



Margaret Garner Act I Draft

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MARGARET
INTRODUCTORY NOTES

THE SUBJECT OF "MARGARET"—KNOWN AS THE AMERICAN SLAVE NARRATIVE—IS BOTH FAMILIAR TO AND EXHAUSTED WITHIN EVERY ARTISTIC MEDIUM EXCEPT OPERA. IT IS OPERA TO WHICH THIS SUBJECT MATTER IS MOST SUITED AND WHICH CAN PROVIDE THE NARRATIVE WITH THE POWER THAT OTHER MEDIA (ESPECIALLY FILM) SEEMS TO HAVE TROUBLE DUPLICATING. ALTHOUGH THE EMOTIONAL LEVELS ARE GRANDLY THEATRICAL, THE ICONOGRAPHY RICH, THE ACTION GRAPHIC AND THE HUMAN STRUGGLE UNIVERSALLY POIGNANT, THESE FEATURES, SO APPROPRIATE FOR OPERA, ARE THE VERY ONES THAT CAN ENCOURAGE THE FLAT, EVEN TRIVIALIZING, TREATMENTS OF THE MATERIAL WE HAVE BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO.

THE OBSTACLES ARE AS RAMPANT AS THEY ARE OBVIOUS:

1. STEREOTYPING
2. PREDICTABILITY
3. GRATUITOUS SENSATIONALISM

EACH OF THESE OBSTACLES IS ADDRESSED HERE AS A WAY OF CLARIFYING THE VISION OF THIS WORK AND INDICATING HOW PROFOUNDLY DIFFERENT IT IS FROM OTHER ATTEMPTS.

1. STEREOTYPING. THE CLASSIC FORMULATION OF THE AMERICAN SLAVE NARRATIVE RELIES UPON THE HARRIET BEECHER STOWE FORMULA, DEPICTING CERTAIN STOCK CHARACTERS: INNOCENT SLAVE/ TREACHEROUS SLAVE; KIND MASTER/EVIL MASTER; EMASCULATED (OR NON-EXISTANT) SLAVE FATHER; HOPELESS, WEEPING MOTHER; INSANELY CRUEL OVERSEER; NAIVE, RIGHTEOUS ABOLITIONISTS, ETC. IN THESE STEREOTYPES THE MOTIVES FOR BEHAVIOR ARE SIMPLIFIED AND THE CHARACTERS HAVE VIRTUALLY NO INTERIOR LIFE. THE OVERSEER IS CRUEL JUST BECAUSE. WHETHER

MARGARET
INTRODUCTORY NOTES

PASSIVE OR ANGRY, THE SLAVE WORKERS ARE SIMPLY VICTIMS, REACTIONS TO THEIR PREDICAMENT WITHOUT AGENCY AND WHOLLY DEPENDENT ON EXTERNAL GENEROSITY OR DUPLICITY.

UNLIKE THOSE STEREOTYPES, THE CAST OF "MARGARET" ARE COMPLEX FIGURES WITH RECOGNIZABLY HUMAN REASONS AND EMOTIONS. THE MASTER IN "MARGARET" IS DRIVEN BY HIS RELATIONSHIPS TO HIS OWN PEOPLE, HIS OWN PAST AND CIRCUMSTANCES. THAT IS TO SAY, BEING A SLAVE MASTER IS PART, NOT ALL, OF HIS CHARACTER. ALSO THE ENSLAVED FAMILY INCLUDE MEMBERS WITH SEPARATE AND DISTINCT VIEWS OF THEIR CHOICES AND WHO ACT AS WELL AS REACT ACCORDING TO THESE VIEWS AND THE COMPLEXITY OF THEIR PERSONALITIES. FOR EXAMPLE, IN THIS WORK THERE IS AN ENSLAVED HUSBAND/FATHER (ROBERT) WHO TAKES CHARGE, IS CAPABLE OF TENDERNESS AND VIOLENCE; THERE IS AN ENSLAVED WIFE/MOTHER WHO CHANGES AND EVOLVES AS CIRCUMSTANCES ALTER. THERE IS A YOUNG ANTI-SLAVERY-LEANING COUPLE WHOSE VIEWS ON SLAVERY ARE A RESULT OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE RATHER THAN ABOLITIONIST IDEOLOGY. IN SHORT, THESE ARE FULLY REALIZED INDIVIDUALS WITH PERSONALITIES AND MOTIVES HISTORICALLY SWAMPED, ELIDED AND OVER SHADOWED IN MOST REPRESENTATIONS OF THE AMERICAN SLAVE NARRATIVE.

THEREFORE THE LANGUAGE OF THE CAST, IN CLICHE'-FREE LIBRETTO, CONTAINS SUBTLETY, DOUBLE-ENTENDRE, PARODY, SATIRE, IRONY AS WELL AS DEFIANCE. THEIR SPEECH RANGES FROM THE LYRIC TO THE VULGAR, FROM THE SERMONIC TO THE SLY. CHARACTERS EXHIBIT OPTIMISM, PESSIMISM, STUPIDITY, RELIGIOUS FAITH, GREED, SACRIFICE, MARRIED LOVE, UNMARRIED LUST, PARENTAL DEVOTION, HUMOR, BRUTALITY AND WISDOM.

2. PREDICITABILITY. THE CONVENTIONAL BONDAGE-TO-FREEDOM THRUST OF THE AMERICAN SLAVE STORY IS MORE LAYERED HERE. IT IS THE STORY, ESSENTIALLY, OF THE DESTRUCTION OF TWO FAMILIES BY MEANS BOTH UNDER THEIR CONTROL AND OUT OF THEIR CONTROL. INSTEAD OF THE PROJECTORY OF THE PLOT BEING ONLY A GEOGRAPHIC MOVE FROM SLAVE COUNTRY TO FREE COUNTRY,

MARGARET
INTRODUCTORY NOTES

SEVERAL KINDS OF FREEDOM ARE BOTH AVAILABLE AND THWARTED IN THIS OPERA: PSYCHOLOGICAL, PHYSICAL, SPATIAL, SPIRITUAL—EVEN THE “FREEDOM” OF MADNESS. “MARGARET’S” PLOT, ALTHOUGH BASED ON AN HISTORICAL CHARACTER AND ACTUAL EVENTS, DELVES INTO THE SELF-DIRECTED AS WELL AS ‘FATED’ CONSEQUENCES OF THE CHARACTERS’ ACTIONS. THE RESULT IS BOTH SHOCK AND COMPREHENSION.

3. GRATUITOUS SENSATIONALISM. MOST SLAVE NARRATIVES ACHIEVE THEIR HIGH DRAMA BY RELYING ON ACTION WITH THE EASIEST ACCESS TO AN AUDIENCE’S RESPONSE: WHIPS, CRIES, BLOOD, LYNCHING, RAPES ETC. WHILE THESE ASPECTS OF OPPRESSED DEGRADATION ARE ACCURATE AND VERY MUCH PRESENT IN “MARGARET”, THEIR FORCE IS MADE MORE LASTINGLY INDELIBLE (AND TERRIBLE) BY OTHER MEANS AT OUR DISPOSAL. THROUGH MUSIC, METAPHOR, GESTURE, SYMBOLS AND STYLE THE AUDIENCE IS MEANT TO BE DRAWN INTO—NOT DISTANCED FROM—THE ACTION AND THE EMOTION. THUS THIS WORK ESCHEWS THE CONVENTIONALLY ANTICIPATED GORE, AND THE ESTRANGING, EXOTIC ‘OTHER’ IN ORDER TO SECURE AN INTIMATE PLACE IN THE AUDIENCE’S MIND, HEART AND AESTHETIC SENSIBILITY.

THIS LAST POINT BRINGS UP A VITAL POINT—THE STYLE OF THE WORK—AN EFFORT TO RID IT OF ‘ANTIQUÉ-NESS’ AND TO ALIGN IT WITH CONTEMPORARY RESONANCES AND SENSIBILITIES. THUS THE OLD-FASHIONED SLAVE RAGS AND BONNETS GIVE WAY TO LEAN SYMBOLIC COSTUMES; NATURALISTIC CABINS, MANOR HOUSES, STEAMBOATS ETC. ARE ELIMINATED IN FAVOR OF FRESH ICONOGRAPHY, SET DESIGNS, BODY MOVEMENT ETC. SUCH A TREATMENT IS NOT MERELY TO INTRODUCE THE ‘NEW’; IT IS PRIMARILY TO ELUCIDATE MORE MEANING AND EXPOSE THE MODERNITY OF THE INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SUBJUGATED AND THE SUBJUGATOR; VIOLENCE AND LOVE; REDEMPTION AND DAMNATION, LIBERTY AND EXCESS. THESE ARE PERENNIAL DILEMMAS WHICH THE AMERICAN SLAVE NARRATIVE CAN BRING INTO VIEW, SUMMONING

MARGARET
INTRODUCTORY NOTES

OUR WIDEST SYMPATHY, OUR DEEPEST TERROR, OUR MOST SUBLIME
RESPONSES TO THE INDOMITABLE HUMAN SPIRIT, AND OUR AWE IN
THE COMPANY OF BEAUTY—ALL OF WHICH IS THE PROPER SPHERE OF
OPERA.

