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*Current draft*

# **Margaret Garner**

An Opera in Two Acts

Music by Richard Danielpour

Libretto by Toni Morrison

(12/01/03)

~~P 3 C?)~~

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67

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9

(agnes  
1972)

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108

15

127

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143)

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146-7 orph

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152

59

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160



P. 175

184

190



## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### Principal Roles

<b>Margaret Garner*</b> , a slave in her mid-20s, Robert's wife	Mezzo-Soprano
<b>Robert Garner*</b> , a slave in his early 30s, Margaret's husband	Lyric Baritone
<b>Cilla*</b> , a slave about 50 years old, Robert's mother	Dramatic Soprano
<b>Edward Gaines</b> , the handsome and charismatic Master of Maplewood Plantation, in his late 30s or early 40s	Lyric Baritone

### Secondary Roles

<b>Casey</b> , the Foreman of Maplewood Plantation	Dramatic Tenor
<b>Caroline Gaines</b> , the daughter of Edward Gaines, engaged to George Hancock	Light Lyric Soprano
<b>George Hancock</b> , engaged to Caroline Gaines	Tenor
<b>Auctioneer</b> , a Professional Salesman [doubles as <b>Fisherman I</b> and <b>Judge I</b> ]	Lyric Tenor
<b>Slave Catchers</b> **	min. 6-8 singers: 3-4 T; 3-4 Bar ( <i>divisi</i> lyric and Verdi baritones)
<b>A Foreman/An Oarsman</b>	non-singing role
<b>2 Fishermen</b> ** [ <b>Fisherman I</b> (T) doubles as <b>Auctioneer</b> and <b>Judge I</b> ; <b>Fisherman II</b> (Bar) doubles as <b>Judge II</b> ]	T, Bar
<b>A Marshall/Country fiddler</b>	onstage fiddleplayer
<b>A Guard/The Hangman</b>	non-singing role
<b>3 Judges</b> ** [ <b>Judge I</b> (T) doubles as <b>Auctioneer</b> and <b>Fisherman I</b> ; <b>Judge II</b> (Bar) doubles as <b>Fisherman II</b> ; <b>Judge III</b> is B-bar]	T, Bar, B-Bar

<b>Militia Men</b>	non-singing roles
<b>Margaret's 2 Children</b>	non-singing roles
<b>The Townspeople/The Guests***</b> (aka, "White Chorus")	SATB: 40 voices (min. 32 voices)
<b>The Slaves*</b> (aka, "Black Chorus")	SATB: 32 voices (min. 20 voices)

\* Although much latitude is possible in casting, *Margaret Garner* does require that these roles be sung by Black performers.

\*\* These roles can be sung by members of the White Chorus.

\*\*\* It is essential that The Townspeople and The Guests are exclusively White Performers, and that the "White Chorus" outnumber the "Slave Chorus."

(12/01/03)



# MARGARET GARNER

## Act I, scene i: Kentucky, April 1856.

The opera begins in total darkness, without any sense of location or time period. Out of the blackness, a large group of slaves gradually becomes visible. They are huddled together on an elevated platform in the center of the stage.

### **CHORUS:** "No More!"

#### **THE SLAVES**

*(Slave Chorus, Margaret, Cilla, and Robert)*

NO, NO MORE.  
NO MORE, NOT MORE.  
PLEASE, GOD, NO MORE.  
NO, NOT MORE.  
DEAR GOD, NO MORE!

*(confidently, with a sense of defiance)*

NO, NO! NO MORE!  
NO, NO! NO MORE!

#### **MARGARET**

ANKLES CIRCLED WITH A CHAIN...

#### **SLAVE CHORUS**

...NO, NO. NO, NO MORE!  
NO, NO MORE!  
*(tenors and basses)* PLEASE, GOD, NO MORE!

#### **MARGARET**

SKIN BROKEN BY ~~A~~ <sup>the</sup> CANE...

#### **SLAVE CHORUS**

...NO, NO! NO MORE!  
NO, NO. NO MORE!

**MARGARET**

BLOODY PILLOWS...

**SLAVE CHORUS**

...NO, NO. NO, NO MORE!  
NO, NO, NO!  
(basses) PLEASE GOD, NO MORE!

**MARGARET**

UNDER MY HEAD...

**SLAVE CHORUS**

... NO, NO, NO MORE!  
NO, NO MORE.  
NO, NO, NO!  
(basses) DEAR GOD, NO MORE!

**MARGARET**

WISHING, PRAYING...

**SLAVE CHORUS**

... NO, NO! NO, NO MORE! ...  
(basses) DEAR GOD, NO MORE!

**MARGARET**

... I WAS DEAD.

**THE SLAVES**

*(Slave Chorus, Cilla, and Robert)*

NO, NO. NO, NO MORE!  
NO, NO. NO MORE!  
NO, NO, NO!  
DEAR GOD, PLEASE, NO MORE!



