



Emmett Draft

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Emmett

by

Toni Morrison

Dramaturgy by Edward Love

Cast of Characters

Emmett

Ma

George Harvey

Eustus Spottswood

J.W.

Roy

Carolyn

Black Girl

Time: Right now

ACT I

9 Emmett enters on a platform above. We cannot see the platform, so he appears to be walking on air. A single spot is on him. 16 He is carrying a large sample case--the kind traveling salesmen of cosmetics or Fuller brushes used to carry. He is dressed in a white shirt, sleeves rolled up, vest, fifties peg trousers and ankle-high sneakers. His hair is cut short except for a shaft in the front. He is humming as he positions the sample case, opens it so that its lid conceals its contents, removes a tablet of paper from his pocket and a pencil from the sample case. he sits on the floor. Writing.

Emmett: August 29. 28? No 29. 195⁶~~8~~, Sumner Mississippi.

(rocking his head and singing)

M I

Crooked leter⁺ crooked letter I

Crooked letter crooked letter I

Hump back hump back I Mississippi

Sunflower County

(rural sounds her^p with background music)

Where? Where in Sunflower County? Mmmmmmm.

Hey! The gin mill. Why not?

(lights come up showing one section at a time, the interior of a cotton gin mill, disused full of the gins , binders and all the ^{fangs} and blades of that industry)

Emmette: Good. That's good. Solid. Yeah.

(Jumping up)

Carolyn! Yo, Carolyn.

(A white woman in her late sixties enters, She is shabby, unattractive seems depressed and befuddled. She hovers near the wings confused about where she is)

Emmett: Nope. Nope. Not yet. Get on back.

(He walks about consulting tablet and the details of the machinery. Notices that Carolyn is still lingering at the wings.)

Emmett: Didn't you hear what I said? Get on back in there till I call you.

(She retreats)

Emmett: Damn. Can't do nothing right. Thirty years and still stupid. Lemme see.

(muses; smiles)

Emmett: Spottwood, Eustus Spottwood.

(Eustus Spottwood enters. A black man in his forties, dressed in faded coveralls.)

Emmett: (calling) George Harvey

(George Harvey enters. A Black man dressed in a business suit)

(Eustus and Geroge recognize each other and shake hands and embrace as though they had not seen each other for a long time)

Emmett: Hey baby!

(jumping down from a piece of machinery above their heads and landing right in front of them)

Emmett: George. Eustus. How you doin'?

Eustus: Emmett? Good God. That you?

Emmett: Damn right.

Eustus and George: I'll be damn (noises of excitement, shock, love, hugging, slapping--all excessive and over-acted)

Emmett: (sharply) OK. That's enough.

(abruptly George and Eustus stop and wait for direction)

Emmett: Enough. I want... I want...Hey. Let's sing. Remember how it went?

(Singing)

If I didn't care for you...

Come on.

(All three sing the Inkspot favorite. and dance the steps that were popular then. At the end of the routine the two older men drop back into neutral.)

Emmett: You need practice, man. You had a voice like an angel. What happen? You start smoking?

Eustace: (embarrassed) I don't smoke; drink neither.

Emmett: Drink neither? (sly) What was in that bottle we hung down the well? Kool -aid? (laughing)

...do. (imitates
...een aged Eustace) Uncle Drew threw
a hammer at your head . (sourly) Missed you. Right
George?

George: Right. Right.

Emmett: (coldly) Missed him. That's what made you stop
drinking, Eus? Somebody tried to kill you, huh?
You never was one for much rough stuff was you?
You and Uncle Drew. Oh he could throw a hammer
all right, but he couldn't stop two crackers from
snatching me out of his house. Don't that beat
all?

(Background sounds of motor of pick up truck; slamming doors,
voices in rage, voices in defense; motor of truck starting
up and driving off)

Emmett: Throw a hamer at a kid having fun, but can't
throw nothing at two crackers dragging his own
nephew out the house.