TONI MORRISON
GRAND VIEW
OCTOBER, 2001

THE CURTAIN OPENS ON AN ARRAY OF SHADOWS—THIN, TALL, WAVEY, LIKE GIACOMETTI FIGURES—HIGH AND HOVERING AGAINST A BACK DROP OF A VIOLENT COLOR [I SEE THE COLORS OF THIS SCENE AS PRIMARILY RED AND BLACK—WITH METAL, STEEL PARTS] WE HEAR UNPLEASANT SOUNDS THAT BECOME A KIND OF CHANT. LIGHTS MOVE TO REVEAL THE SHAPE OF THE SHADOWS: ABOUT 20 SLAVES, CHANTING, DANCING TOGETHER AND BREAKING APART INTO SMALLER FAMILY GROUPS. THEY ARE NOT DRESSED IN CONVENTIONAL SLAVE RAGS. THEIR COSTUMES SHOULD BE MODERNIZED VERSIONS OF THAT. THE SHADOWS SHRINK AND FADE AS THE DANCE AND CHANT SWELL. THEN A 'CALL AND RESPONSE' SONG BEGINS.

MEANTIME, LIGHTS ARE ALTERING AND FOCUSING TO REVEAL THE WOMAN LEADING THE CALL/RESPONSE IS MARGARET. SHE IS WEARING A BRIGHT RED RIBBON AROUND HER NECK. LIKE THE OTHERS, SHE IS SURROUNDED BY AN APPARATUS INDICATING THAT THEY ARE RESTRAINED, PENNED IN. THIS SHOULD BE GESTURAL, NOT NATURALISTIC. PERHAPS A SERIES OF VERTICAL BARS SPACED AMONG THEM IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE SLAVES, WHILE INHIBITED BY THE BARS AND THEIR MOVEMENTS SEVERELY LIMITED BY THEM, THEY ARE ALSO USED BY THEM IN THEIR CHOREOGRAPHED MOVEMENTS.

THE CALL

SLAVES

NO! NO MORE!
NO! NOT MORE!

MARGARET

NECKS CIRCLED WITH A CHAIN

SLAVES

OH NO! NO[T] MORE!

MARGARET

SKIN BROKEN BY A CANE

SLAVES

NO! NO MORE!
NO! NO MORE!

MARGARET

BLOODY PILLOWS UNDER MY HEAD

SLAVES

OH NO! NO MORE
PLEASE GOD NO MORE!

MARGARET

WISHING, PRAYING I WAS DEAD

SLAVES

NO. NO. NO MORE
PLEASE GOD NO MORE!

[LIGHTS UP SLOWLY REVEAL A CROWD OF TOWNSPEOPLE, CUSTOMERS, ON
LOOKERS. THEY ARE PRESIDED OVER BY AN AUCTIONEER]

AUCTIONEER

BY THE POWERS INVESTED
BY CUSTOM INGESTED
I HEREBY DECLARE AND ALLOW
THE SALE OF ALL GOODS AND
CATTLE AND WOODLAND
SLAVES AND FIELDS DARK WITH LOAM.

VENDORS ALL [VOICES MINGLING]

VENDOR 1.

MELONS, MELONS, VINE RIPE MELONS
SWEET AS SUGAR CANE

VENDOR 2.

BROOMS. BROOMS.
OF FRESH NEW STRAW

VENDOR 3.

OKRA'S TENDER
PEPPER'S HOT
SEASON UP THE OLD MAN'S POT

AUCTIONEER

BY THE POWERS INVESTED
BY THE CUSTOM INGESTED
I HEREBY DECLARE AND ALLOW
AN OLD ESTATE RICH IN HISTORY IS NOW ON THE MARKET
FOR A GENTLEMAN'S POCKET

A PRIZE IN THE WHOLE COUNTY
YOUR SHREWD EYES WILL LIGHT UP
YOUR BIDS ARE INVITED
DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR
POUND FOR POUND
THE BESTEST VALUE FOR MILES AROUND.

VENDORS ALL

MELONS, MELONS, VINE RIPE MELONS
SWEET AS SUGAR CANE

BROOMS. BROOMS
MADE OF FRESH STRAW

OKRA'S TENDER
PEPPER'S HOT
SEASON UP THE OLD MAN'S POT

NEW BROOMS
OKRA
RIPE MELONS
PEPPER FOR THE POT
SWEET CANE
FRESH STRAW

NEW BROOMS
OKRA
SWEET MELONS
PEPPER FOR THE POT

[UPSTAGE MEANWHILE SLAVES ARE BEING RE-ARRANGED FROM FAMILY GROUPS TO OTHER FIGURATIONS: ALL MEN, ALL BOYS, ALL WOMEN, ALL YOUNG GIRLS.]

[THE TOWNSPEOPLE/ CUSTOMERS SNAP THEIR FINGERS (A LOUD, INSISTENT SOUND, RHYTHMIC AND A- RHYTHMIC) AND THE SLAVES DISPLAY A GESTURE OF DISPLAY. AS: SNAP, SNAP-TEETH BARED; SNAP-ARM MUSCLES SHOWN; SNAP, SNAP, SNAP-BLACKS ON DISPLAY; SNAP, SNAP-EYES WIDENED FOR A CLOSE LOOK. THEY SING.]

TOWNSPEOPLE/CUSTOMERS

HOW MUCH? HOW MUCH?
FOR PICKNIES AND MAMMIES AND BREEDERS AND BUCKS?

WHAT SAY? WHAT SAY?
FOR MILKING AND PLOWING AND SPINNING AND CANNING AND SUCH.

O WHAT A PROBLEM TO DECIDE
O WHAT A BURDEN ON OUR SHOULDERS
FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOTHING, ARE NOTHING, DO NOTHING, KNOW
NOTHING EXCEPT FOR WE

WHO CLOTHE THEM AND FEED THEM
LET THEM SLEEP WHEN THEY ARE ILL
WE TEACH ALL THEY WILL EVER KNOW
OF GOD AND WORK AND HOME

HOW MUCH? HOW MUCH?
FOR PICKNIES AND MAMMIES AND BREEDERS AND BUCKS?
WHO KNOW NOTHING OF GOD AND HOME!

AUCTIONEER

[BRINGING FORTH THE WOMEN, ONE BY ONE]

CILLA. ABOUT SIXTY, SHE THINKS. / BUT SPRY. A COOK, CHILD NURSE, LAUNDRY
AND SEAMSTRESS. NOW BETSY. FORTY OR SO. MOTHER OF SIX AND STILL
BREEDING. STRONG AS A MAN. THIS HERE IS MARGARET. ONE SCORE AND FOUR.
AS GOOD WITH A SPINNING WHEEL AS SHE IS WITH A PLOW. AND SHE COMES
WITH A JUST WEANED PICKANINNEY...

[CUSTOMERS MURMUR/ HUM AT THE PRESENTATION OF EACH. ENTER EDWARD
GAINES AND CASEY]

EDWARD

HOLD ON! HOLD ON! I'M TELLING YOU! STOP!

[CROWD IN CONFUSION]

*Towns people
"What say? etc."*

*Auctioneer
"By the powers"*

*Auctioneer
"Starting
"Can I get 200?"
Buyer:
Chorus?"*

AUCTIONEER

EXCUSE ME, SIR. LEGAL BUSINESS IS IN PROGRESS HERE. BY THE POWERS INVESTED, BY THE CUSTOMS INGESTED...

EDWARD

I BEG YOUR PARDON. THIS FARM BELONGED TO MY BROTHER. IT CAN'T BE SOLD TO ANOTHER. NOT A STICK NOR A BARREL NOR A TIN OF CHINA TEA. IF A FAMILY MEMBER CALLS THE CLAIM NO SALE CAN TAKE PLACE HERE OR NOW. I AM A GAINES. EDWARD GAINES. BROTHER OF THE DECEASED. DON'T YOU REMEMBER ME?

TOWNSPEOPLE/CUSTOMERS

WHO? EDWARD GAINES? ~~DID~~ OLD GAINES ^{had} HAVE A BROTHER? WHO IS HE?

EDWARD

I WAS BORN AMONG YOU. AND NOW I'VE RETURNED. DOESN'T ANYBODY REMEMBER ME?

TOWNSPEOPLE/CUSTOMERS

NO. NO. WAS IT A LONG TIME AGO?

