand.

MISS

This is fine.

Holding her skirt like a basket, Miss deposits coins.

MISS (CONT'D)

She is free.

With conviction, Seflove stands.

SEFLOVE

Godworksmyhands?

DON ESCONDIDO

His hands are worth ten slaves.

SEFLOVE

He deserves a family.

DON ESCONDIDO

He has a family. He is not for sale.

GWMH storms to the opposite end of the room where the drunken white man sleeps sprawled out on the party floor. His leg slung over his sword like a lover. motion, GWMH pulls the sword from the sleeping man's thigh. He raises the sword in the air. The crowd gasps.

CARRINGTON

(to Male Party Guest)

This is no show.

GWMH grabs a burning candle from the wall. He dips the the candle flame into his open mouth. He exhales fire onto the sword. He quickly looks at Seflove for inspiration. With the dragon air of Bruce Lee, GWMH advances to Don Escondido. Don Escondido blanches white.

GODWORKMYHANDS

You choose to die for my freedom?

So be it.

GWMH turns the sword at different angels to breath fire onto the blade. Don Escondido shrinks in his coat. The blade turns from bronze, to red. The blade turns white as GWMH arrives a foot away from Don Escondido's face. Escondido cowers. They speak in subtitled Portuguese.

DON ESCONDIDO
I am alone. You are all I have.

The blade halts.

GODWORKSMYHANDS
Marry a woman.

The blade lowers.

DON ESCONDIDO
My life is meaningless.

GODWORKSMYHANDS
So you determine.

GWMH pulls back the blade like a batter up to swing.

DON ESCONDIDO
You owe me your life!

GWMH drops the sword. The flames extinguishes.

GODWORKSMYHANDS
And I will spare yours!

GWMH takes Seflove by the hand to exit the ballroom.

BFF #1
This is the best ball I have ever
attended!

CARRINGTON
Wait till next year!

DON ESCONDIDO
You fool. Stupid fool. You're
still mine...

EXT. FRONT DOOR CARRINGTON PLANTATION-NIGHT

Seflove wakes up Alfredo on his carriage.

SEFLOVE
I'm Free! You're free!

She places coins on his lap. Alfredo looks confused.

GWMH
I bought her freedom!

SEFLOVE

You shoulda seen me, Popi!

Perplexed, Alfredo studies them both. She hugs Alredo.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Knocking down her foes like a drum.

SEFLOVE

An uprising! That's for your freedom.

ALFREDO

WHAT DID YOU DO!!

GWMH

Come with us!

ALFREDO

Where?

GODWORKSMYHANDS

Up North.

ALFREDO

Diego, your brother. He's only eight...

SEFLOVE

You can't leave him.

GODWORKSMYHANDS

I am not free. We must hurry.

Alfredo takes Seflove aside to whisper.

ALFREDO

Do you feel your best self when you are with him?

SEFLOVE

Claro que si!

Alfredo laughs out loud as he embraces Seflove. Seflove and GWMH ride into the distance on separate horses.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS STREETS-DAY

The sheriff nails a poster to a wooden street post. Anna and Ms. Haberdasher carry bundles of material down the street. Anna stops in front of the poster. Anna's P.O.V: drawing of GWMH and the words WANTED/REWARD.

ANNA

What's it say?

MS. HABERDASHER

It's a high price on his head.
Dead or alive. It reads he
attempted to kill a white man.

Anna looks quickly into the street before she tears the poster down to stuff in her bundle. The street behind them is covered with wanted posters.

EXT. MS. HABERDASHER DRESS SHOP-DAY

Standing next to the armed Sheriff, Dons Escondido waits at the entrance of Ms. Haberdasher's shop. GWMH and Seflove wait crouched around the corner. Seflove leads GWMH away from the shop. Don Escondido tips his hat respectfully to Ms. Haberdasher.

HABERDASHER

Sorry, Sir. We are closed today.
We must stock our supplies.

Talking to Sheriff, Escondido points to Anna.

DON ESCONDIDO

That daughter of hers is a law
breaker too. She undressed her
hair in public.

Haberdasher and Anna squeeze into the doorway to slip past Escondido to close the door behind them.

SHERIFF (O.S)

Don't worry, Sir, we'll catch them
both.

EXT. CONGO SQUARE-DAY

Blacks sell, dance and mill about. Shrouded by a long flowing cloak, like Red Riding Hood, Seflove rushes looking for Anna. She moves in and out of gatherings and on the edge of conversations.

Fluid colorful skirts, sweep in and out of the crowd. Pressing bodies move forward. Head-wraps bounce above the crowd. Women smile and greet. A short heavy woman throws her hands up into the air to scream in exultation. A tall thin woman covers her mouth to jumps up and down. The women's eyes meet. The fat woman dances happy circle around herself. The women laugh and embrace.

The back view of Seflove's cloak flutters as she pushes to zig zag through the men. A few feet ahead of her billowing disguise, a single voice whispers.

CROWD VOICE MAN

Seflove...

Like dominoes, heads turn. Seflove's name echoes in a whisper of the crowd. The heads in front of her turn back to recognize her. The path opens up, to a row of vendor stalls. Anna sits sewing in front of a table of wares.

SEFLOVE

(screams at the top
of her lungs)

Mama!

Anna doesn't look up. Seflove's face cringes.

SEFLOVE

Anna!!

Anna looks up from her sewing. Her sewing drops to the ground as she sees Seflove.

SEFLOVE

Mama!

Seflove stands still like a lost puppy dog. Anna runs to her. Seflove lets out years of longing in one scream.

SEFLOVE

Mama!

Seflove collapses into Anna's arms like a wounded child. Anna cradles Seflove as she cries.

SEFLOVE

SEFLLOVE

(quietly, as if telling her a
thousand secrets.)
Mama! Mama!

SLAVE CATCHER #1 (O.S)

There she is!

ANNA

I ain't never gonna leave again.

SEFLOVE

We free mama. (beat) You and me.

Slave Catcher spots Seflove.

SLAVE CATCHER #1

His woman. Right there!

The crowd scrambles away from Anna and Seflove.

CONGO SQUARE MAN #1

Get Back!

SLAVE CATCHER # 1

Boy, don't touch me!

A gun fires. The crowd screams and disperses. Anna pulls
Seflove from the ground to run.

SLAVE CATCHER #1

Stop her!

Seflove stands like John Wayne preparing for a shoot out.
Seflove pulls off her hood and begins to sing. She pushes
Slave Catcher #1 to the ground with her voice.

ANNA

Child!

SEFLOVE

You give me that!

Hand in hand, Anna and Seflove run as the man recovers.
Slave Catchers 2 & 3 continue the chase. A slave woman
selling hush puppies throws a can of used oil in front of
the Slave Catchers. The Slave Catchers slip and fall.
Seflove and Anna exit Congo Square.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS STREETS-DAY

Anna leads Seflove sneak and hide in side alleys. The young Slave Catchers, follow close behind. Seflove stops.

ANNA

You can't make all that noise in
the street.

Seflove and Anna run. The Slave Catchers scurry over iron fences, cut through tropical flowered atriums and slip into court yard fountains. Seflove helps Anna balance over slippery wet, cobbled stone streets. A black STONE MASON unloading a wagon sees Seflove and Anna fleeing. He motions them to jump underneath the cover of his wagon. Leaving his work unfinished, he jumps atop the wagon, holds the reigns and clicks his tongue at his horse. The horse pulls the carriage away from the city.

SLAVE STONE MASSON

Where'm I taking you?

SEFLOVE

To the river.

Huddled, Anna clutches Seflove beneath the cover. The steam boat blows a horn. The boat's wheel rolls the water white with foam. The slave catchers run from top to bottom, on the ship. The wagon nears the river. The ship approaches the shore. The sun slowly sets. Seflove and Anna stand next to the wagon. Seflove takes off her hood to thank the Mason. A Slave Catcher from the docking ship recognizes Seflove.

The Slave Catchers jump to shore. Seflove and Anna sprint along the river as the first stars appear. The grove of trees slowly appears along side the river. The men grow closer. The steam boat whistle hollers again. GWMH steps from out of the trees. He holds the reigns of two horses.

GWMH sees Seflove and Anna panting towards him. He jumps on top of one of the horses. He races towards them, holding the reigns on both horses. Seflove trips and falls on her cloak. Anna scrambles to help her recover. The Slave Catchers close behind Seflove and Anna. GWMH swoops to lift Anna and place her to sit in front of him on the horse. A Slave Catcher almost grabs Seflove's cloak. She unties her cloak. It falls on the Slave Catcher like a net.

GWMH rides along side Seflove so she is sandwiched between both horses. Like circus performers, he takes her hand to hoist her in the air. Her foot on his thigh, she Balances on one leg as Godworksmyhand's steers the horse. Anna offers Seflove a second hand of support. Seflove sweeps her body on the free horse.