Eustace: That ain't right what you saying, and it aint fair.

Emmett: Not fair?

George: That was a long time ago, Emmett.

Emmett: Was it? Hey you lookin good. (touches and arragnes
George's lapels etc.) Put on a light weight though.
Not good, George. Gotta stay lean, fit. (shadow
boxes and punches George playfully)

Emmett: Come on. Come on.

George: Em, I'm forty-four years old. Forty-four.

ching; affecting innocence) How's it
feeling forty four?

George: Well it aint twenty-four (laughs)

Emmett: (with some menace) I wouldn't know. I got stopped
No forty-four. No thrity-four. No twentyOfour.
Not even fifteen. Just fourteen. That's all
I know George. Fourteen. So you all got to tell
me about the rest. Tell me, Eus, when you get to be
twenty, do you cool down, are the women different?
You got any kids?

Eustace: (hesitant) Five.

Emmett: No shit. How old?

Eustace: Got a girl 23. 'Nother 18. One is--

Emmett: (screaming) Older than me! Older than me! My
best friend got kids older than me. (Begins to
stroke and handle the machinery in a threatening
way) What they do for fun Eustace? Go to dances
and stuff? (Loud dance music) Eat smoked pork
on Saturday, chicken on Sunday? (Slaming around
in a rage) Big old biscuits with jalapeno jelly
and Kool Aid. Sit on the porch and look at lightening
bugs? (fatigued--music softer) Drink well water
out a guord? Taste like moss. (Earnestly) Does
the water taste like moss? Is it cold? It used
to be cold. Real, real cold.
(closes his eyes remembering the taste of cold
well water on a hot day in Mississippi)

Emmett: Oh well, Let's get on with it. Ma! Ma!

(Mrs. Till enters; she is bent and older than her years.)

Emmett: Oh, Ma. No. NOT like that. What'd you do to your hair? You was--a big woman, wasn't you Ma? Stand up straight, Ma. Come on, now. Here (Presses her spine while pressing her stomach to make her stand straight) Little more, little more, just a li-

(She shakes her head)

Emmett: I'm doing that Ma. YHou have to do what I want you to.

Mrs. Till: Bobo, I'm awful tired. You know I---

Emmett: (angry) No! No! Oh shit. Your teeth. YOu got different teeth, Ma. (frustrated) OK. Ok. Look jut , sit. Over there. Sit down and rest.

(She sits. George and Eustace go to her, shake hands, speak to her words we can not hear. Emmett picks up his table and writes furiously for amoment, then more calmly singing along with a gospel choir I am climbing Jacob's ladder . At end of the song, he looks at his mother and the two men engaged in a private conversation. He picks up something and smashes it.

Emmett: All right! Here we go! Carolyn! (teasing voice) Oh, Carolyn.

(Carolyn reenters; sees Emmett and the others. Reacts as thought she is in danger and turns to go.)

Emmett: Uh uh Carolyn. This is my world, baby. YOU
aint going no where.

Carolyn: You better let me out of here. Don't you come near
me (No one is) Stay the hell away from me!

(Runs toward wings, bumps into "wall" Searches it. No exit.)

Emmett and the others watch her felling an invisible wall,
touching it at its base, pounding on it, jabbing it etc.

Finally she turns back toward the others her back edging along
the "wall." Mrs. Till recognizes her and slowly, painfully begins
to raise herself up from where she is seated. Starts
toward Carolyn.

Emmett: (Waving) No Ma. It's OK. Just sit. All in good
time. All in good time. You like a good time,
Carolyn?

(He wiggles his pelvis at her. Wolf-whistles, etc. Then
bursts into laughter. Points up the difference be-
tween his young, muscular self and her old shapeless self,)

Emmett: (still plying with Carolyn) J.W! Get in here!

(J.W. Milan enters)

Emmett: J.W. Milan, skilled mechanic! Not guilty! Roy
Bryant!

(Roy enters)

Emmett: Mr. Bryant is a store keeper. Not guilty!