EDWARD

YOU THOUGHT I WAS LOST, DIDN'T YOU? IN A ROUGH LIFE OF THE GAME? YOU WERE WRONG. WELL NO, YOU WEREN'T. WELL YES, YOU WERE! I WAS JUST A BOY WHEN ANY OF YOU LAST SAW ME. BUT I'VE BEEN HAPPILY MARRIED WITH A DAUGHTER WE BOTH ADORED. NOW I'M A WIDOWER, A MAN WITH MEANS, A FATHER WITH A CHILD TO RAISE. WHAT MY BROTHER OWNED I HAVE RIGHT OF FIRST OFFER TO BUY. WHICH I DO NOW, FRIENDS. WHICH I DO NOW.

AUCTIONEER

IT IS TRUE. IT IS THE LAW. WE MUST ENTERTAIN HIS RIGHT UNDER THE LAW. [TO EDWARD] WHAT IS YOUR PLEASURE, MR. GAINES, SIR? WHAT PARTS INTEREST YOU?

EDWARD

I WANT IT ALL. I'LL HAVE IT ALL. EVERY STICK EVERY BARREL EVERY BOX OF CHINA TEA BELONGS TO ME. EVERY BODY EVERY BROOM EVERY MULE EVERY LOOM. I'LL BUY IT ALL.

[HE JOINS THE AUCTIONEER AND THEY GESTURE NEGOTIATIONS. THE REACTION FROM THE SLAVES IS RELIEF AND THEY RE-ASSEMBLE THEMSELVES INTO FAMILY GROUPS. THEIR DANCE MOVES THEM TOGETHER AS A GROUP AND MOVES THEM BACK TO FAMILY UNITS. THEN THE MEN CONTINUE TO DANCE WHILE THE WOMEN STEP FORWARD AND SING]

A LITTLE MORE TIME

ALL

A LITTLE MORE TIME
A LITTLE MORE TIME
A LITTLE MORE TIME
WITH OUR MOTHERS
MORE TIME WITH THE CHILDREN WE LOVE.

MEN

WE FEEL THE MERCY OF OUR LORD GOD
WITH THE GRACE OF A LITTLE MORE TIME

MEN AND WOMEN

WITH THE GRACE OF A LITTLE MORE TIME
WITH THE GRACE OF A LITTLE MORE TIME
WITH THE GRACE OF A LITTLE MORE TIME

WOMEN

ANOTHER SEASON OF FRIENDSHIP
TELLING STORIES, SHARING SECRETS BY THE FIRE
MORE NIGHTS TO CURL LIKE A VINE IN OUR HUSBAND'S ARMS

MEN AND WOMEN

OUR FATHERS' GRAVES WE CAN STILL ATTEND
WITH SWEET WILLIAM AND COLUMBINE

MEN

WE FEEL THE MERCY OF OUR LORD GOD
WITH THE GRACE OF A LITTLE MORE TIME.

MEN AND WOMEN

WITH THE GRACE OF A LITTLE MORE TIME
WITH THE GRACE OF A LITTLE MORE TIME
WITH THE GRACE OF A LITTLE MORE TIME

MARGARET

THIS MYSTERY CALLED CHILD

I MADE A LITTLE PLAY DOLL FOR MY BABY
WITH BUTTON EYES AND HAIR OF YARN
THE LIPS ARE MADE OF ROSE COLORED THREAD
ONE DAY SHE WILL LOVE IT
I'M WAITING FOR HER TO LOVE IT
WHEN SHE IS OLD ENOUGH TO HOLD IT
I AM WATCHING THIS MYSTERY CALLED CHILD.

WOMEN AND MEN

WE FEEL THE BREATH OF OUR LORD GOD
WITH THE GIFT OF A LITTLE MORE TIME
WITH THE GIFT OF A LITTLE MORE TIME

[THE DANCE CONTINUES WITH MARGARET IN SOLO. THESE MOVEMENTS USE THE BARS OF THEIR DETENTION IN INTERESTING WAYS, SUGGESTING A KIND OF RESISTANCE TO THEM. AS DANCE CLOSES, SHE UNTIES HER NECK RIBBON AND TWIRLS IT, THEN WRAPS IT—IN DISMISSIVE DEFIANCE—TO A POLE. ALL EXIT DANCING TO FAINT, FAR OFF INSTRUMENTAL]

[AS THE TOWNSPEOPLE GRADUALLY EXIT, EDWARD AND CASEY SAUNTER AROUND THE AUCTION BLOCK. EDWARD CAREFULLY WATCHING THE TOWNSPEOPLE AS THEY PASS.]

EDWARD

LOOK AT THEM. THEY WERE MY NEIGHBORS ONCE. THEY LIE. THEY PRETEND THEY DON'T REMEMBER ME.

CASEY

IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO, SIR. YOU'VE BEEN AWAY FOR TWENTY YEARS.

EDWARD

THEY PRETEND. THEY LIE. THEY DON'T WANT TO REMEMBER ME.

CASEY

SOMETHING IN THE PAST, SIR? SOMETHING BEST FORGOTTEN?

EDWARD

I WAS JUST A BOY. THE TROUBLE I CAUSED WAS INESCAPABLE. FOR A BOY. A BOY WITH AN APPETITE.

CASEY

AN APPETITE. OF COURSE. BUT EVERY BOY HAS AN APPETITE, SIR.

EDWARD

I LEFT UNDER A CLOUD OF SUSPICION. IT WAS NOTHING, NOTHING TO RAISE EYEBROWS. SO NOW THEY PRETEND NEITHER I OR NOR IT EVER HAPPENED. TOO BAD. I REMEMBER. I REMEMBER EVERYTHING.

EDWARD

[SINGING]

I REMEMBER THE CURVE OF EVERY HILL
THE SWANS IN THE POND
I REMEMBER EVERY TREE
MAPLE, BIRCH, WILLOWS AND PINE

I CAN SEE THEM NOW
SHADING THE DRIVE
SHELTERING ME FROM THE HEAT.
MAPLE, BIRCH AND THE ODOR OF PINE

I REMEMBER EVERY TREE
BUT NONE OF THEM REMEMBERS ME

THE WELL, THE CREEK
FISHING WITH A STRING, BERRIES IN MY POCKET
HAY RIDES AFTER LONG AFTERNOONS
IN THE SUN

EVENINGS OF LAUGHTER
WITH GIRLS WHO WANTED TO PLAY

I REMEMBER EVERY TREE
BUT NONE OF THEM REMEMBERS ME.

CASEY

SO THEY SAY.

EDWARD

SO THEY SAY.

EDWARD AND CASEY
BUT EVERY BOY NEEDS TO PLAY
SO THEY SAY.

EDWARD
THEY WON'T FORGET ME AGAIN.

CASEY
NO SIR! NOT YOU!

EDWARD
THIS FARM WILL BE THE BEST RUN ESTATE IN THE COUNTY.

CASEY
A MODEL OF THRIFT.

EDWARD
A PERFECT MACHINE.

CASEY
A DYNAMO, SIR.

EDWARD
THEY WILL BEG TO COME TO MY SUPPERS. I WILL PICK AND CHOOSE WHOM TO
ENTERTAIN.

CASEY

YOUR DISCRETION, SIR. YOU PICK. YOU CHOOSE. YOU ARE THE MAN THEY WANT TO BE. A HEART OF STEEL AND THE MIND TO MATCH. TRUE PATRIOT. CLEVER PLANTER. LOVING FATHER.

[LIBRETTI BECOMES SUPER-IMPOSED]

EDWARD

THEY WILL FIGHT TO COURT MY DAUGHTER. I WILL TURN THEM ALL AWAY.

CASEY

DON'T LET THEM HAVE HER TOO EASY. SHE IS TOO GOOD FOR THEM.

EDWARD

MY SLAVES WILL WORK TWICE AS HARD. MY HARVEST WILL BE DOUBLE.

CASEY

WE'LL WORK THEM THE WAY THEY SHOULD BE, SIR. OR TRADE THEM FOR ONES WHO CAN.

EDWARD

THE TOWNSMEN PRETEND I NEVER EXISTED. BUT I'LL MAKE SURE THEY NEVER MAKE THAT MISTAKE AGAIN. LIARS!

CASEY

IT WAS JUST APPETITE, SIR. ALL BOYS HAVE APPETITES.

EDWARD

SO THEY SAY.

CASEY AND EDWARD

ACT I; SCENE 1.

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WHEN YOU ARE YOUNG AND THE NIGHTS ARE LONG, WHERE IS THE BOY WHO
DOESN'T WANT TO PLAY?

[EDWARD NOTICES THE RED RIBBON WRAPPED AROUND THE POLE. HE TAKES IT,
STROKES IT.]

EDWARD

EVERY BOY HAS AN APPETITE. SO THEY SAY. SO THEY SAY.

[EDWARD AND CASEY EXIT TOGETHER]

ORCHESTRAL INTERLUDE 1.

TWILIGHT. WORKERS RETURNING FROM FIELDWORK TO QUARTERS. THEY ARE YOUNG AND OLD; MALE AND FEMALE. SOME, LIKE THE GIRL SHOWN AT THE AUCTION, AS YOUNG AS 10 OR 12.