**SLAVE CHORUS**

*(without Cilla and Robert)*

DEAR GOD,  
NO MORE, NOT MORE.  
PLEASE, NO MORE.

**MARGARET**

BLOODY PILLOWS UNDER MY HEAD;  
WISHING, PRAYING I WAS DEAD.

**THE SLAVES**

*(Slave Chorus, Cilla, and Robert)*

PLEASE GOD, NO MORE.

**MARGARET**

MASTER'S BRAND IS FOLLOWING ME;  
ROPE CAN SWING FROM ANY OLD TREE.

**THE SLAVES**

*(Slave Chorus, Cilla, and Robert)*

*(pleading)*  
PLEASE GOD, NO MORE.  
PLEASE GOD, NO MORE.  
PLEASE GOD, NO MORE.  
NO MORE!

\*\*\*\*

The lights go up, and illuminate the entire stage. The "elevated platform" on which the slaves stood at the beginning of the opera is revealed now to be a trading block situated in the middle of a busy townsquare in Kentucky. It is April 1856. In preparation for a slave auction, members of slave families are being separated from one another, and grouped according to gender and age.

The local townspeople are gathering eagerly for the auction. They exhibit a small-town mentality: familiar with everyone else's daily life and business, they love to gossip and at times can be judgmental of others. Also in the crowd of onlookers is a handsome, genteel man named Edward Gaines, accompanied by his daughter Caroline.

**AUCTIONEER**

*(freely chanted)*

BY THE POWERS INVESTED  
AND BY CUSTOMS INGESTED  
I HEREBY DECLARE AND ALLOW:

THE SALE OF ALL GOODS  
AND CATTLE AND WOODLAND,  
SLAVES AND PLANTING FIELDS  
DARK WITH LOAM.

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  
DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR,  
POUND FOR POUND,  
THE BESTEST VALUE FOR MILES AROUND.

*(A foreman approaches the slaves. He cracks a bullwhip, and the slaves immediately assume different positions for inspection: they bare their teeth, expose their backs, stretch out their necks, etc.)*

**THE TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(White Chorus)*

HOW MUCH? HOW MUCH?  
FOR PICKNIES AND MAMMIES AND BREEDERS AND BUCKS?  
HOW MUCH? HOW MUCH?  
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  
EXCEPT FOR WE WHO CLOTHE THEM AND FEED THEM  
AND LET THEM SLEEP WHEN THEY ARE ILL.  
WE TEACH THEM ALL THEY WILL EVER KNOW,  
ALL THEY WILL EVER KNOW  
OF GOD AND WORK AND HOME!



**AUCTIONEER**

BY THE POWERS INVESTED  
AND BY CUSTOMS INGESTED,  
I HEREBY DECLARE AND ALLOW  
THIS SALE TO BE NOW OPEN!

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

WHAT SAY? WHAT SAY?  
FOR MILKING AND PLOWING  
AND SPINNING AND CANNING AND SUCH.  
HOW MUCH? HOW MUCH?  
FOR PICKNIES AND MAMMIES AND BREEDERS AND BUCKS,  
WHO KNOW NOTHING OF GOD AND HOME!

**AUCTIONEER**

*(bringing forth the first slave for sale)*

NOW THIS HERE IS CILLA.  
ABOUT FIFTY, SHE THINKS.  
A COOK, A CHILD NURSE, LAUNDRESS AND SEAMSTRESS.

THIS BID BEGINS AT TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS.  
DO I HEAR TWO FORTY, TWO FORTY, TWO FORTY, TWO FORTY?

*(A customer raises his hand, thereby upping the bid.)*

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(emphatically)*

TWO FORTY!

**AUCTIONEER**

YES!

TWO HUNDRED FORTY.  
DO I HEAR  
THREE HUNDRED, THREE HUNDRED, THREE HUNDRED?  
I NEED THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(enthusiastically)*

THREE HUNDRED!

**AUCTIONEER**

YES!

THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS.  
DO I HEAR  
FOUR HUNDRED, FOUR HUNDRED,  
FOUR HUNDRED, FOUR HUNDRED DOLLARS...

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(excitedly)*

...FOUR HUNDRED, FOUR HUNDRED, FOUR HUNDRED, FOUR HUNDRED,  
FOUR HUNDRED!

**EDWARD GAINES**

*(impatient, forcefully)*

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

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(startled, a little nervously)*

WHO IS IT? WHAT IS IT?  
WHO IS IT? WHAT IS IT?

**AUCTIONEER**

*(polite, but annoyed)*

EXCUSE ME, SIR.  
LEGAL BUSINESS IS IN PROGRESS HERE.

BY THE POWERS INVESTED,  
AND BY CUSTOMS INGESTED...