The horses kick up dust. The Slave Catchers fall behind. Seflove blows a gust of wind. The Slave Catchers cough and squint in a cloud of dirt. The two horses stamped toward the open horizon.

In the sky, a shooting star falls as in front of Seflove, as she rides forward, looking back.

CAPTION BEFORE ENDING CREDITS:

Congo Square, now called Armstrong Park in the City of New Orleans was considered sacred ground by the Houmes Indians. In the late 1740s African vendors began to gather at the site. By the early 1800s African-American gatherings numbered between 500-600 people. Congo Square is the birth place of the American rhythms of Jazz, Rhythm and Blues and Rock n Roll.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Taken

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts

by

Aisha Aku Jenkins

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Thesis Committee:

Professor Stuart Krieger, Chairperson
Professor Charles Evered
Associate Professor Nalo Hopkinson

TAKEN (stage play)

CHARACTER

Anna Ball: African-American, 15 yrs. old

Linus Chance: Irish-American , 25 yrs. old

Haddy/(O.S.) Stephanie: African-American, 52 & 32 yrs. old

Mrs. Jones/Mama Justine: African-American, 55 and 48 yrs.
old

Porter/Preacher: African-American 58 and 34 yrs. old

Police Officer(male)/Grandmother: white, 22 and 43 yrs old.

TIME AND PLACE

1918. New Orleans.

SETTING

Linus and Anna's home are comprised of five essential items which define the relationships of the play: a couch and bed where Anna and Linus spend their intimate moments, a rocking chair where Anna solidifies her maternal bond with Mamie, and a porch and kitchen table which are the gathering places of the women, in addition to being a solitary retreat for both Linus and Anna.

Traditionally in Southern culture the front porch/veranda is the key meeting place for community where as the kitchen table is the meeting place for familiars.

In addition to the home is the world of the street which includes a neighborhood porch and a police and train station which can be indicated with minimal lighting and sound. ** News events cited are factual.

ACT 1

SCENE 1

The sound of heavy boots climbing up the porch steps. Anna leaves the kitchen to tenderly greet Linus at the door. Linus enters physically exhausted from work. He places his keys and the mail on a table near the front door. Without exchanging words, Linus sits on the floor between Anna's knees. She sits above him on the couch.

LINUS

Ouch!

ANNA

What are you sitting on?

LINUS

It's in my pocket.

(He pulls out a woodcarving tool from his pocket as curls of wood chips from his back pocket fall to the floor.)

ANNA

I'll get those later.

LINUS

Almost finished that set of chairs I was telling you about.

ANNA

Oak?

LINUS

You should see the stain!

ANNA

It must be fine.

(He slumps back down to sit between her knees. She glides around and through his body to massage his arms and shoulders.)

LINUS

That's feels good. Yeah, right over there.

ANNA

Its not to hard.

LINUS

Just right.

(Facing each other they pause to almost kiss. Linus stands, then discreetly smells himself.)

LINUS

Gonna go clean up.

ANNA

I laid out a clean change of clothes.

LINUS

What's for supper?

ANNA

Catfish.

LINUS

Hot damn!

(Linus exits. Anna languishes, smelling Linus on her hands and finger tips. She enters the kitchen to take out spices to season the fish in cornmeal.)

ANNA

Oak, cedar...

Hush little baby don't say a word, mama's gonna buy you a
mocking bird

(Anna laughs at an inside joke as she
sings. The sound of sizzling oil in the
frying pan against contrasts against
water running in the shower Anna fries
the fish. She rummages through the
mail as Linus enters changed for
supper. Excited, she waves a postcard
in the air.)

ANNA

A postal card?

(He urgently grabs for the card and as
she playfully waves it in the air.)

LINUS

Let me see that!

ANNA

Where is it from?

(The wrestle with each other for the
postcard. He tickles her so she drops
the card. Anna recovers the card on the
floor to roll away from Linus.)

LINUS

Give me that!

ANNA

(playful)
Must be a secret!

(Anna runs away from Linus to examine
the post card. She shrieks in horror.)

ANNA

She's pregnant!

(She blocks Linus from taking the
card.)

LINUS

You don't need to see that!

ANNA

They brought children; watching; eating popcorn and cotton candy!

LINUS

Anna, I said give it to me!!

(He takes the card)

ANNA

Who would send you something like that!

LINUS

My grandpa.

ANNA

He follows lynchings for sport!

LINUS

I can't speak for him. When are we going to eat?

ANNA

What's he trying to say Linus? You living with a colored woman...

LINUS

I never minded him.

ANNA

What would he do if we had a child?

LINUS

Let's eat.

ANNA

You didn't answer me.

LINUS

I'd never let him near my child. Never.

(He sits down at the table and waits for Anna to serve him.)

LINUS
You cooking for an army?

ANNA
You seem to take care of it just fine.

LINUS
I do; don't I?

ANNA
Sure do.

LINUS
Why we eating fish? It's not Friday.

ANNA
No. We're having a baby.

LINUS
Hot damn!

(He kisses her on the cheek and proceeds to shovel food into his mouth without looking up from his plate.)

LINUS
Is there more?

ANNA
On the stove. Let me-

LINUS
I got it.

ANNA
Linu--

LINUS
These tomatoes from the garden?

ANNA
Um hum.

LINUS
Where's the okra?

ANNA

(sad)

In the oven.

LINUS

Aw (beat) you know I would have married you long time ago;
if it wasn't for the law.

(beat)

You pay what's her name?

ANNA

Haddy... She's been coming more than a year. I'll be on
the porch. Getting rid of that card.

SCENE 2

HADDY

I done the toilet. Where you want me to move next? Let me
pull down the laundry.

ANNA

Pull down the towels and sheets. I'll get the rest.

HADDY

Let me at least pull down the shirts and pants. I won't
touch his drawers.

ANNA

Pull in the linens and help me make the bed.

HADDY

I gotta keep remembering you from Happy-ville; not from New
Orleans.

ANNA

West Feliciano Parish.

HADDY

That's right... You know my other colored lady, she gets
dressed up special the day I come. Breaks out with a box of
chocolates, sits herself down, props up her feet; just to
watch me clean the house. Like a was a Vaudeville picture
show. But she got children....

She probably holding back tears of joy every time she see some body, other than herself, pick something up off the floor. You know he's gonna catch you.

ANNA
What are you talking about?

HADDY
Girl, how old are you?

ANNA
...fifteen.

HADDY
That's what I thought! Your hands look like you five. Your man paying me to come in here to keep them hands soft. Put that polish down. I ain't gonna put no curse on your bed.

(Anna continues to clean the house as Haddy helps herself to a plate of food.)

ANNA
There's catfish left over from last night.

HADDY
Don't nobody but me cook at my house. They all act like they can't fry an egg when I'm gone!

ANNA
Tomatoes?

HADDY
Yes, please. You oughta put your apron on before you shine that headboard.

ANNA
You're right.

HADDY
What you got to drink?

ANNA
Lemonade is in the icebox.

HADDY

I might get religious, too, if my man made all our furniture. But he didn't stitch them clothes...

ANNA

(playful)

He didn't make the house neither. You can mop the floors and clean the walls when you're done!

HADDY

I'm done now.

ANNA

Did you see the cornbread?

HADDY

In the breadbasket?

ANNA

Over the stove.

HADDY

So what's he like?

ANNA

Who? I'm not gonna talk about him with you!

HADDY

Suppose I'm happy I ain't never seen him. If he was sitting around here, I'd be looking for work.

ANNA

He's always home for supper.

HADDY

He never stop some place on his way home?

ANNA

No.

HADDY

Hmmm.

ANNA

Put something else in your mind while you're sweeping my floor, Haddy!

Yes, Ma'am.

HADDY

SCENE 3

(Anna's pregnant belly is large. Linus leads her to slowly waddle over to a wooden crib. He takes her hand to rub against the railing of the crib.)

LINUS

(exuberant)
He can stand up, teeth all over the thing. Won't a single splinter ever come in his mouth!
This space right here is for his name. I'm gonna carve it in wide lettering.

(Anna kisses Linus's hands then holds them to her breast.)

ANNA
I didn't know I wanted a baby.

LINUS
Me neither. I mean... I wanted a baby. I didn't know I'd find pleasure in it. It's like starting from scratch.

ANNA
(hopeful)
Anything can happen.

LINUS
(enthusiastic)
Baby's real different. I been making things all my life. Never felt like this.

ANNA
What's it feel like?

LINUS
Special. I don't know? (laughs) Anyway, wait 'till you see the rocker I'm making!

ANNA

At your shop?

LINUS

Yeah. I started painting it today. The paint came in this afternoon.

ANNA

I sure would like a rocker!

LINUS

Well, you gotta tell me when you need something. I was thinking you oughta start looking for a wet nurse.