THEIR ENTRANCE IS A DANCE, OR A SYNCHRONIZED MOVEMENT, ACCOMPANIED BY SONG. MARGARET AND ROBERT ARE AMONG THEM AND OCCUPY A DOMINANT SPACE.

WORK SONG

ROBERT

TURN MY FACE TO THE DYING SUN

ALL

CAN'T STRAIGHTEN MY BACK TIL WORK IS DONE
OH MOTHER, OH FATHER DON'T ABANDON ME
WHILE MY SWEAT STILL SWEETS THE DIRT
OF DEAR OLD KENTUCKY

ROBERT

PLOWED THE FIELD; BALED THE HAY

MEN

GOING TO DANCE ON THE LEAD MULE'S BACK SOMEDAY

WOMEN

BOSS IS HAPPY AT HIS PLATE
LONG AS HE GETS HIS FOWL

MARGARET
ACT 1; SCENE 2

2

IF I STAND AT HIS COOKING STOVE
HIS SUPPER WILL BE FOUL
BELIEVE IT.

ALL

OH MOTHER, OH FATHER DON'T ABANDON ME
WHILE MY BLOOD FLOODS THE DIRT
OF DEAR OLD KENTUCKY

ALL

CRACK

UH! BACK

CUT

UH! CANE

PULL

UH! MULE

CHOP

UH! COTTON

SPLIT

UH! WOOD

CRACK! CUT! PULL! CHOP! SPLIT!

CRACK! CUT! PULL! CHOP! SPLIT!

WOMEN

BOSS IS HAPPY IN HIS BED
LONG AS HIS PILLOW'S DOWNEY
IF I STOOD NEAR HIS SLEEPY HEAD
HIS FACE WOULD BE AS FLUFFY
TELL IT!

ROBERT

PLOWED THE FIELD; BALED THE HAY

MEN

GOING TO DANCE ON THE LEAD MULE'S BACK ONE DAY.

ALL

OH MOTHER, OH FATHER
DON'T ABANDON ME
WHILE MY TEARS MUDDY THE SOIL
OF DEAR OLD KENTUCKY

CRACK

UH! BACK

CUT

UH! CANE

PULL

UH! MULE

CHOP

UH! COTTON

SPLIT

UH! WOOD

CRACK! CUT! PULL! CHOP! SPLIT!

CRACK! CUT! PULL! CHOP! SPLIT!

[AS THE SONG ENDS, THEY MOVE TO POSITIONS OUTSIDE FRAMING THAT INDICATES CABINS, AND BEGIN TO WASH UP. THE DOOR TO ROBERT AND MARGARET'S CABIN IS OPEN AND CILLA IS FRAMED IN ITS LIGHT.]

CILLA

YOU LEFT THE LIGHT BEHIND YOU. DID YOU HAVE A WORRISOME DAY?

ROBERT

EVERY NEW DAY IS LIKE YESTERDAY. WORK THE CROPS, FORGET ABOUT PAY. END EACH DAY LIKE THE ONE BEFORE. DON'T LEAVE THE FIELD TILL THE LIGHT'S TOO POOR.

CILLA

THIS GAINES IS NOT LIKE THAT LAST ONE. A MEAN STREAK RIDES HIS BROW. THE OTHER ONE HAD A HEART SOMETIMES. AT LEAST IT SEEMED SO TO ME.

MARGARET

NO SUCH THING AS A BOSS'S HEART. HE CAN'T AFFORD THE SPACE.

ROBERT

IF HE COULD HARVEST CORN IN HIS CHEST HE WOULD LEASE OUT HIS OWN HEART'S PLACE.

CILLA

EASE YOURSELVES. EASE YOURSELVES. THE TABLE IS LAID. THE SUPPER IS PLAIN BUT WARM. I'VE GOT MILK AND STRAWBERRIES TOO.

[THEY SIT]

CILLA

DEAR LORD IN HEAVEN. MAKE UP GRATEFUL FOR OUR FOOD. KEEP US WELL AND
IN YOUR SIGHT. AMEN.

ROBERT

YOU ARE A HUNDRED POUND BLESSING, MAMA.

MARGARET

HOW IS MY BABY? NOT CRYING FOR ME? NOT MISSING ME?

CILLA

SLEEPING, MARGARET. SLEEPING. NOT A FROWN ON HER SUGAR BUTTER FACE.

ROBERT

(LAUGHING TO CILLA,) YOU EVER SEE A MOTHER LIKE THAT? THE CHILD SUPPOSED
TO NEED THE MOTHER. NOW HERE THE MOTHER NEEDS THE CHILD MORE.

MARGARET

I NEED TO SMELL HER BREATH.

CILLA

THE BABY NEEDS HER REST.

MARGARET

I NEED TO SEE HER EYES; HER SMILE

CILLA

ITS DANGEROUS, DAUGHTER, TO LOVE TOO MUCH. THE LORD GIVETH AND THE
LORD TAKETH AWAY. COME TO YOUR SUPPER BEFORE YOU WAKE HER.

MARGARET
ACT 1; SCENE 2

6

MARGARET

SHE IS MY SUPPER, THE FOOD OF MY HEART

ROBERT

AND WHAT AM I? THE LEAVINGS?

MARGARET

(LAUGHING) OH NO. YOU ARE THE PULSE. WITHOUT YOU I HAVE NO HEART.

ROBERT

AND WITHOUT YOU I HAVE NO PULSE TO GIVE.

[THEY EMBRACE]

CILLA

ENOUGH SAID. GO GET YOUR HEART BEFORE YOU BREAK MINE.

[MARGARET PICKS UP HER BABY WHILE CILLA AND ROBERT SIT TO EAT. MARGARET SINGS]

LULLABY

BAD THINGS
FAR AWAY

SAD THINGS
FAR AWAY

SOFT THINGS
COME AND PLAY

PRETTY THINGS
HERE TO STAY

SLEEP IN THE MEADOW
SLEEP IN THE HAY
BABY'S GOT A DREAMING ON THE WAY

MARGARET
ACT 1; SCENE 2

7

SLEEP IN THE MEADOW
SLEEP IN THE HAY
BABY'S GOING TO DREAM THE NIGHT AWAY

NICE BABY SMILE AT ME
SWEET BABY SMILE AT ME
GOOD BABY ON MY KNEE
LOVELY BABY GO TO SLEEP

SLEEP IN THE MEADOW
SLEEP IN THE HAY
BABY'S GOT A DREAMING ON THE WAY

SLEEP IN THE MEADOW
SLEEP IN THE HAY
BABY'S GOING TO DREAM THE NIGHT AWAY

[ENTER CASEY]

CASEY
NOT TONIGHT. NOBODY DREAMS TO NIGHT.

ROBERT
WHAT? WHAT'S THAT YOU SAY?

CASEY [WITH AN AMUSED SNARL]
WHAT'S THAT I SAY? WHAT'S THAT YOU SAY?

ROBERT
EXCUSE ME, SIR. YES, SIR. WHAT'S THAT YOU SAY, SIR?

CASEY
BETTER. MUCH BETTER. WHAT I SAY IS NO HAPPY DARKY DREAMING TONIGHT. MR.
GAINES HAS OTHER PLANS.

CILLA

MARGARET
ACT 1; SCENE 2

8

WHAT PLANS, MR. CASEY?

CASEY

I'M SPEAKING TO YOUR BOY, CILLA. NOT YOU. [TO ROBERT] YOU HAVE BEEN RENTED OUT, BOY. MR. GAINES WANTS YOU ON YOUR WAY TONIGHT SO YOU'LL BE READY FOR WORK AT SUNRISE.

ROBERT

WHERE, SIR? WHERE IS HE SENDING ME?

CASEY

NOT YOUR BUSINESS TO KNOW. ONLY YOUR BUSINESS TO GO. THE WAGON IS ON THE ROAD. HOP TO IT, BOY!

MARGARET

I'LL GET READY. HOLD THE BABY, MAMA.

CASEY

HOLD ON, GIRL. YOU'LL GET READY ALL RIGHT. BUT YOU WON'T NEED THE WAGON. MR. GAINES WANTS YOU IN THE HOUSE, HIS HOUSE. AIN'T THAT NICE? NO MORE FIELD WORK. AIN'T THAT NICE? YOU CAN PUT YOUR FEET UP IN HIS HOUSE ALL DAY, ALL NIGHT TOO. AIN'T THAT NICE?

[ROBERT AND MARGARET EXCHANGE LOOKS. CILLA ROCKS THE BABY. CASEY LEAVES , MOCKING THE RHYTHM AND MELODY OF MARGARET'S LULLABY]

ROBERT

SKUNK! SNAKE! SON OF A WHORE!

CILLA

SHHH. DON'T WAKE THE BABY.