(J.W. and Roy are silent, alert standing close to one
another)

Emmett: What's the matter? I said not guilty, didn't I?
Not guilty, not guilt. You ain't guilty, but you

you also is in danger. (giggles),
(Emmett turns his back to them. Roy pulls out a knife and swishes it toward Emmett's back, just missing. Mrs. Till, George, Eustace jump up. Carolyn clasps her hands in hope. Emmett urns toward Roy. Roy sticks the knife deep into Emmett's stomach. Others scream. Emmett does not move.)

Emmett: This is my dream, fucker.

(The men back away slowly; turn to leave; bump into "wall"
The seach it. Find no exit.)

Emmett: What you know? Look like somebody kidnapped
your ass. Aint that a hoot?

(He walks over to Carolyn and singing " In the4 dark, In the dark, I get such a thrill, when you press your sweet lips to mine etc. ; dances with Carolyn as close as possible (a kind of slow drag) . Carolyn is repelled, stiff with rage. Suddenly Emmett stops , steps back and, with a glance at Carolyn's husband (Roy) wolf-whistles at her. J.W. rubs his jaw, flings out a hand to restrain the leap Roy begins to defend his wife.)

Emmett: To Carolyn) Did you think I was serious? (To J.W.)
Did you think I was serious? I was fourteen, man.
Fourteen! Did you think I was serious? In the ninth grade. In the ninth grade. Two weeks after you killed me I would have been in high school, You know what, I couldn't wait to go to hight school. (Sighs)
Hey, did you ever meet my mom?

Mrs/ Till: Baby, please.

Emmett: No. Come on, Ma. (Introduces, formally, cheerfull)

Carolyn. My mother. (the women react)

Emmett: What about a little curtsey, Miss Ann.

Carolynb curtsies to Mrs. Till)

Emmett: You need practice. Practice, I said. Keep practicing till you get it right.

(She continues to curtsey)

Mrs. Till: I don't want that. I don't need that.

Emmett: (shouting) I want it. I need it! (To J.W. cordially)
J.W.? You and Roy ever meet my Mom? Mom, this is J/W, skilled mechanic, killer, farmer, jack of all trades and this is his brother, (slappin him on the back) Roy, ditto except for skill. Fucker can't even shoot. J.W. here's the marksman. 'Shoot the head off a turtle at fifty yars' Right? Right!

(Shaking his finger at Carolyn who has stopped curtseying_

Emmett: Practice. Practice makes perfect.

(She continues, frequently stumbling, bur forced by Emmett's attention to keep it up, until puppel-like she establishes a rhythm. Mrs/ Till is discomnfited, Eustace and Geroqe stay by her to sooth her. George approaches Emmett.

George: Look, uh, Bobo. I know this is uh how you want it and everything, but, but

Emmett: But, but

George: Well, things is different now.

Emmett: Different?

George: Yeah, yeah. I mean you wouldn't believe
Summer now. I mean, well, look--

(George brings out his wallet)

Emmett: (to Carolyn) Practice bitch.

George: (showing a card to Emmett) See this?

Emmett: What is it?

George: My registration card. My voter registration card.

Emmett: (deadpan) Hot shit.

George: And LOOK here. Look. Can you believe this.

(pulling out another card) Mastercard. Visa card, Sears and
Roebuck. Exxon,

Emmett: (laughing)

George: What's so funny? (angry)