ANNA

A what?

LINUS

Somebody to nurse the baby.

ANNA

Some stranger is not gonna nurse my child!

LINUS

She won't be a stranger. I had a wet nurse.

ANNA

What was her name?

LINUS

I don't remember.

ANNA

How could you not remember!

LINUS

It was a long time ago.

ANNA

Were you sucking on her teat?

LINUS

I was a baby!

ANNA

That is exactly what I'm talking about... I appreciate the thought, Linus. It's real thoughtful...

LINUS

You're gonna be tired.

ANNA

That's why God made the sun go down. So folks can rest and sleep. What color'd you paint the rocker?

LINUS

Don't-

ANNA

There's a fly on the wall! You see it?

LINUS

There a hole in the screen door?

ANNA

I don't know. Check.

LINUS

You already gonna be tired from having the baby.

ANNA

You tire me out all the time. You don't see me calling around the corner for help, do you?

LINUS

(laughing)

Damn; you're so serious!

LINUS

What do you think he's gonna look like?

ANNA

A baby.

LINUS

He'll probably look just like you. Get your wide eyes and olive skin! We'll have to call him Linus.

ANNA

Linus?

LINUS

You don't like my name?

ANNA

We already got one Linus in the house. It's confusing.

LINUS

His name is Linus Chance. No mistaking he's mine. Whether he favors me or not.

SCENE 4

(Mrs. Jones enters carrying a coffee cake and places it on the table.)

MRS. JONES

I thought you might be craving sweets...

ANNA

That's kind. I'm preferring salts.

MRS. JONES

Mind if I have a piece?

ANNA

No, here. Help yourself.

(Mrs. Jones lays open a newspaper on the table and proceeds to inhale the cake.)

MRS. JONES

There's a story I want you to read.

ANNA

Which one?

MRS. JONES

You look and see. It's on one of them pages. Bunch a folks got lynched in Georgia.

ANNA

Where did you hear about it?

MRS. JONES

Shirley Till told me about it, but I want to know for myself. She ain't nothing but a gossip! (Beat) Shoot! When I was young, I could look at things that close. Every time I blink, things is getting smaller!

(Anna gasps and makes a serious of shocked, surprised emotional sounds as she silently reads the paper.)

MRS. JONES

Even if I could read, I'd still be needing you to make out the words for me!

(Anna begins to cry.)

MRS. JONES

Women in your condition cry for no reason at all. You'll get used to it... What it say?

ANNA

They took a woman. Mary Turner. Says she was salty with the white men that killed her husband. She was eight months pregnant.

MRS. JONES

I'm listening...

ANNA

(crying)

They strung her upside down by her ankles. They, they (beat) cut her baby out. (beat) Stomped it on the ground.

MRS. JONES

Only white folks could be so evil! Who else could even think that way: sick. They just sick!

ANNA

One of the men that did it, he told the newspaper she "made unwise remarks."

MRS. JONES

Pregnant women don't know when to shut up. They always talking out they head!

(Mrs. Jones looks at Anna waiting for her to read the rest of the story.)

ANNA

Take this over to Edmond. He can finish reading it to you.

(Mrs. Jones doesn't move.)

ANNA

I said take it outta my house. Right now, Ida.

(Mrs. Jones eyes her unfinished cake.)

ANNA

Take the cake with you. I am pregnant. My taste is too salty...

SCENE 5

(Anna's stomach is flat. Her breast have increased three cup sizes. She opens the door for Haddy.)

HADDY

Look at you! How you feeling?

ANNA

Feel fine.

HADDY

Girl, you don't have to lie to me. I've had five children. You taking sitz baths?

ANNA

Uh hum.

HADDY

It'll get better. Let me see that baby!

(shocked)

Oh...

(regains her composure)
She sure is purty! Her daddy got white hair?

ANNA
Uh hum.

HADDY
He just spit her out! When she gets older, you can't be scolding her in the street. White folks libel to jump you.

ANNA
You wanna hold her?

HADDY
Give her here!

ANNA
Smell her.

HADDY
Babies are sweet.

ANNA
Even her diaper smells sweet!

HADDY

HADDY
Always put um down now and again. It's good for um to cry.

ANNA
It hurts my soul to hear her cry. When I'm holding her my heart feels so big; like my whole body is my heart. When she cries I feel about as big as a raisin.

HADDY
Your mama left already?

ANNA

(sad)
She couldn't come.

HADDY
Everybody's got to work.

ANNA

I don't know where she is.

HADDY

What you mean?

ANNA

I don't know. My daddy wouldn't let her take me when she left.

HADDY

She musta had a good reason to leave.

ANNA

I guess.

HADDY

Her daddy must be mighty proud she favor him.

ANNA

You would think it was his talent now. Spitting out babies. All this time he's been holding himself up for making furniture. He looks at her like her made her himself!

HADDY

It bother you?

ANNA

No...I like it.

HADDY

(beat)

Listen. You sit today, for a while, 'till you're mended. I can take care of the house by myself.

ANNA

No. You go ahead and start with the floors. I'll pick up with you after I finish nursing.

HADDY

Let me change these sheets. Looks like they ain't been changed since before I left.

ANNA

Here, let me put her down so I can start sorting the clothes.

(Anna puts Mamie down. Mamie sighs loudly. Anna runs back to the bassinet to pick her up.)

HADDY

Your milk let down when she cry?

ANNA

Umm hum.

HADDY

That'll change. Here, I'm here to clean the house. Let me do it by myself, just for awhile.

ANNA

Feels like she's still a part of me, like she's supposed to finish growing in my arms.

HADDY

That's sweet. Go ahead and respect that. You know what's right.

ANNA

But.

HADDY

I won't use no curse words while I'm shinning up your kitchen table.

ANNA

Can you sing?

HADDY

You ever heard me sing before?

ANNA

No.

HADDY
You don't want to!

ANNA
Come on.

(Haddy joins in as Anna sings to Mamie. Anna abruptly stands up when Haddy touches a pair of Linus' pants.)

ANNA
Here, let me do that!

(Anna puts down Mamie who begins to cry. Anna stops in her tracks.)

HADDY
She's only gonna be that size but once.

ANNA
It's kinda funny. When I hold her. I feel my mama.

HADDY
What you mean?

ANNA
Mamie takes me back. I'm holding her being myself; at the same time; I feel myself being held by my mama.

(Anna looks at Mamie with loving attention.)

HADDY
That's special. Go ahead and hold her. It's only dirty clothes. Next week it'll be different.

ANNA
Just this time.

HADDY
Just this time.

SCENE 6

(Anna sits in the rocking chair nursing and humming to Mamie.)

The sound of Linus' heavy boots as he climbs the front porch to enter.)

LINUS

(with excitement)
You shoulda seen-

ANNA

(without taking her eyes off Mamie)
Shhh. Can you take your boots off. They're too loud.

(Linus sits on the floor, next to the couch, as he takes off his boots. He waits on the floor for Anna to massage him. He picks up his shoes to exit.)

LINUS

I'm gonna go read on the porch.

(Shoeless, Linus enters the house. Deep in thought he watches Mamie nurse as Anna sings and rocks her.)

LINUS

Beatrice!

ANNA

What was that?

LINUS

The woman that nursed me. Beatrice. Her name was Beatrice!

ANNA

How did you remember that?

LINUS

I musta been two. I remember being scared; hiding in her blouse!

ANNA

What happened to her?

LINUS

She stayed on after I got big. Maybe five. I made too much noise at my Mama's card parties.

ANNA

I imagine you would.

LINUS

My granddaddy was visiting one day. He asked me what I'd done. I told him all the things I had done with Beatrice. Called her mama. Nobody had ever whipped me before.

ANNA

He beat you bad?

LINUS

Not so bad, now that I think on it. It was the look in his eye; like he wanted to kill me. (beat) What hurt was she went to work across the street. I'd see her every day; from across the street. Never said good bye. Could never wave or say hello.

ANNA

Why not?

LINUS

You know it is. I was too big to be acting like I didn't know no better. She loved me.

ANNA

I don't think a woman can nurse a baby and not fall in love.

LINUS

You sit with me?

ANNA

Of course.

(They cuddle together. He rolls his head at her chest and slowly begins to play with her blouse. Anna re-buttons her blouse.)

ANNA

I feel different now.

LINUS

You feel the same to me. No, you feel better. Kinda feel like a part of me.

(He nuzzles and pecks at her breast.)

ANNA

Feel like it's just for Mamie.

(She closes her blouse.)

ANNA

Once she is weened it will be different.

LINUS

(playful)

Bet it taste sweet.

ANNA

Linus!

LINUS

You don't sit with me anymore.

(Mamie cries. Anna smells Mamie's diaper suspiciously. She makes faces at Mamie as she turns her back away from Linus to change Mamie.)

LINUS

I feel like my heart is wide open.