ROBERT

MARGARET
ACT 1; SCENE 2

9

YELLOWBELLY! SON OF A DOG!!

MARGARET

ROBERT. COOL DOWN. HE WILL HEAR YOU.

ROBERT

I AM A MAN! AIN'T I? AIN'T I? AIN'T I A MAN?

MARGARET

YES! YES! YOU ARE TO ME. TO US. BUT TO THEM, NOT YET. BUT SOON, SOON.
YOU'LL BE A MAN TO EVERY MAN AND I'LL BE A MOTHER TOO. SOON, BABY,
SOON. THE MESSAGE WILL COME AND WE WILL BE READY. JUST A LITTLE BIT MORE.
WE CAN TAKE A LITTLE BIT MORE, CAN'T WE?

ROBERT

THIS IS NOT A LITTLE BIT. I KNOW WHAT IS ON HIS MIND. BASTARD! THAT
BASTARD!

MARGARET

IT WON'T HAPPEN. IT WON'T!

ROBERT

HOW CAN YOU KNOW? HOW CAN YOU BE SURE?

MARGARET

YOU KNOW ME. YOU HAVE SEEN HOW I DEAL.

ROBERT

MARGARET
ACT 1; SCENE 2

10

THIS IS KILLING ME! I OUGHT TO BE KILLING HIM! I CAN! I WILL! I CAN!

MARGARET

NO. NO. REMEMBER OUR PLANS! I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.

ROBERT

YOU CAN'T CONTROL A SNAKE IN HIS OWN NEST, MARGARET.

MARGARET

HIS DAUGHTER, CAROLINE, LIVES THERE TOO. HE WILL BEHAVE.

CILLA

BELIEVE HER, SON. DON'T WORRY. IT CAN'T BE FOR TOO LONG.

MARGARET

WE WILL FIND A WAY. STAY STRONG. HE IS NOT THE MASTER OF ME.

MARGARET AND ROBERT

THE ONLY MASTER

[SHE] HOLD ME

[HE] HOLD ON

[SHE] STAY SWEET

[HE] STAY STRONG

[SHE] BE MY MOONRISE

[HE] BE MY DAWN

YOU ARE MY SHOULDER
YOU ARE MY SPINE
YOUR ARE MY COURAGE
YOU ARE THE SIGN
THAT LOVE IS THE ONLY MASTER THE HEART OBEYS
LOVE IS THE ONE MASTER MY HEART OBEYS.

[SHE] DON'T FORGET

[HE] I WON'T FORGET

[SHE] GET READY

[HE] STAY STEADY

[SHE] BE MY MOONRISE

[HE] BE MY DAWN

[TOGETHER]

YOU ARE MY SHOULDER
YOU ARE MY SPINE
YOU ARE MY COURAGE
YOU ARE THE SIGN
THAT LOVE IS THE ONLY MASTER THE HEART OBEYS
LOVE IS THE ONE MASTER MY HEART OBEYS

[LIGHTS DARKEN GRADUALLY. SCENE CHANGES TO GAINES' HOUSE. HE IS
DRINKING. CASEY ENTERS]

CASEY

YOU ASKED ME TO REPORT, MR. GAINES.

EDWARD

I DID. INDEED I DID. ANY PROBLEMS?

CASEY

MARGARET
ACT 1; SCENE 2

12

NOTHING I COULDN'T HANDLE, SIR. A LITTLE COMMOTION AT FIRST, BUT THEY'RE QUIET NOW.

EDWARD

QUIET? THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR. THE WAGON'S GONE?

CASEY

AS PLANNED.

EDWARD

THE GIRL?

CASEY

IN THE KITCHEN, SIR. HOLDING HER HEAD UP HIGH.

EDWARD

OH YES?

CASEY

SHE IS FEISTY, SIR. I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK IN HER EYES.

EDWARD

LOVELY! LOVELY! FEISTY WITH A LOOK IN HER EYE. WAIT A MOMENT, THEN TELL HER I WANT HER TO COME TO ME.

CASEY

AT YOUR PLEASURE, SIR.

EDWARD

A LITTLE SOLACE

A LITTLE SOLACE

FOR A HARD WORKING MAN
A RED RIBBON
SOOTHES A CALLOUSED HAND
SOME RESPITE FOR AN ACTIVE MIND
IS DUE
IS DUE

THE LEOPARD'S SPOTS ARE NOT MARKS OF SOIL
THEY ARE THE WISDOM OF NATURE'S DESIGN
THE NATURAL LANGUAGE OF ITS KIND
A CUE
IT'S TRUE.

A LITTLE SOLACE
FOR A HARDWORKING MAN.
A LITTLE SOLACE
FOR A HARDWORKING MAN

[EDWARD LOOKS UP AS TOWARD A BEDROOM. HE DRAWS FROM HIS POCKET A
RED RIBBON, FINGERING IT, STROKING IT HE MOVES TOWARD THE STAIRS.]

CURTAIN

ORCHESTRAL INTERLUDE 2.

[EDWARD GAINES' PARLOR. AN ENGAGEMENT PARTY IS IN PROGRESS. GUESTS DANCE A QUIET STYLIZED WALTZ WITH PIANO AND VIOLINS IN THE BACK GROUND. DOWN STAGE ARE EDWARD, CAROLINE, GEORGE.]

EDWARD [TO THE GUESTS]

PLEASE. MAY I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION?

[GUESTS GATHER AROUND]

EDWARD

I PROMISED CAROLINE'S MOTHER TWO THINGS. ONE, THAT I WOULD STAY A WIDOWER. TWO THAT I WOULD SEE TO HER FUTURE CARE. SHE HAS PROVEN THE RIGHTNESS OF THOSE PROMISES. MY DAUGHTER WILL INHERIT A SOUND ESTATE—WHICH, I MIGHT ADD, HAS GROWN FROM MODEST TO GRAND, THANKS TO ME. AND HER CHOICE OF HUSBAND IS EVERYTHING HER MOTHER WISHED FOR. A MAN OF STATURE AND LEARNING.

CAROLINE

AND YOU, FATHER? IS HE WHAT YOU HAVE WISHED FOR ME?

EDWARD

EXACTLY SO. PRECISELY SO. AM I RIGHT, GEORGE? AM I?

GEORGE

I AM NOT SURE THAT I DESERVE HER, BUT I WILL SPEND MY LIFE TRYING TO SERVE HER AND EARN THE DEVOTION SHE SQUANDERS ON ME.

EDWARD

WELL PUT, SON. CAROLINE, MY ADORABLE CAROLINE. GIVE YOUR FATHER A DAUGHTER'S EMBRACE.

[CAROLINE ENTERS HIS ARMS FOR HIS EMBRACE. HE HOLDS HER TOO TIGHTLY]

CAROLINE [LAUGHING]

OH, FATHER. I CANNOT BREATHE.

EDWARD

FORGIVE ME. MY ARMS ARE LIKE MY LOVE. STRONG AND ALL EMBRACING.

CAROLINE

NEVER MIND, FATHER. I HAVE PROSPERED SO MUCH IN YOUR ARMS I CAN NOW EMBRACE ANOTHER.

[TURNS TO GEORGE]

GEORGE

THERE IS NO RIVAL HERE. LOVE DOES NOT CONQUER OR DISPOSE. IT DOUBLES AND TRIPLES WITH USE.

EDWARD

I AGREE. LIKE MONEY IN THE BANK.

GEORGE

OH, NO, SIR. LOVE IS AN OCEAN BREAKING INTO RIVERS; THOSE RIVERS
BREAKING INTO STREAMS.

EDWARD

WATCH OUT! HE WILL DROWN YOU, DAUGHTER.

CAROLINE

ALL WILLINGLY, WILLINGLY, WILL I SWIM IN HIS SEA OF LOVE. AIR MEANS NOTHING
TO ME WITHOUT HIM.

EDWARD

A MINUTE AGO YOU WERE GASPING FOR AIR. 'I CAN'T BREATHE! I CAN'T
BREATHE!' NOW YOU TRADE IT FOR WATER. YOUR CONFUSION DISTURBS ME,
DAUGHTER.

GEORGE

SHE NEEDS BOTH, SIR. AS ALL LIFE DOES: AIR AND WATER. NO RIVALRY THERE.
THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE IS ALWAYS CONFUSING. IT CAN NEVER BE AS CLEAR AS
THE EMOTION IT TRIES TO CONVEY. THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE ...

EDWARD

IS AN IMPOSTER! HIDING IN DRESSES OF VERSE

GEORGE

IS A MAGICIAN! TURNING ROSES INTO DOVES ON THE WING

EDWARD

IS AN INFANT'S HAND IN A FATHER'S GLOVE

CAROLINE

A RAFT IN A STORMY SEA, OFFERING RESCUE

GEORGE

A LIGHT HOUSE TO GUIDE US OVER HEAVY WAVES

EDWARD

A THIEF RESPECTING NO HOUSEHOLD, STEALING THE LOVED ONES AWAY

CAROLINE

A CLIPPER SHIP WITH ROOM AFTER ROOM AFTER ROOM FOR DANCING! FOR CAKES
AND TEA...AND CHAMPAGNE!