Emmett: Wallets, man. Wallets are funny. I had a wallet
once. It had a place for money, to just like
yours. (handles George's wallet) Yeah, and a
place for cards, all kinds of credit cards. But
I didn't have none. Money I mean and credit cards.
But it had this place for pictures, photos. It's
one of those things that makes you a man, having a
wallet (to Carolyn) Sit down woman. You can't do
nothing, learn nothing. (fingering the wallet)
Cause when you have a wallett you can pull it out of
your hip pocket and show it to another man. He pulls
out his; I pull out mine. He shows me his; I show
him mine. See? First thign you did was show me
yours. The bullshit yo got in here, just like

the bull shit I had in mine. You got cards, I had pictures. All bull shit. So another man would know how tough you is. Hey. (punches George in friendly but manic manner) Hey, George. You tough? You tough? Yeah, you tough. White folks don't scare you now. You got cards. But seems to me I remember when yo didn't have no wallett. Seems to me I was the only one with a wallet. You think that's why yo was so scared to meedle some white girl? And why I wasn't? Black Boy with a wallett-- he got to have something in it. Don't he, Carolyn. Don't he Roy? What yo got in your wallet, J.W.? One of them little Klan Cards, right?

J.W.; Look boy. Let me tall yo something--

(Emmett punches J.W. in the stocmah, hard, then curbs him self from being enraged and doing more, as if waiting to savor it later.)

J.W. is bent over , breathless and in pain.

Emmett: Speak up, sweet heart. You aint got all day.

J.W.: (gsping) Don't make no difference what you do to me . You a dead nigger and I made you dead. Nothig gonna change that.

Mrs. Till: (Screaming a loud pitiful scream) I aint

going through this no more. I am tired! (George and Eustace try to hold her down) Let go of me! (To

Emmett, pleading) Let me go. Please Bobo, if you ever loved

Please.

(It is not finished, Ma.

Till: Yes you are, baby. You're finished, I'm finished. These here raggedy white fold, Can't you see they finished too?

Emmett: They can't be finished. You either, least of all me. Nothing is finished, until I finish it. I finish it. Can't nobody finish me. You think cause I'm dead I'm finished. Shit no. Shit no. Oh it's going to be finished all right. But by me this time. I'm the one didn't get to bve grown- didn't get to go to high school(mtk)

1: You call them names. They call you names. What's left to do baby?

Emmett talks and she replies, Emmett walks up to level where his sample case is. Rummages in it and pulls something out)

Emmett: One thing more. One thing, before I finish it for good!

(Throws his beaten up, dried up corpse down among them. Carolyn screams. Mrs. Till weeps loudly, Eustace covers his nose. George vomits. J.W. and Roy look at the corpse and then turns their backs. Emmett pulling from bhis sampler a cleaner's garment bag in which is a pale blue suit hanging from a hanger. Then he pulls shoes, and a hat. With all of this he walks over to Roy and J.W.)

Emmett: Proper burial in a proper suit.

(They resist)

Emmett: (bellowing) Move!

the whites, including Carolyn, all set about the task
dressing the corpse in the blue suit. When they falter,
Emmett points a finger which makes them jump as though
a bolt of electricity has shot through them, and they
start. While they do the shrouding/dressing, Emmett
sings and dances a powerful, ~~saxxy~~ ^{sexy} rocking song--
Metha Franklin's "Respect" but of the period he
is in the 1960s. He is interrupted by a scuffle in the
audience. The music fades. A young Black ^{girl} ~~woman~~ climbs
from the front pit onto the stage.

girl: Stop it! Stop it!

Emmett picks the corpse out of their hands, continues to
sing (until it is off stage)

girl: I'm not listening to anymore of this mess!
What is this? (To Emmett) Who the hell do you
think you are?

Emmett: ^{ain't} You are ~~not~~ in my play!

Black girl: That's the trouble with it. I'm not in it

the first thing the audience sees? / How do we want Emmett to be
?"

THE CURTAIN IS ALREADY UP AS THE AUDIENCE ENTER THE theatre.

"RE-SET" LIGHTS THE DOWNSTAGE PLAYING AREA AND CASTS SHADOWS ON

CONCEALS THE SET FROM THE AUDIENCE'S INITIAL view.

FADE TO BLACK DOWNSTAGE AND COME UP AGAIN ILLUMINATING

OF THE SCAFFOLD-LIKE SET IN SILHOUETTE HIGH ABOVE THE

SCRIM

IN SILHOUETTE ON THE PLATFORM Above. WE CANNOT SEE THE

SEEMS TO BE WALKING ON AIR. HE STANDS STATUE-LIKE AS A

FADES UP SLOWLY ON HIM. HE IS CARRYING.... (ETC.)