ANNA

(to Mamie)

Let mama see...

LINUS

I watch the two of you; remember what it feels like to be little and loved.

ANNA

(to Mamie)

Oh, look at you. Look at you. You so cute!

LINUS

I feel thankful when I come home

MAMIE

That's the biggest one I've seen yet. Such a good girl!!

(laughing)

Look at that smile!!

LINUS

I got a home full of love, not like when I was a child,
and--

ANNA

Linus? Did you say something?

LINUS

Not a thing. (beat) Good you nurse her. Otherwise
there'd be no peace and quiet.

ANNA

She's a good baby.

LINUS

Can't stand this house! Can't step with my shoes on. Can't
get my needs met!

ANNA

Something you wanna say Linus?

LINUS

I just said it!

SCENE 7

(Anna lays under the covers of their bed)

ANNA
You coming to bed?

LINUS
In a minute...

(Linus stands behind the kitchen cupboard drinking a glass of scotch.)

ANNA
You can't come to bed like that.

LINUS
Like what?

ANNA
(Whispers)
Smelling like a bottle.

(He turns to face away from her.)

LINUS
I'm not breathing on you.

ANNA
What if I want you to?

LINUS
I'm asleep. Don't worry about it....

(Anna laughs. Linus mumbles.)

ANNA
You know, I can't sleep with you smelling like a saloon.

(Anna gets up, puts on a coat to exit out the kitchen back door to return with a handful of herbs)

Peppermint.

ANNA

(Linus rolls over)

I'm asleep.

LINUS

(Angry, Linus sits up to mechanically chew and clenches his jaws. Mamie cries in the bassinet. Anna quiets Mamie by bringing her into the bed.)

Oh hell!

LINUS

(Long silent pause. The covers ruffle.)

Don't do that.

LINUS

What?

ANNA

Not when she's in the bed.

LINUS

She's asleep.

ANNA

Leave me alone.

LINUS

You want me to leave you alone?

ANNA

That's what I said.

LINUS

ANNA
I'm gonna leave you alone...

LINUS
Good night.

ANNA
Go to hell Linus!

LINUS
They close early on Monday nights!

SCENE 8

(Anna paces the house waiting for Linus to come home from work. She jumps at little noises outside, expecting the sound of his foot steps on the porch.

The sound of his heavy shoes clip up the stairs, then slide and stumble back down, as we hear bangs and thuds. Anna urgently moves towards the door in stops and starts.)

LINUS
(off stage)

Shit.

(beat)
God damn it...

(beat)
Oh hell!

(Anna opens the door to help Linus stumble into the house.)

LINUS
Put me on the couch.

ANNA
You all right?

(Anna unbuttons his shirt and unlaces Linus' shoes then places a pillow beneath his teetering head on the couch.)

LINUS
I smell alright to you?

ANNA
You smell just fine.

(On the verge of throwing up, he breaths heavily.)

LINUS
Awww.

(Anna wets a cloth in the water basin to cool Linus' head. She moves to unbutton his pants. He pushes her hand away and tries to steady himself.)

LINUS
I'm alright!

(Anna tries to help again.)

LINUS
You think I can't take off my own pants?

(beat)

Shit...

(Linus struggles to stand to unbutton his pants. After many long deep breaths, he walks a zig zag line to put his pants in the clothes hamper, then falls onto the bed. Anna tries to cover him with a blanket.)

LINUS

I'm hot!

(With Anna attending him, Linus falls asleep.)

SHIFT OF LIGHT/MORNING

ANNA

(out the window)

Dewy...Dewy...come here. Take this penny. Go over to Mr. Chances shop. Tell his men keep working today, but he won't be in today. His stomach is bothering him.

HADDY

(off stage)

What you doing hanging out the window?

ANNA

Shh. Come in quiet.

HADDY

She sleep?

ANNA

No.

(Haddy sees Linus sprawled out on the bed.)

HADDY

What he got?

ANNA

He's just tired.

HADDY

Let me open the windows. Smells like bourbon in here.

(Linus moves in discomfort every time Haddy's heels click across the floor. He wakes up surprised to see Haddy in the house. Haddy hurriedly takes out the trash.)

LINUS

Anna. Why didn't you wake me?

ANNA

Looked like you needed to rest. I sent word to the shop. They expect you tomorrow.

LINUS

My clothes pressed?

ANNA

Just give me a--

LINUS

That's alright. I'll be back for supper.

ANNA

You mad?

LINUS

No, I'm not mad.

(beat)

I'm sorry.

ANNA

I'm not mad.

(They kiss)

LINUS

I'll be home for supper. You want me to pick up anything special?

ANNA

No, we got everything.

LINUS

(stops to hold her and look her
squarely in the eye.)

I sure do.

(From the front door she lingers to
watch him walk away from their home.)

HADDY

He gone?

ANNA

Um hum.

HADDY

What you want me to do next?

ANNA

Wash the clothes.

(Anna rocks Mamie and sings. Haddy
joins in singing while she sorts the
laundry.)

HADDY

(guttural sigh)
Ugh.

ANNA

What's that?

HADDY

Nothing.

(They resume singing.)

HADDY

What happened last night?

Nothing happened.

ANNA

Mmmm...

HADDY

(They resume singing.)

ANNA

(Anna resumes singing)
Ms. Ball...

Something wrong?

ANNA

Not exactly.

HADDY

What does that mean?

ANNA

Something's not right.

HADDY

Haddy, what are you talking about?

ANNA

HADDY
It ain't none of my business. You so good to me. I thought you oughta know. (beat) I been doing folks laundry for years. Men clothes.

So?

ANNA

(Haddy holds up Linus' pants.)

HADDY
His pants wrinkled and bunched up like that. You gotta put some weight on the material for a crease to hold like that.

In that one spot?

ANNA

You trying to tell me something?

(Haddy hands Linus' trousers to Anna.
Anna holds them at a distance.)

HADDY

He couldn't soil the pants on the inside and out. The print on the outside of the pants is as easy to read as a footprint. She was holding it, right there, a good long time to leave a stain.

ANNA

Watch your words, Haddy.

(Anna examines the pants.)

HADDY

What's on the inside, not the same as what's on the outside.

(Anna smells both the inside and the outside of the pants. She stands silent.)

HADDY

You alright?

ANNA

Here!

(Anna hands Haddy the pants.)

No. Here.

(Anna takes back the pants and hands Mamie to Haddy.)

Rock her.

(Anna ties the pants to the front door knob with twine.)

ANNA

Son of a bitch. That lying son of a bitch!

HADDY

He was drunk.

ANNA

Looked me square in the eye this morning and lied to me!

(She throws off the bedding and
struggles to take the mattress outside
as Haddy rocks Mamie and sings.)

Help me move this furniture!

HADDY

What we doing?

ANNA

Put her in the bassinet. Help me push the table up against
the door. Now take the end of the chest to block the
bottom.

HADDY

What you gonna do about the back door?

ANNA

Here, help me turn this couch upside down. Lean it up this
way.

HADDY

You crazy. What about the windows?

ANNA

He won't bust the windows. He can't do glass. His head
too big to call another man for help. But busting a Hendge
won't bother him at all... Help me lock the top of this
chair up against the door handle. Press the door in, while
I position it.

HADDY

He's gotta come in some time.

ANNA

The heck he does!

HADDY

We not cleaning the house today?

ANNA
I'm not thinking on this house!

HADDY

(sweating)
It's hot. You want some water?

ANNA
Pour me a glass.

HADDY
How'm I supposed to get out?

ANNA
Through the window.

HADDY
You think I'm crazy too!

ANNA
I think you're my friend...

HADDY
Sure enough. How am I gonna climb out? I can't jump down.

ANNA
He's got a ladder in the closet. We can prop it out the window to the ground.

(Haddy gives Anna a long questioning look.)

ANNA
I don't care. Let them talk about me.

HADDY
Mrs. Jones--

ANNA
She's got nothing better to do--

HADDY
The city's rubbing off on you.

ANNA

Naw, you just ain't never seen me mad.

HADDY

Steady the ladder. Pull it up against the house. You got it?

ANNA

I won't let you fall. Go ahead. Watch your stockings.

HADDY

You want me to come Tuesday?

ANNA

Yup.

HADDY

He can't come back in this house, I can bet you he ain't gonna be handing you no more money to pay me.

ANNA

Don't you worry about that.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE 1

(Linus stands at the front door. Mrs
Jones sits on her front porch.)

LINUS
Anna, open the door.

ANNA
(Through the other side of the door.)
Those must be your pants. You're the only man to ever step
foot in this house.

LINUS
Let me explain.

ANNA
You got my attention right now. Go ahead.

LINUS
Anna.

ANNA
Surprised you remember. You so busy.

LINUS
Anna open the god damn door!

ANNA
Say something to make me want to open the door.