[MARGARET ENTERS WITH A TRAY OF GLASSES]

EDWARD

WELL THAT IS OUR ANSWER, THEN. CHAMPAGNE HEALS ALL WOUNDS AND PUTS
ARGUMENT TO BED. CONGRATULATIONS, SON. BLESSINGS DAUGHTER.

[THEY DRINK AS MARGARET SERVES THE GUESTS]

CAROLINE

MARGARET. WAIT A MOMENT. COME TO ME. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

MARGARET

EXCUSE ME? MAM?

CAROLINE

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT LOVE? WE WERE DISCUSSING THE WORDS TO
DESCRIBE IT. DO THEY HELP US TO LOVE OR HURT US BEYOND REPAIR?

EDWARD [WARNING]

CHILD! CHILD!

GUESTS

OH DEAR. WE THOUGHT HE WAS QUALITY THIS IS A MISTAKE QUALITY FOLK
WOULD NEVER MAKE. A PROFOUND INSULT. WHAT KIND OF HOUSE DOES HE
RUN?

CAROLINE

I WANT TO KNOW. I WANT TO KNOW WHAT SHE THINKS.

EDWARD

CAROLINE. YOU ARE TOO WILLFUL. SHE CAN'T ANSWER YOU.

CAROLINE

WHY NOT? SHE HAS LOVED ME, SERVED ME, TAUGHT ME. PUT ME TO BED,
WATCHED OVER MY SLEEP, STITCHED MY CLOTHES AND FED ME WITH HER OWN
HANDS WHEN I COULD NOT MANAGE ON MY OWN. WHO KNOWS BETTER THAN
SHE HOW TO SAY WHAT LOVE IS? CAN WORDS DO IT JUSTICE, MARGARET?
ENCOURAGE ITS SUCCESS? OR, AS MY FATHER SAYS, IS THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE
AN IMPOSTER? A THIEF IN THE NIGHT?

MARGARET

BEGGING YOUR PARDON, MISS CAROLINE. MR. GAINES IS THE EXPERT HERE.

EDWARD

YOU SEE? SHE HAS NOTHING TO SAY ON THE MATTER. LOVE IS NOT HER CUP OF
TEA.

CAROLINE [TO MARGARET]

MY FATHER? THE EXPERT? HIS LOVE IS ROUGH. YOURS IS TENDER.

MARGARET

WORDS OF LOVE ARE MOTHS—EASY FOOD FOR FLAME. ACTIONS ALONE SAY
WHAT LOVE MAY BE.

EDWARD

ENOUGH! WE HAVE ALL HAD ENOUGH OF THIS NONSENSE.

GUESTS

YES, ENOUGH. WHO IS INTERESTED IN A SLAVE WOMAN'S VIEWS?

EDWARD

I REFUSE TO HEAR A SLAVE COMMENT ON THINGS OUTSIDE HER SCOPE. OF
COURSE SHE IS TENDER TO A CHILD, BUT WHAT CAN A SLAVE KNOW OF ADULT
LOVE GIVEN FREELY? OUR GUESTS ARE RIGHT. HER VIEWS ARE WORTHLESS. [TO
MARGARET] YOU ARE EXCUSED. LEAVE US.

[MARGARET EXITS]

CAROLINE

FATHER, YOU SHAME ME. SHE IS AS COMPLETE A HUMAN AS YOU ARE.

GEORGE

IF SHE IS A MOTHER, MAYBE MORE SO.

GUESTS

COMPLETE? WHY NOT? IMPOSSIBLE! NOT AT ALL. OUTRAGEOUS!

EDWARD

YOU DISAPPOINT ME. HOW COULD LOVE EXIST IN A SLAVE. PASSION, PERHAPS.
BUT WOULD SHE KNOW THE DIFFERENCE?

CAROLINE

THERE ARE MANY KINDS OF LOVE, FATHER.

CAROLINE AND GEORGE

AND MANY KINDS OF LOVERS.

GUESTS

THIS IS TOO SUBTLE FOR ME. AND ME. AND ME. PERHAPS IT'S TIME TO SAY GOOD NIGHT. ARGUMENT CHILLS A PARTY. GOOD NIGHT. GOOD NIGHT. AND GOOD NIGHT!

[GUESTS EXIT, COOLY, DISAPPROVINGLY, BOWING STIFFLY]

EDWARD [CHAGRINED BY THE GUESTS EARLY DEPARTURE]

FOOLS. IDIOTS. WHAT DO THEY KNOW ABOUT QUALITY FOLK? [THEN WITH REGRET] THIS WAS TO BE A PROUD MOMENT. NOW YOU HAVE GIVEN MY NEIGHBORS MORE REASON TO GOSSIP AND DESPISE ME.

CAROLINE

I AM SORRY, FATHER, IF I UPSET YOU.

GEORGE

SO AM I. DON'T THINK US UNGRATEFUL FOR THIS CELEBRATION.

CAROLINE

FORGIVE US, FATHER. WE DID NOT MEAN TO BE RUDE, ONLY TO SAY WHAT WE BELIEVE. HONESTY SHOULD NOT OFFEND YOU.

EDWARD

I AM NOT SO WEAK AS TO BE OFFENDED BY INNOCENCE.

CAROLINE

BUT FATHER—PLEASE TRY TO UNDERSTAND.

EDWARD

MY SWEET CAROLINE. IT DOESN'T MATTER. ALL IS WELL. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELVES. GOODBYE. TAKE CARE.

[CAROLINE AND GEORGE EXIT]

EDWARD

IT DOESN'T MATTER AT ALL. I HAVE SUCCEEDED JUST AS I SAID I WOULD. ENVY IS THE TRUE PRICE OF WEALTH—WHICH I EASILY, HAPPILY PAY. A RICH MAN HAS MANY REMEDIES.

[EDWARD BEGINS TO EXIT, BUT LINGERS, HIDDEN, WHEN HE NOTICES MARGARET RETURNING TO CLEAR THE GLASSES. SHE PICKS UP A GLASS AND, HOLDING IT TO THE LIGHT, PEERS INTO IT AS IF IT WERE A CRYSTAL BALL.]

MARGARET [TO THE GLASS]

IS IT TRUE? ARE THERE MANY KINDS OF LOVE? SHOW ME EACH AND EVERY ONE. YOU CAN'T, CAN YOU? FOR THERE IS JUST ONE KIND.

QUALITY LOVE

ONLY QUALITY LOVE CAN ENDURE
A HAND-ME-DOWN LIFE

UNHARNESSED HEARTS CAN SURVIVE
A LOCKED-DOWN LIFE

LIKE A RIVER RUSHING FROM THE GRIP OF ITS BANKS
AS LIGHT ESCAPES THE COLD STAR

QUALITY LOVE WILL BREAK AWAY

WHEN SORROW CLOUDS THE MIND
THE SPINE GROWS STRONG

NO PRETTY WORDS CAN SOOTHE OR CURE
WHAT HEAVY HANDS CAN BREAK

WHEN SORROW IS DEEP
THE SECRET SOUL KEEPS

ITS QUALITY LOVE.

NO PRETTY WORDS CAN SOOTHE OR CURE
WHAT HEAVY HANDS CAN BREAK

WHEN SORROW IS DEEP
THE SECRET SOUL KEEPS

ITS QUALITY LOVE.

[EDWARD LEAVES HIS HIDING PLACE. MOVES TOWARD MARGARET AND TAKES THE
GLASS FROM HER HAND. DROPS IT TO THE FLOOR. HE PULLS A RED RIBBON FROM
HIS POCKET AND DANGLES IT.]

EDWARD

SUCH FINE SENTIMENTS. TOO FINE, I THINK FOR A SLAVE. BUT I HAVE REMEDIES.

MARGARET

THEY CAN NOT TOUCH THE SECRET SOUL

EDWARD

YOUR SOUL IS NOT REALLY ON MY MIND.

[WRAPPING THE RIBBON AROUND HER NECK, SLOWLY, IN COMPLETE CONTROL,
HE PULLS HER ACROSS THE STAGE TOWARD HIS QUARTERS]

EXIT

CURTAIN

ORCHESTRAL INTERLUDE 3.

[WINTER. FIVE YEARS LATER. DOWN STAGE RIGHT CILLA'S CABIN.
UPSTAGE IN SINISTER LIGHT, CASEY AND A BLACK MALE . CASEY
HOLDS HIM BY THE THROAT, ANIMATED. WE CAN NOT HEAR THE
DIALOGUE. MARGARET ENTERS CILLA'S CABIN. CILLA IS PUTTING
CHILDREN'S CLOTHES--INCLUDING A HOME MADE DOLL, ETC. IN A
CARPET BAG. MARGARET ENTERS.]