SPEAK THE SCRIM SLOWLY RISES -

CAROLYN enter stage right or left - on the playing area or
the platforms higher off the actual stage?

perhaps she could enter downstage right, close to the audience-

and GEORGE establish the "witness stand" platform? Where is it?

they could enter opposite CAROLYN on a platform upstage left-
(for a new focal point)

transition into "Let's sing." too abrupt? / Could the line come out
of reminiscence of some sort? (a very short one)

EMMETT go in the playing area onstage here or stay on the platform
EUS and GEORGE? / Perhaps it's time for him to cross downstage right
center stage on these speeches - still turning to address his friends,
course. This would leave him center stage to call his MA -

Where does Mrs. Till enter? / Perhaps she should enter on the opposite
side of the stage where our attention has been thus far., stage right - downstage
similar to CAROLYN'S entrance, so that EMMETT has to spin around to see
her - this might add an element of more surprise for him -

MRS. TILL Perhaps a bench-like "bin" could slide
the set here establishing a new location - directly center

EMMETT pick up and why does he smash it? Has he lost control
of the set here - we should say so.. What is the reaction the actors
to his anger?

reenter upstage right on the scaffolding?/ This might give
the idea of people appearing from everywhere and out of nowhere.

of the levers and pulleys of the "machine" can move in to
way up high in full view. (We must then think of how to get
the others)

er? / perhaps upstage left or downstage left - perhaps
"stand" platform?

they must be close together; Perhaps EMMETT goes over

on the floor level move in to "trap" them here?

they remain where they are standing - does EMMETT bring
perhaps they can congregate somewhere together for his
center stage?)- Do they sit waiting for EMMETT to give
stage direction? What is their attitude? Do they
change tableau?

After this speech "presenting his case" to the listening
group is pacing back and forth before them?

actors" react to this intrusion?/ Does the BLACK GIRL "remove
herself" here?/ What does EMMETT do while she "ruins his funeral, his
life"?

premature ending to an act? Perhaps it is the end of a scene
first act. Perhaps this is a "one-act play" with several scenes-
of two acts. We should discuss...

ail:

is a description of what I want Emmett, A Play
Music, to be. I have included a draft of ^{part of} the first

What follows is a description of the concept, se-
cast and so on.

is not a recreation of what happened to Emmett
56. It is a dramatic rendering of what might
he could return from the dead to set things
The device for this belated "justice" [in-
confrontation, vengeance, explication and restor-
his own creation. He casts, directs, manipulates
tes each and every character he summons up, and they
apped in his dream as he is trapped in the tragedy
royed him. The play--designed by him as his
desire for "justice," turns and becomes for the
in his dream/play and for the audience an involve-
working out of the conflicts, a resolution of the
inished state left by his death and the subsequent "trial."
At the height of the ceremony he has planned for the resolution,
another resolution, one he did not count on occurs. His
reality (the reality only he knows) is juxtaposed to the
public/historical reality (what the audience may recall
and what was reported at the time.) Both of these realities
are smashed by a contemporary reality when a young Black girl

...challenge his
...things. Her violent insurgence
...stuns and angers him; releases
"cast" to act and speak their own way; and forces
to verbalize deeper fears and to come to terms with
more exacting contemporary reality.

...ect to situate Act I of the play very much in his
That is, the music Emmett hears, the songs he sings
ties period pieces he would have heard in Chicago,
...wer County, Mississippi--music from that fate-
1956. Although the other sound effects: river water,
pick up truck, voices in the bar where he approaches
woman, wind, leaves, insects, his own death
etc--come as the heard sound in his memory, his
hear what he hears, ask about it etc. These
to underscore his monologues and the dialogue he
characters in.

reager to know what you think.