LINUS
Anna, this is my god damn door!

LINUS

Anna!

ANNA

How come your pants smell like a bitch in heat, Linus? We ain't got no dogs in this house! Where you been? You tell me where you been and I'll open the door...

MRS. JONES

He got them shifty eyes...

ANNA

Lie to me some more Linus. Tell me these are not your pants.

LINUS

I pay for this house!

ANNA

I don't give a damn where you put your pocket. How can you stare me straight in the eye and lie to me, Linus?

LINUS

I didn't lie to you. I'm knocking this door down.

(He kicks and pushes with no effect.)

MRS. JONES

(Yells across the street)

Anna, don't you let that no count so and so in your house!

LINUS

Stay out of my business!

MRS. JONES

You the one putting your business in the street!

LINUS

That's why you don't have a man!

(Mrs. Jones laughs heartily.)

MRS. JONES

Last thing I need is a man like you! What you done Mr. Chance?

(Linus stomps to the back of the house. Sounds of banging against the door. He sits on the front porch.)

MRS. JONES

Anna; you need anything. Just holler. I'm right next door. It took time, but he showed you his true color...

(Angry, Linus storms away from his house.)

SCENE 2

(Anna scrubs the laundry in the backyard. She stops her work as if she has heard something.)

ANNA

Linus?

(Anna looks around for the source of the sound.)

ANNA

Linus, that you?

(Anna runs excited toward the house.)

ANNA

Linus!

(Haddy knocks on the front door. Anna freezes in the backyard.)

HADDY

Anna?

(Anna returns to the laundry.)

ANNA

I'm back here.

HADDY

You hard headed. I could be doing that for you.

ANNA

That's alright. Them white folks paying you more than I could.

HADDY

They not even paying me as much as you was. You know that! But that's alright. They give me car fare.

ANNA

You like riding the street car?

HADDY

You know I walk!

ANNA

Sure you do!

HADDY

Makes me nervous. Being hemmed up with all them white fools. You never know what might happen... Ain't no army gonna stand up for me, somebody snatch me off a street car!

(long silence.)

HADDY

I brought you some seeds from my garden. You gonna need some vegetables.

ANNA

Thank you.

HADDY

You too hard-headed, Anna. Next, you gonna be working side by side with me.

ANNA

You ever known me afraid to work?

HADDY

(said in a sing -song)
Anywho...I got to go pick my children up. My sister get mad when I leave um there all day.

ANNA

Thanks for stopping by.

(Anna sings to Mamie as she hangs the clothes on the line. She carries Mamie's basket with her from one side of the line to the other. She pauses to indulge in the smell of Linus' shirt.)

ANNA

Oak. Cedar. (nostalgic)

(Holding back tears, she buries her face in Linus' shirt.)

(Mournfully)
Hush little baby don't say a word, mama's gonna buy you a mocking bird.

(Anna enters the house. We hear her break down and cry inside the house.)

ANNA

Linus...

(She returns with dry eyes to see that Mamie's basket is gone.)

ANNA

Mamie? Mamie...

(Anna searches the entire yard.)

ANNA

She was right here... I know it!

(She retraces her steps from the house to Mamie's basket.)

ANNA

That basket didn't get up and walk away.

(Anna frantically over turns the yard.)

ANNA

I been standing in the sun too long.

(Anna circles the yard three times. At the beginning of the circle is the location of Mamie's missing basket.

Her repetitive circling is: 1) nervous and skittish 2) wild and out of control 3) in slow motion and methodically controlled.

Her movements are accompanied by 1) staccato inhales interspersed with 2) wails and screams 3) sharp random outbursts of internal criticism interspersed with long exhales.

ANNA

(Whispers tenderly into the corners of the yard after first circle of yard.)

Mamie. Mamie.

(chants as if a prayer, into the fence after her second circle.)

Mamie.

(Condemning as if Mamie is in trouble, after her third circle.)

ANNA

Mamie.

(Slow sustained exhales accompany Anna's gestures to gather herself. Anna's body is violently triggered by Mrs. Jones' remarks which express Anna's banter of internal dialogue and conflict.)

MRS. JONES (OFF STAGE)

Only white folks could be so evil.

ANNA
Hot head do you no good. Slow, Anna.

MRS. JONES (OFF STAGE)
Who else could even think that way?

ANNA
Slow it down. You know how to handle this. Handle this.

MRS. JONES (OFF STAGE)
Sick.

ANNA
Who would take a child!

MRS. JONES (OFF STAGE)
It's just sick!

ANNA
(blood curdling scream)
Mamie!

MRS. JONES

(from her open window)
What happened!

ANNA

(frantic)
Mamie's gone!

MRS. JONES
She can't get up and walk away.

ANNA

(crying)
Search the block!

MRS. JONES

(calming)
Where'd you leave her?

ANNA

(searching the neighborhood)
Right here! You go over to the school. I'll go over by the shop.

(Mrs. Jones crosses into the yard.)

MRS. JONES

(takes Anna by the hand)
Show me where you left her.

ANNA

(running into the street)
Meet you on my porch.

(They exit)

SHIFT OF LIGHT, LATER THAT DAY

(Anna waves a postcard as she walks towards Mrs. Jones)

MRS. JONES

Somebody stole two a Mr. Tom's chickens; overturned his garden. The boys playing near the tracks saw two white boys, they ain't never seen before, running off with a big sack--

ANNA

Look what I found!

MRS. JONES

A postal card? That's sick!

ANNA

It was hiding in the bushes, near the fence. It's a calling card.

MRS. JONES

What's it say?

ANNA

Good times! Grandpa...

MRS. JONES

Who the hell's Grandpa would leave you a card with a Negro strung up on it?

ANNA

Linus'.

MRS. JONES

He know about your baby?

ANNA

I gotta get Linus!

MRS. JONES

You better get that white man to talk to the police.

ANNA

How am I gonna tell him?

MRS. JONES

I'll walk you.

ANNA

I can walk myself.

MRS. JONES

They're probably waiting to find you alone. Don't be a fool!

SCENE 3

Setting: Linus' shop.

(Mrs. Jones follows behind as Anna enters Linus' shop.)

LINUS

Get that witch off my property.

(Anna motions to Mrs. Jones to wait outside.)

LINUS

You bring her here to make a scene at my business? Want to send away all my customers? Is that what you wanna do?

I'm sorry, Linus. ANNA

You need something? LINUS

No. ANNA

Why did-- LINUS

Yes. (beat) Mamie's gone. ANNA

Wha- LINUS

She needs you to go to the police! MRS. JONES (OFF STAGE)

What the hell? LINUS

Ida! ANNA

She put you up to this! LINUS

I swear Linus, Mamie is gone! ANNA

I've spent too many years building this business up. You and this, this witch are not gonna pull my name down! LINUS

Your grandfather-- ANNA

He's got nothing to do with this! I never thought, would have never thought; until you did what you did, keeping me outta the house; acting like you lost your mind... LINUS

MRS. JONES (OFF STAGE)

She--

(Anna slams the front door closed)

ANNA

Since the baby, when I get mad, I just can't help it...

LINUS

You can't help a whole lot of thing; especially me. You don't think about anybody but yourself.

ANNA

I think about you everyday... You and Mamie. Don't you think about Mamie; me and Mamie?

(He starts to lead her to the door.)

LINUS

You threw me out like common trash.

(She pulls on him, pleading.)

ANNA

Your grandfather sent two boys to take Mamie!

LINUS

Trying to use a baby; to get back at me! You're low down Anna, low down!

ANNA

But Linus, Linus, I swear to god. They took her!

(Mrs. Jones knocks on the door.)

MRS. JONES

Anna ?

LINUS

This is her idea, to get me to go to the police? Tell me, Anna, isn't it!

ANNA

Doesn't matter who's idea it was, Linus, Mamie's gone!

MRS. JONES (OFF STAGE)

(worried)

Anna?

LINUS

(to Mrs. Jones)

Get off my property before I call the police on you!

ANNA

But Linus?

MRS. JONES (OFF STAGE)

Showing your color again, Mr. Chance?

(Linus leads Anna to the door. He opens the door.)

LINUS

(to Mrs. Jones)

Take your black ass off my property! I'm not gonna tell you again!

(Mrs. Jones pulls on Anna.)

MRS. JONES

Come on, Anna!

(Anna reaches to Linus.)

ANNA

Linus?!

(Linus closes the door. Anna cries.)

ANNA

(screams and pushes Ida away)
Leave me alone!

MRS. JONES

Bu--

ANNA

You've done plenty!

MRS. JONES

Listen here--

ANNA

Let me be Ida. Go on home!

SCENE 4

Setting: Train Station and neighborhood porches.

PORTER

We collected 500 more petitions right here at my station.
James Weldon took um to President Wilson!

ANNA

That so!