MARGARET

HAS HE COME?

CILLA

NOT YET, BUT SOON. ROBERT IS MY SON AND HIS WORD IS GOLD.

[MARGARET NOTICES CARPET BAG.]

MARGARET

WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WHERE ARE THE CHILDREN?

CILLA

CALM YOURSELF. YOUR DAUGHTER IS WITH KATE. SO ARE THE TWINS.

MARGARET

WHY ARE YOU FOLDING THEIR CLOTHES? YOU ARE PACKING THEM
AWAY! WHAT AREN'T YOU TELLING ME? HAS CASEY BEEN HERE?

CILLA

YOU HAVE CHANGED SO, MARGARET. EACH TIME YOU VISIT I SEE LESS
OF YOU AND MORE OF A WET HEN.

MARGARET

BUT I SAW CASEY LURKING NEARBY. IS HE TAKING THEM AWAY? HAVE
THEY BEEN SOLD? HAVE THEY? HAVE THEY?

CILLA

DON'T CUT UP SO. THE NEWS IS GOOD.

MARGARET

WHAT NEWS? PLEASE, CILLA. WHAT IS HAPPENING?

[CILLA PULLS MARGARET INTO PARTIAL SHADOW]

CILLA

IT'S TIME, DARLING GIRL. AT LAST, THE TIME HAS COME. THE PLAN IS
SET. THAT'S WHY YOUR HUSBAND IS LATE. HE IS MAKING SURE ALL IS
IN PLACE. BLANKETS, FOOD, WATER. THE TRAIN LEAVES TONIGHT.

MARGARET

SWEET JESUS!

CILLA

SWEETER THAN SYRUP AND RIGHT ON TIME.

[MARGARET PICKS UP ARTICLES OF HER CHILDREN'S CLOTHES.]

MARGARET
ACT 1: SCENE 4

4

DANCING WITH THEM (A LITTLE SHIRT HELD BY ITS SLEEVES LIKE A
DANCING PARTNER; HER DAUGHTER'S DRESS HELD AGAINST HER CHEST
LIKE A BALL GOWN) SHE SINGS A VERSE OF "LULLABY."]

MARGARET

SLEEP MY BABIES IN THE MEADOW

SLEEP MY BABIES IN THE HAY

MY BABIES GOT SOME DREAMING TO DO

CAUSE FREEDOM'S ON THE WAY

[ENTER ROBERT. MARGARET AND HE EMBRACE.]

MARGARET

YOU DIDN'T SAY A WORD LAST SUNDAY.

ROBERT

I COULDN'T. I HAD TO BE SURE.

MARGARET

MARGARET
ACT 1: SCENE 4

5

WHEN DO WE LEAVE?

ROBERT

THREE HOURS.

MARGARET

OH LORD. I'M GOING TO CRY

ROBERT

YOU? NOT YOU? MY SOLDIER GIRL'S GOING TO CRY?

[ROBERT HOLDS HER; SHE TURNS AWAY AS IF EMBARRASSED. HE
PERSISTS.]

ROBERT

IT'S ALL RIGHT.

GO CRY, GIRL

GO CRY, GIRL

YOU HAVE WON YOUR TEARS

GO CRY, GIRL

THE STRING IS CUT

THE TALE IS TOLD

I KNOW. I KNOW.

DON'T THINK I DON'T KNOW.

GO CRY, GIRL

GIRL, GO CRY

THE GATE IS OPEN

THE WAY IS CLEAR

DON'T THINK I DON'T KNOW

GO CRY, GIRL

GIRL, GO CRY

MARGARET [RECOVERING, BUT AGITATED]

WHERE WILL WE GO? ARE THERE OTHERS? WHO WILL LEAD US? DO
WE NEED MONEY? WHERE WILL WE HIDE? IS THERE ENOUGH FOOD?

ROBERT

MARGARET
ACT 1: SCENE 4

7

SH. SH. I AM IN CHARGE. EVERYTHING IS READY EXCEPT YOU. NOW
HELP MAMA FINISH PACKING. I AM GOING FOR THE CHILDREN.

[ROBERT EXITS]

CILLA [LOCKING THE BAG]

ALL DONE. I'M THROUGH.

MARGARET

WHERE ARE YOUR THINGS? I DON'T SEE YOUR THINGS, MAMA.

CILLA

DARLING GIRL, I AM TOO OLD TO TREAD NEW WATER. I AM BOUND TO
STAY HERE.

MARGARET

MAMA! YOU HAVE TO COME WITH US.

CILLA

NO, I DON'T. SEEING YOU, MY SON AND MY GRANDCHILDREN GONE
FROM THIS PLACE, AWAY FROM SATAN'S BREATH IS MY BLESSING.
DON'T MOURN ME. WHEN MY FAMILY IS SAFE, I WILL BE ONLY NEAR
THE CROSS—NOT ON IT.

CILLA

HE IS BY

HE IS BY,

FOREVER BY ME.

IN HIS SHADOW I WILL LINGER ON A WHILE

TIL HE CALLS ME

NO TRUMPETS OR STREETS OF GOLD

HE WILL COME IN SILENCE

BAREFOOT IN THE GRASS AND GATHER ME

IN HIS ARMS

AMEN.

[SUNG IN COUNTERPOINT WITH CILLA'S HE IS BY

MARGARET

PLEASE DON'T CONFINE US
TO THE EDGE OF YOUR MIND

IN SHADOW

WE DON'T WANT
TRUMPETS OR STREETS OF GOLD

AS WE LEAVE IN SILENCE

BAREFOOT IN THE GRASS

GIVE US YOUR ARMS

MARGARET

IT WILL BREAK MY HEART KNOWING YOU ARE STILL HERE. WE CAN'T BE
FREE WITHOUT YOU. ROBERT WILL INSIST.

CILLA

I WILL RESIST. I AM HIS PARENT. HE IS NOT MINE. HUSH. HEAR ME
NOW: DON'T WASTE MUSCLE WHERE NONE IS WANTED. YOU WILL
NEED EVERY BONE AND SINEW PLUS YOUR MIND TO GET AWAY FROM
HERE. FOLLOW YOUR HUSBAND. SAVE YOUR CHILDREN, MOTHER!

[APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS ARE HEARD]

CILLA [SMILING IN ANTICIPATION]

REAR UP, NOW. HERE COME YOUR CHILDREN.

[ENTER CASEY. MARGARET AND CILLA RECOIL IN SHOCK]

CASEY [LOOKING AROUND]

PLANNING A LITTLE TRIP? OR JUST CLEANING OUT THE STY?

[ROBERT ENTERS. HE DOES NOT SEE CASEY]

ROBERT

THE CHILDREN ARE COMING. THEY...[STOPS, SEEING CASEY]

CASEY

WELL, I'LL BE. LOOK WHAT CRAWLED OUT OF THE WOODS. PAPPY
BEAR. COME TO GET MAMMY BEAR AND ALL THE LITTLE CUBS?

[ROBERT, MARGARET, CILLA ARE FROZEN IN TERROR]

CASEY [TO CILLA]

I GUESS YOU MUST BE GOLDBLOCKS. SEEMS THE PORRIDGE IS ALL ET
UP. LET ME SEE WHAT I CAN OFFER YOU.

[REACHES INTO HIS COAT AND PULLS OUT A PISTOL]

CASEY [CONT'D]

GUN POWDER MIGHT BE A LITTLE DRY, BUT GOLDBLOCKS GOT TO EAT,
DON'T SHE?

[POINTS PISTOL AT CILLA'S MOUTH]

CASEY [CONT'D.]

[WAVING TO ROBERT AND MARGARET WITH HIS FREE HAND]

LET'S JUST LINE UP OVER THERE.

[ROBERT ATTACKS CASEY. A VIOLENT STRUGGLE FOLLOWS. ROBERT

MARGARET
ACT 1: SCENE 4

12

EMERGES WITH CASEY'S PISTOL. HE STANDS IN PROFILE POINTING
PISTOL AT CASEY. HESITATES.]

CASEY

YOU KILL ME, BOTH OF US IS DEAD. YOUR FAMILY TOO.

ROBERT

AND IF YOU LIVE, WILL THEY?

MARGARET

DON'T KILL HIM. HE IS ALREADY DEAD.

CASEY [TO MARGARET]

BLACK SLUT! DON'T YOU BEG FOR ME!

ROBERT

DOG WITHOUT TEETH!! REMEMBER HELL? GO HOME TO IT NOW!

[SHOOTS CASEY. CASEY FALLS.]

CILLA

LAP OF GOD, ROBERT. WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

ROBERT

PROVED MY WORTH AS A MAN AND YOUR SON.

CILLA [HANDS CLASPED]

FORGIVE HIM, FATHER. THIS MAY BE THE END.

MARGARET

NO! WE CAN'T CHANGE WHAT IS DONE. QUICK! ROBERT, YOU HAVE
TO RUN!

ROBERT

I CAN'T LEAVE YOU ALL HERE!

MARGARET

TELL ME WHERE TO MEET YOU. THEN GO!

ROBERT [AGITATED]

IN THE BOTTOM...BY THE MIMOSA. THE GRASS IS TALL THERE. WHEN
THE MOON HITS THE TOP OF THE PINES, THE WAGON WILL BE THERE.

CILLA

HURRY, SON! MAKE TRACKS. NOW! WE'LL HANDLE GOD'S OUTCAST.
[BEGINS TO DRAG THE BODY]

ROBERT

MARGARET. OH MY SWEET WOMAN!

MARGARET

THE BOTTOM...TALL GRASS...MIMOSA...

ROBERT

MARGARET
ACT 1: SCENE 4

15

BE THERE. WHEN THE MOONLIGHT...

MARGARET

...TOUCHES PINE

ROBERT

LISTEN FOR THE WAGON WHEELS. WATCH FOR...

MARGARET

MOONLIGHT. THE MOONLIGHT. WE'LL MEET YOU IN THE
MOONLIGHT. GO!

[ROBERT EXITS]

CURTAIN

MARGARET
ACT 1: SCENE 4

16

ORCHESTRAL INTERLUDE 4.

THREE DAYS LATER. RIVER BANK IN OHIO. TWILIGHT WITH A STORM
THREATENING. DOWNSTAGE AN UNDERGROUND SHELTER—A
STRUCTURE SHORED UP BY BOARDS—LIKE A LARGE ROOT CELLAR.
THREE OR FOUR STEPS LEAD UP TO A DOOR. UPSTAGE LEFT A HUGE
ELM GROWS UNDER A DARKENING SKY. ROBERT STANDS BENEATH
IT. INSIDE THE SHELTER HOT COALS GLIMMER FROM A HOLE IN THE
EARTHEN FLOOR. FROM BEHIND A BLANKET HANGING FROM THE
RAFTERS WHERE THE CHILDREN ARE SLEEPING, MARGARET EMERGES.
SHE FANS EMBER SMOKE TOWARD THE OPEN DOOR FOR A WHILE,
THEN CLIMBS THE STEPS TO STAND OUTSIDE.

MARGARET

THE CHILDREN ARE TROUBLED. THEY CRY IN THEIR SLEEP.

MARGARET
ACT 1: SCENE 5

2

ROBERT

I KNOW. BUT FREEDOM IS IN OUR TEETH.

MARGARET

TELL ME AGAIN. WHAT IS THE NAME OF THIS PLACE?

ROBERT

OHIO. IT MEANS 'BEAUTIFUL.'

MARGARET

IS IT?

ROBERT

SO I HEAR. A BEAUTIFUL PLACE FOR A FUTURE.

MARGARET

TELL ME. TELL ME WHAT THE FUTURE WILL BE LIKE.

ROBERT

IT WILL BE YOU AS MY WIFE
NO OTHER MAN CAN TOUCH OR CLAIM.
IT WILL BE THE CHILDREN SEATED NOT BENT.
SEATED IN SCHOOL ROOMS
NOT BENDING THROUGH ROWS OF CORN.
IT WILL BE ME
PAID FOR MY LABOR
WITH COIN OF THE REALM.

MARGARET
WILL I PLANT A GARDEN?
MEND YOUR SHIRTS BY LAMPLIGHT?
WILL I WATCH FROM A WINDOW OUR CHILDREN
TUMBLING IN CLOVER AND ROSEMARY?

ROBERT
TRUST ME, MARGARET. IT WILL BE JUST SO.

MARGARET

WILL THEY SWIM IN CLEAR WATER
UNTIL THEIR SKIN GLITTERS LIKE BRASS?

TELL ME.

ROBERT

THEY WILL.

LOOK. SEE THIS TREE?
HOW ITS LOWERING BRANCHES PROTECT YOU
NO MATTER WHAT THE WEATHER BRINGS.

IMAGINE.

THAT IS HOW I WILL ALWAYS BE.

[MARGARET PICKS A LEAF FROM THE TREE AND CARESSES HIS FACE WITH
IT. THEY DANCE A TEASING, CATCH-ME DANCE AROUND THE TREE
(WITH THE LEAF RESONANT OF MARGARET'S RED NECK RIBBON). AT
CLOSE OF THE DANCE THEY EMBRACE SINGING]

MARGARET AND ROBERT

THAT IS HOW I WILL ALWAYS BE.

THAT IS HOW IT WILL ALWAYS BE.

ROBERT

[PLACES THE LEAF IN HER HAIR]

COME INSIDE. IT'S DANGEROUS OUT HERE. SOMEONE MAY SEE US.

[THEY RETURN TO THE SHED. AS SOON AS THEY SETTLE DOWN, LOUD
HOOF BEATS ARE HEARD. ROBERT GRABS THE PISTOL. MARGARET
RUNS TO THE CHILDREN BEHIND THE BLANKET. SIX MEN ARRIVE— FIVE
SLAVE CATCHERS AND EDWARD GAINES LEADING THEM. THEY BANG
AGAINST THE DOOR.]

EDWARD

OPEN! OPEN UP!

[LONG SILENCE FROM INSIDE THE SHELTER]

EDWARD

IF BLOOD SHED IS ON YOUR MIND, DON'T WORRY. I JUST WANT
WHAT IS MINE.

EDWARD AND SLAVE CATCHERS [SINGING]

NO HARM. COME SOFTLY.

NO HARM. OPEN UP.

THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO.

WE CAN WAIT. WE WILL WAIT.

AS LONG AS WE HAVE TO.

THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO.

[THEY BREAK THROUGH THE DOOR. ONE FIRES IN THE AIR. ROBERT
FIRES BACK AND MISSES. MEN RUSH IN AND GRAB HIM FORCING HIM
TO THE FLOOR WHERE HE IS HIT IN THE HEAD, KNOCKED
UNCONSCIOUS AND TIED UP. MARGARET BURSTS FROM BEHIND THE
BLANKET, SCREAMING.]

MARGARET

NO! NO MORE! [REMINISCENT OF THE "NO" LYRICS IN THE OPENING
SCENE] WHY CAN'T YOU LEAVE US BE?

EDWARD

LEAVE MURDERERS BE? I OWN HIM! I OWN YOUR CHILDREN!

[SOFTER] I OWN YOU.

[EDWARD SPINS MARGARET AROUND GRIPPING HER FROM BEHIND]

MARGARET [MOANING]

SOMEBODY HELP US! SOMEBODY!

EDWARD

MY BED IS COLD, GIRL. IT WANTS HEATING. REMEMBER THE BED
WARMER YOU RAN OVER MY SHEETS? FIRST YOU FILLED IT WITH HOT
COALS AS I RECALL...

MARGARET [BREAKING AWAY]

HERE THEY ARE! TAKE THEM! TAKE THEM!

[SHE PLUNGES HER HAND INTO THE SMOLDERING FIRE, PICKS UP A
PIECE OF COAL AND THROWS IT AT EDWARD. THEN ANOTHER. AND
ANOTHER. EDWARD SUCCESSFULLY DODGES EACH ONE. THEN GRABS
MARGARET'S WRISTS, LOOKS AT HER SCORCHED HANDS AND FORCES
HER TO HER KNEES.]

EDWARD

MANGLE YOURSELF, I DON'T CARE.

[THROWS HER PRONE ON THE GROUND. CHILDREN'S CRIES ARE
MOUNTING.]

EDWARD

CASEY WAS NOT ENOUGH? YOU WILL KILL ME TOO? OH NO, MY
LITTLE CROW.

MARGARET
ACT 1: SCENE 5

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[SLAVE CATCHER ENTERS]

SLAVE CATCHER

HE'S BOUND AND READY, SIR.

MARGARET

DAMN YOUR MARBLE EYES, YOUR PUTRID, PUTRID HEART. DAMN YOUR
SLITHERING SOUL!

EDWARD [TO SLAVE CATCHER]

TAKE THE YOUNG ONES TO THE WAGON. THEN LIGHT THE FIRE. THE
NIGHT IS COLD AND PROMISES TO BE LONG.

[LIGHTS UP OUTSIDE REVEAL SILHOUETTE OF ROBERT'S FIGURE. HIS
FEET REST ON A BOX UNDER THE ELM TREE]

ROBERT

MARGARET! MARGARET! I LOVE YOU! I LOVE—

MARGARET
ACT 1: SCENE 5

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[HIS VOICE IS CUT OFF AS THE BOX IS KICKED AWAY . IN THE SUDDEN
SILENCE, MARGARET PULLS THE LEAF FROM HER HAIR, HOLDS IT IN HER
SCORCHED HANDS AND WEEPS INTO IT.]

CURTAIN