PORTER

You know we never sleep on these cars! Best thing we do is
carry the news in the colored cars.

ANNA

That's why I'm here.

PORTER

What ya need?

ANNA

I need you to spread the word, on all the cars. Two little
white boys took my baby.

PORTER

What they look like?

ANNA

Can't exactly say. They are not yet men, kinda of scraggly, carrying a big sac, big enough to hide a child.

PORTER

I know what she looks like. We'll touch every bag that boards a train, spread the word on all the rails.

ANNA

I appreciate it.

PORTER

Who you need to talk to is Mama Justine. She heads every woman's committee in the city. Tell her you're Jessie's sister.

ANNA

You th--

(The Porter uncomfortably stares at blouse.)

PORTER

Everybody wants to help. She heard about you already. She stays over on the same street as Pastor Tousant. Here, take my coat.

ANNA

I'm not cold.

PORTER

(discrete, protective)
You soiled your blouse.

ANNA

(innocent)
What?

PORTER

Your milk is running down.

SHIFT OF LIGHT AS ANNA WALKS

(Anna tentatively paces in front of the entrance of the police station.)

The Police officer bumps into Anna as he exits the station. He almost knocks her to the ground.)

POLICE OFFICER

Girl! (beat) You better watch where you're going!

(Anna recovers to continue to Mama Justine's.)

SHIFT OF LIGHT AS ANNA WALKS

MAMA JUSTINE

Afternoon?

ANNA

How do you do. I am Jessie Ball-- Jessie Moore's sister.

MAMA JUSTINE

Oh child, hand me your coat. Come on in!

(Anna buttons up her coat and sits on a porch chair.)

ANNA

Such a nice porch...

MAMA JUSTINE

Your brother was a fine man, the way he defended that woman... The way the police dragged her out her home! My women's club, we turned in 300 petitions to the NAACP. They had no right to hang Jessie or put those soldiers in jail. Wilson maybe president but he's not much of a man, not half the man your brother was, God rest his soul.

ANNA

I'm here for my child. You're the head of so many clubs and committees. I knew if anyone could help me, if anyone could ease the pain in my heart, it would be you.

MAMA JUSTINE

Well child, don't take your time, tell me what happened!

ANNA

Two white boys took my child. Came over into my yard and stole her while my back was turned.

MAMA JUSTINE

You know who they are?

ANNA

No. But I know who sent them.

MAMA JUSTINE

What!

ANNA

Her father's granddaddy.

MAMA JUSTINE

Who would be so evil?

ANNA

He's white.

MAMA JUSTINE

Oh.

(long silence.)

MAMA JUSTINE

The only thing white folks love more than blood or liquor is money. You offer a big enough sum, they'll be shooting each other to bring your child back.

ANNA

I have about fifteen dollars.

MAMA JUSTINE

You need a hundred or so to bring folks out of the wood work and forget their color. My card club has been planning a luncheon, to raise funds for school supplies. I'll bring it up, but I am sure everyone will agree, the children can share books till we find your child. Is it a boy or a girl?

ANNA

A girl.

MAMA JUSTINE

Pass by tomorrow. Anybody else you can ask?

ANNA

Her daddy. He'll give a good portion to find her.

MAMA JUSTINE

Bring it when you come. We'll put it in the fund. We can post the news right away. But they'll have to go through the bank and my husband, an attorney, before they get any cash. They can meet Simone at his office if they have any news. They don't get a cent unless it leads to something. They can sign on it. You talk to Pastor Tousant?

ANNA

Tonight at church.

MAMA JUSTINE

He's my neighbor. Lives in the yellow house next door. I bet you he's at home!

(Anna knocks on Tousant's front door.)

PASTOR TOUSANT

I haven't seen you since, the Easter pic nic! What was that, a year ago?

(condemning)

More than a year ago?

ANNA

Yes, Sir.

PASTOR TOUSANT

I heard you had a child! Baptized her over with the Catholics.

ANNA

That's her father.

PASTOR TOUSANT

How you think Christ gonna feel about that? You resting with him in the after life and your daughter sitting with her father in Purgatory? That's where they go isn't it?

ANNA

What you mean, brother?

PASTOR TOUSANT

Them Catholics living in sin; they don't go straight to hell, do they?

ANNA

She has his name.

PASTOR TOUSANT

And I know. He can't marry you. We understand that.

ANNA

Its not that simple.

PASTOR TOUSANT

And he won't let you come to service alone? No, I guess not...

ANNA

But I was planning on coming tonight. I was going to wait till after the meeting, but I figured, it being an emergency and all...

PASTOR TOUSANT

That's what I'm here for. You need ministering...Give me your hands.

ANNA

They stole my child!

PASTOR TOUSANT

Who?

ANNA

Two white boys.

PASTOR TOUSANT

First the lord takes your brother. Now your child. He's testing you so you can be a better woman.

PASTOR TOUSANT

Give me your hands. Lets pray. "The right hand of the Lord hath covered me" Myyyyyy, they sure are soft.

(He fondles her hand)

"The right hand of the Lord hath spared us."

(He touches her forearm.)

"The arm of the Lord hath saved us from the sword that passed through, from famine and the death of sinners."

(Anna pulls back her arm. He grips her hand.)

That man you with, he told the police?

ANNA

He's gone, Sir.

PASTOR TOUSANT

Come into the arms of God.

(embraces her with too much familiarity.)

" Faithful is the lord to them that love Him in truth."

Oh yes; Sweet Jesus! You have a warm soul. A real warm soul... I can feel it, Anna. Christ has not left your bosom.

ANNA

(untangling herself from his embrace.)

Pastor. (beat) Can you mention it at your meetings? Ask them to keep an eye out for a white haired baby. Less than a year old. About so big. She turns her head when you say Mamie.

PASTOR TOUSANT

(Unsuccessfully, he attempts to take her hand again.)

We'll pray on it tonight! I'll tell my ladies group. They'll have all the groups praying for your girl.

ANNA

Pastor--

PASTOR TOUSANT

(Preaching with loud enthusiasm)

I'm gonna talk to God on it myself!

(He takes her hand again.)

Special for you. To bring your daughter back safe from harm.

ANNA

I was hoping--

PASTOR TOUSANT

It's in the hands of God. The Lord will make it right!

ANNA

I was hoping we could get a group a men, from the congregation, to go out and search for Mamie on the other side of the tracks.

PASTOR TOUSANT

(patronizing)

Your child's gone. Your man done left you! You not thinking straight.

ANNA

No. I think it's the best plan. To go send a group a men out to search for Mamie.

PASTOR TOUSANT

(condescending)

You are not in your right mind. Standing on my porch. Telling me what to do. (beat) I heard about them Catholics! They women rule they house.

ANNA

I can't go alone.

PASTOR TOUSANT

I am a soldier of the Lord. Not a fighter in the street. Wilson made it clear Niggahs can fight overseas but not at home. (beat) This is not the post to put your plea. Go on home. You too pretty to look so tired.

ANNA

But Pastor--

PASTOR TOUSANT

(condemning)

Go on home. I'm gonna pray for you. Living in sin. I'm gonna pray for the burdens you done placed on that child.

SCENE 5

LINUS SHOP

(Anna approaches Linus' shop. The sign says closed. She opens the door and enters. The shop is empty. Surprised. She hears Linus' labored breath.)

ANNA

You alright?

(Concerned, Anna urgently moves closer to the closed supply room door. From behind the closed door she hears Linus' breath/groans in-concert with a females'.

Anna breaks down into tears as she runs out the door.

Tormented Anna stands outside Linus' shop as she struggles to move past the negative banter in her head.)

LINUS (OFF STAGE)

I wanted a baby. I didn't know I'd find pleasure in it. It's like starting from scratch.

ANNA (OFF STAGE)

(hopeful)

Anything can happen.

LINUS (OFF STAGE)

(enthusiastic)

Baby's real different. I been making things all my life. Never felt like this.

ANNA (OFF STAGE)
What's it feel like?

LINUS (OFF STAGE)
Special. I don't know...

(Anna storms into the shop to quickly steal Linus's cash box as he and the woman loudly climax in orgasm.)

SCENE 6

(Anna joins Haddy who sits on her front porch. Anna uncomfortably scratches and repositions her breast periodically throughout the conversation.)

HADDY
Where you been? I thought you'd be home once it got dark.

ANNA
Looking for Mamie. She--

HADDY
I heard. Everybody's talking about it. Everybody knows. Woman I walk home with told me all about it. She heard about it way on that side of town. I know you hard-headed, but you gotta smooth things out with Linus.

ANNA
I went to talk to Mama Justine.

HADDY
I didn't know you was that highfalutin. How you know her?

ANNA
I--

HADDY
You knocked on her door looking like that? Gotta squeeze that milk out. You ain't never been away from her long enough to need to... It's good for a child to cry at home first.

ANNA
What are you saying!

HADDY

(apologetic)

I didn't mean it like that.

ANNA

Today was the first day I walked a block without her in my arms.

HADDY

Fell good?

ANNA

It was unnatural. My feet didn't feel heavy and solid on the ground. You'll talk to the women who work near you?

HADDY

Sure.

ANNA

Justine said they'd raise a reward.

HADDY

I'll ask um all. I woulda gone to Pastor Tousant.

ANNA

I did.

HADDY

You left the meeting early? Use a warm compress. Go ahead in the house.

ANNA

I stopped by his house.

HADDY

Where'd you get that idea!

ANNA

Mama Justine's his neighbor.

HADDY

You ain't that woman. You shoulda had her go ask him for you!

ANNA

(regretful)
I know. I had planned-

HADDY

You shoulda gone to that prayer meeting, swayed and shouted amen to every part of his performance. That man love attention more than a child! When was the last time you tithed with him?

ANNA

It was last--

HADDY

And you went knocking on his front door!

ANNA

I can get Mama Just--

HADDY

Naw, you already showed him your tattered drawers. Ain't no going back now. He hold a grudge worse than a woman!(Beat) Stop scratching like that! You making me itch! You're gonna swell up like a hot air balloon, then your flesh is gonna get as hard and tight as pig's skin. Go on up in the house.

ANNA

If I let my milk go to waste I'd be saying Mamie's not coming home. I couldn't do that.

HADDY

You got too many feelings, Anna. They not helping you at all. Look where it got us! Mamie's gone and I'm working for white folk. You gotta go talk to her father. He's the one to help you now.

(Distraught, Anna stares off into space.)

HADDY

Let me roll you one.

(Anna watches Haddy roll. Haddy lights the cigarette then hands it to Anna. Anna takes a long drag.)

ANNA
He already told me no.

HADDY
WHAT?

(They pass the cigarette back and forth.)

ANNA
He got some woman living up there with him in his shop.

HADDY
A white snake will bite you same as a black one...

ANNA
He never wanted Mamie. I knew. (beat) When I told him she was coming, he just kept putting food in his mouth.

HADDY
You didn't force him.

ANNA
It was his idea!

HADDY
My sister had a man like that. All he ever talked about was wanting a child. The day she told him she was carrying his, he got up, said he was going for a soda. Never came back. Left all his clothes, all his belongings, right there in the house. He lives on the other side of town. Never once came by to see the child. Men will do anything to have relations. My cousin just got baptized last week for some woman. He's afraid of water and don't believe in God. How you feeling?

(Unfastening her bra beneath her blouse to rub her breast.)

ANNA

I stopped being mad at my mama.

HADDY

I didn't know you were harboring any ill feelings.

ANNA

I'd always been mad she left me.

HADDY

Thought she left you're daddy and he wouldn't let you go?

ANNA

I always thought she coulda done something. Coulda fought. Coulda taken me with her. My daddy did two terms in the Senate. They don't piss in town until he say so.

HADDY

She couldn't do a thing.

ANNA

Now I know what it feels like, to have a child and have no authority.

HADDY

She musta had a good reason to leave.

ANNA

Imagine so. She was barely as old as me. You think I'm a sinner?

HADDY

(laughs heartily)

He tell you, you was gonna burn in hell?

ANNA

Who?

HADDY

Tousant. You going to hell? He'll be standing at the gate! There ain't nothing you can do tonight. You gotta sleep. Start fresh tomorrow. I'll tell everyone I see, what she look like. I gotta get home. I can hear my sister cursing me right now!

ANNA

(laughing)
Your ears burning?

HADDY

Shit. I can hear my boys running around tearing up her house. It's late. Here, let me roll you one before I go. They gonna hurt so bad you won't be able to scratch um no more, I'm telling you... Keep the these.

(Haddy hands Anna the matches.)

ANNA

I'll see you later.

HADDY

Alright.

ANNA

(talks to the stars)
You know me. I don't lie. I don't cheat... If I've ever done anything, anything, that needs correcting...You tell me how. And I'll do it.

(beat)
Not a church I can walk into and marry him in. You know that!

(beat)
You seen her.... She's too little to carry my burdens. I don't believe that... I know you want nothing but goodness...

(beat)
If you're going to listen to anyone on this situation, it ought to be me....

(fondles her belly.)
You give her to me, right here. I do my best to watch over and protect her.

(beat)

If you didn't trust me... Why'd you give her to me? You didn't warn me...

(Anna lights up the cigarette and contemplates the stars in silence.)

He's a grown man and can take his own punishment!!

MRS. JONES

(off stage)
Anna, you alright?

ANNA
Leave me be, Ida!

ANNA
(whispers emphatically)
Nobody will EVER do for her. The way I do.

(angry)
You weren't watching. You didn't see her!! How could you not see that?

(beat)
(apologetic)
I'm tired... I sit out here any longer. I'm gonna say something I can't take back.

(Anna goes inside the house to remember her good times one the couch with Linus and to sooth herself as she holds Mamie's empty blanket as she rocks in the rocking chair. She rocks herself to sleep in the rocker.

She turns and jams her breast against the hard chair to scream in pain.

Groaning in agony, in dim light, she expresses her milk into a bowl.

Anna cries uncontrollably.

ANNA

(repeat)

Mamie. Mamie.

SCENE 7

Setting: Front porches and Train Station.

(Wearing the same dress from the day before, hair uncombed, rushed- Anna arrives at Mama Justine's door.)

(Anna hands Mama Justine an envelope)

ANNA

Two hundred dollars!

MAMA JUSTINE

You got two hundred dollars from her father?

ANNA

Sure did!

MAMA JUSTINE

Well, isn't that something! We can post this right now. Even a white doctor will try to recall what he's seen for two hundred dollars! I have news for you. A daughter of a woman from my knitting circle came by in the evening. They heard about your girl...The white woman the daughter cleans for has her ladies' group over on Thursdays. While the girl was serving lunch, she overheard the ladies laughing and joking about this one poor woman, married to a man who could only give her sons. They say she's crazy. For eight years now she's been trying to have a little girl! She crocheted all the blankets and sewn a cupboard full of new born dresses, embroidered with flowers, covered with ribbons. Yesterday morning; one of the women saw her buying yellow fabric, too much for a new born, not enough for a grown woman. The ladies laughed till they cried. One woman lost her bladder; left a stain on the chair.

ANNA

A woman like that is liable to do anything...

MAMA JUSTINE

Sounds like she already did it. Or at least paid some boys to do it for her.

ANNA

Who is she?

MAMA JUSTINE

A simple woman who cleans her own house.

ANNA

I could offer to clean her house for free, for a week. Tell her if she doesn't like my work she's not obliged to owe me anything.

MAMA JUSTINE

You have to send someone else...

ANNA

You're right. I could--

MAMA JUSTINE

I can send my daughter. Folks would accept her cleaning free of charge but nobody would pay for it!

(They laugh.)

ANNA

Question is; how do I get in to get Mamie?

MAMA JUSTINE

If she's there? That's a good question.

ANNA

Linus has a gun; somewhere in the house.

MAMA JUSTINE

Not with my daughter in the house.

ANNA

Of course not. I'd get Mr. Tom to drive me. Take me straight to the train station.

MAMA JUSTINE

They'll be waiting to hang you at the next stop.

ANNA

You're right. If I hide somewhere in town, till they forget. Then sneak out.

MAMA JUSTINE

I've got an attic upstairs. Nobody would dare come into my house.

ANNA

Your husband won't mind?

MAMA JUSTINE

Simon's lived here forty years, never been up those stairs once. Besides, he'd feel proud to help Jessie Moore's sister. I'm sure he'll fix it up nice for you and your girl. I'll talk to him about it tonight. Go on home. I'll send you word.

ANNA

Thank you.

MAMA JUSTINE

Don't you live the other way?

ANNA

I'll see you later.

SHIFT OF LIGHT AS ANNA WALKS

(The police officer plays solitaire on a box crate. He sees Anna without acknowledging her. Anna hovers over him waiting to be acknowledged. He speaks to Anna without looking up from his cards.)

POLICE OFFICER

You want something?

ANNA

Yes, sir.

(beat)

Officer. My daughter's been stolen.

POLICE OFFICER
We'll, what you doing here? Here we go! Now the king.

ANNA
I've looked all over for her--

POLICE OFFICER
I'd go asking my people if I was you.

(to playing cards)
That's what I've been waiting for, you Queen of Hearts,
always trying to be slick with me. I got cha now!

ANNA
Sir, I was hoping--

POLICE OFFICER
You crowding my game. Breathing on my cards.

(He motions Anna to step back.)

ANNA
She's just a baby--

POLICE OFFICER
I don't care if she was shiting pearls. Don't I look busy
to you?

(to himself)
This red jack been sitting here all this time? I didn't
even see him.

(to Anna)
You messing with my game!

(Enraged, the Police Officer stands up
and moves aggressively towards Anna.
She quickly exits.)

POLICE OFFICER
Don't come back!

PORTER

Anna, come here...over this way.

(hushed voice)

PORTER

We were talking about your girl. One of my men; the day before she was missing; one of my men served drinks in the Pullman Car to a white man who was bragging about pulling black girls into the woods. He was special. Had a memory book of postal cards he'd collected from lynching parties. He was passing that book around proud, like it was full of family portraits.

ANNA

What'd he look like?

PORTER

Irish looking man, about sixty or so, maybe older. His hair was silver and white, that kinda white that's almost yellow.

ANNA

Mr. Chance!

PORTER

Somebody you know?

ANNA

Her daddy's grand-daddy. Maybe?

PORTER

He's from out town, staying in a hotel. He paid Lula Mae's boy to carry his bags to the for him. I told the boy if he follows the man around this week, I'll let him set up his shine box, right here on the platform.

ANNA

What'd he say?

PORTER

I told him to pass by your house tonight. You better head on home before he misses you.

(Anna embraces Porter.)

PORTER

You hold on to all of that till she's found.

(Anna passes police station. Police Officer sits out front eating a sandwich.)

POLICE OFFICER

Wait a minute. Wait a minute here.

(Yells)

I'm talking to you!

ANNA

Yes, Sir?

POLICE OFFICER

I heard about you...

ANNA

Yes, Sir?

POLICE OFFICER

I had a man in here last night, drunker than piss, ripping and hollering about how he's gonna fix his wife. She been nagging him for a little girl. Hell, he got four boys! He told the boys in his cell he was gonna bring her home a little white-nigger girl. Get his wife real good.

ANNA

He inside?

POLICE OFFICER

I let him go this morning.

ANNA

What's his name?

POLICE OFFICER

Pay me first.

ANNA

I thank you kindly. Mr. Tappins, the attorney is handling that part of the matter. You can expect him to visit you soon. Good day, Officer.

ACT III

SCENE 1

Setting: Anna's backyard.

(Goes directly to the back yard to take her dress down from the full clothes line. She notices Linus' shirts and slowly handles and smells one.)

ANNA

(disgusted)

Oak. Musty trees, all up in the creases!

ANNA

(sorrowful)

Let a whole month pass... Never once checked on her.

(She begins to tear at the seams of his shirt, using her shoe for leverage.)

(enraged)

Whole god damn town has got an eye out for her. He can't lift a single finger! Low- life handyman!!

HADDY

What you doing? You lost your mind?

ANNA

(continuing to rip the shirt to shreds)

I ain't lost nothing! That no good son of a bitch!

HADDY

My boy will fit them other shirts! Uh-Uh-Uh. I'll take um
out your sight. Ask me who I saw today?

ANNA

(elated)

Oh my goodness!

HADDY

Ask me!

ANNA

(over come with joy)

You saw her?

HADDY

You didn't ask me...

ANNA

Who'd you see?

(Overjoyed, Anna embraces Haddy.)

ANNA

I gotta get over there!

HADDY

Over where?

ANNA

Pick up Mamie!

HADDY

You think they gonna just hand her over to you? Use your
mind, Anna. Think. He took her. That's why you didn't hear
no scream or cry. It was her daddy. Her own daddy... She
fine. Look all pink and rosy. Where you going?

(Shuffling in the back yard, thick
Haddy blocks petite Anna like a line
backer trying to stop a running back.)

HADDY

It's for your own good. You can't run up there.

ANNA
She's my child!

HADDY
And that's her daddy.

ANNA
I don't give a damn!

HADDY
She look just like him.

ANNA
I birthed her.

HADDY
What do you think is gonna happen? You go marching over there? You think anybody's gonna believe that's your child! They gonna take your word over his? They all gonna lie and say they don't know you!

ANNA
GET OUT OF MY WAY!

(Mrs. Jones enters.)

HADDY
Block the gate! She gonna set a fire on the white side a town!

ANNA
I found Mamie!

HADDY
She a fool! She think she gonna knock on Linus' Mama's front door and they gonna hand Mamie over.

MRS. JONES
Oh lord.

(Anna runs for toward the house.)

HADDY
Block the back door!

(Haddy blocks front of the gate as Anna fights for the lock.)

Both women pull Anna, kicking and screaming away from the gate.)

HADDY

White folks go crazy you take a child.

ANNA

She's my child!

MRS. JONES

Don't nobody know that!

HADDY

Ain't nobody stole a white child before.

MRS. JONES

(to Haddy)

Ain't nobody that stupid!

(Anna tries to move past the women.)

(To Anna)

She look like them. She on their property. In the least, you'd be trespassing...

HADDY

She carrying his name. Mater of fact, she IS their property!

(Haddy shoves Anna away. Anna and Haddy push each other back and forth. Anna slaps Haddy.)

HADDY

They oughta string your ass up! Let her go!!

(Anna marches off.)

HADDY

(spiteful)

You oughta let that girl go ahead and be white! You ain't got nobody!

SCENE 2

(Anna moves through the streets like she is her own army. Bystanders on the street move out her way as she bullies through like a steam roller.)

Linus rocks Mamie on the veranda. He holds a sugar teet that Mamie sucks like a bottle.)

LINUS

(sings tenderly)

Hush little baby don't say a word, papa's gonna buy you a mocking bird. If that mocking bird don't sing, papa's gonna buy you a diamond ring-- Mama, you got another one of them towels?

(to Mamie)

You can't smile and swallow at the same time, at least not on my good pants!

GRANDMOTHER

You're a mess Linus. Go on upstairs...

LINUS

I can clean her up.

GRANDMOTHER

Get-out your Sunday suit. You don't know a thing about children!

LINUS

(to Mamie)

I'm just going up stairs.

GRANDMOTHER

She don't understand a word you're saying!

(to Mamie)

Isn't that right, sweetheart? Grandma brought you here, so she can raise you right... I been waiting for you for years. Linus has always been slow.

(Grandma makes Mamie laugh by playing peek a boo, hiding her face with her hands. Grandma sees Anna marching toward the house.)

You got your grandma's eyes... Hush little baby, grandma's gonna buy you a diamond ring, if that diamond ring turn brass, grandma's gonna buy you a looking glass-- Oh, well, look a here. That must be the wet nurse!

(Grandma tucks Mamie into bassinet.
Anna stares grandmother down.)

GRANDMOTHER

Linus!

LINUS

I'm upstairs!

GRANDMOTHER

Linus!!

ANNA

Give me my child.

GRANDMOTHER

I ain't never seen you before in my life. You best move on.

ANNA

Give me my child.

GRANDMOTHER

This is my son's child, you best get on your way, before I call somebody.

(Anna marches past the Grandmother. The old woman struggles to move after Anna. Anna takes Mamie. Panting and out of breath, the old woman clutches for her heart.)

Linus enters drying his hair with a towel.)

LINUS
I told you I was upstairs...

GRANDMOTHER
Mamie!

LINUS
Where'd you put her?

GRANDMOTHER
(crying)
Mamie!!

LINUS
What happened!

GRANDMOTHER
Her mother--

LINUS
Anna?

GRANDMOTHER
Took her!

(Anna periodically freezes in dramatic gestural poses as she struggles to sooth and carry Mamie.)

LINUS
Anna came all the way over here?

GRANDMOTHER
She put her hands on me!

LINUS
(curious)
Crossed the tracks by herself.

(urgent)
Was she by herself?

GRANDMOTHER
That nigger; pushed me to the ground!

LINUS

(enthusiastic)
She did?

GRANDMOTHER
She ought to hang for it! Linus, my grandchild!!

LINUS
She ought to hang... Yup, she loves hard like that...
(subtext: Anna will risk anything for love. She used to love me.)

GRANDMOTHER
You oughta go get her. Get Mamie!

LINUS
You're right! (subtext: I am going to reunite with Anna!)

(Holding Mamie close to her body, Anna urgently rushes through bodies of people on the street.

Eager and inspired, Linus runs behind Anna, in a parallel plane of light.

The path of light that Anna occupies communicates a dark dangerous mood while Linus' light path communicates an upbeat/light mood.)

LINUS
Anna! Anna...

GRANDMOTHER
Some Nigger stole Mamie! No, No, he's gone off this way!
Tell them to go that-a -way!

(Anna stops to reposition heavy Mamie on her body in various positions. Anna breathes heavily.

Off stage sound of angry voices: a crowd gathers.)

Exhausted, Anna enters her home. She sits in the rocking chair to nurse and sing to Mamie, as the sound of the mob gets louder.)

ANNA

(sings)

Hush little baby don't say a word, Mama's gonna buy you a mocking bird, and if that mocking bird don't sing.

(Screams of angry crowd.)

BLACKOUT.

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