**EDWARD**

*(interrupting the Auctioneer)*

...I BEG YOUR PARDON!

THIS FARM BELONGED TO MY BROTHER.  
IT CAN'T BE SOLD TO ANOTHER.

**AUCTIONEER**

IT IS TRUE.

*Same thing else*

*/?*



IF A FAMILY MEMBER CALLS THE CLAIM,  
NO SALE CAN TAKE PLACE HERE AND NOW.

**EDWARD**

I AM A GAINES.  
EDWARD GAINES, BROTHER OF THE DECEASED.

*(incredulously)*  
DON'T YOU REMEMBER ME?

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(their curiosity aroused)*

EDWARD GAINES? WHO IS HE?  
DID OLD GAINES HAVE A BROTHER?  
WHO IS HE? EDWARD GAINES?

**EDWARD**

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

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

NO. 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!

**ARIA:**

**"I Was Just a Boy"**

**EDWARD**

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 OF MEANS,  
A FATHER WITH A CHILD TO RAISE.

*near / ?*

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.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(echoing the Auctioneer)*

IT IS TRUE. IT IS TRUE.  
IT IS TRUE, IT IS THE LAW.

**AUCTIONEER**

WE MUST ENTERTAIN HIS RIGHT UNDER THE LAW.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

UNDER THE LAW. UNDER THE LAW.

**AUCTIONEER**

WHAT IS YOUR PLEASURE,  
MISTER GAINES, SIR?

*(solicitously)*  
WHAT PARTS INTEREST YOU?

**EDWARD**

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

*(pointing at the slaves)*

KEEP ALL THE GOODS AND PROPERTY TOGETHER.  
I'LL HAVE IT ALL.



*(The auctioneer and Edward shake hands after agreeing on terms for the sale of Maplewood Plantation. As Edward examines the legal paperwork, the townspeople begin to disperse. Several prominent businessmen remain to witness the transaction, as does Edward's daughter Caroline, who will inherit Maplewood one day.)*

\* \* \* \*

The slave families, now allowed to stay together thanks to Edward's generosity, celebrate in dance and song. The slaves' movements, however, indicate their sense of captivity.

**CHORUS:**

**"A Little More Time"**

**SLAVE CHORUS, CILLA, MARGARET, and ROBERT**

*(clapping as they sing)*

A LITTLE MORE TIME

A LITTLE MORE TIME

MORE TIME WITH THE CHILDREN WE LOVE...

*(tenors)*

...TIME WITH OUR BROTHERS.

*(all)*

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

**CILLA and MARGARET**

ANOTHER SEASON OF FRIENDSHIP  
TELLING STORIES, SHARING SECRETS BY THE FIRE.

**SLAVE CHORUS**

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

**MARGARET**

MORE NIGHTS TO CURL LIKE A VINE  
IN OUR HUSBAND'S ARMS.

**ROBERT**

MORE DAYS TO BASK IN THE LIGHT  
OF OUR LOVER'S EYES.

**CILLA and MARGARET**

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

**SLAVE CHORUS**

SWEET WILLIAM AND COLUMBINE.

**SLAVE CHORUS, CILLA, and ROBERT**

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

(altos)  
...TIME WITH OUR MOTHERS.

(all)

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

*(Gaines nods in assent to the contract's terms, then turns to the businessman standing next to him and asks for a pen with which to sign the contract.)*

**ARIOSO:**

**"I Made a Little Play Doll"**

**MARGARET**

*(tenderly)*

I MADE A LITTLE PLAY DOLL FOR MY BABY,  
WITH BUTTON EYES AND HAIR OF YARN;  
THE LIPS ARE MADE OF ROSE-COLORED THREAD.

*(Distracted, Edward looks up from his paperwork; he turns around and notices Margaret, who is wearing a red scarf. He is intrigued, and grateful for his good fortune to have just purchased her.)*

*"dances"  
what - wrapping  
around pole,*



ONE DAY SHE WILL LOVE IT;  
I AM WAITING FOR HER TO LOVE IT

*(Edward turns around again, and finishes signing the contract. The businessmen extend handshakes of congratulations to him on the acquisition of Maplewood.)*

WHEN SHE IS OLD ENOUGH TO HOLD IT.

*(One of the slaves brings Margaret her infant daughter, who is wrapped in a white cloth. Margaret cradles the baby tenderly in her arms.)*

I'M WATCHING THIS MYSTERY CALLED CHILD.

**SLAVE CHORUS, CILLA, and ROBERT**

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

*(altos)*  
...TIME WITH OUR MOTHERS.

**SLAVE CHORUS, CILLA, and ROBERT**

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

**SLAVE CHORUS**

WE FEEL THE BREATH OF OUR LORD GOD.

**CILLA, MARGARET, and ROBERT**

WE FEEL THE BREATH OF OUR LORD GOD.

**SLAVE CHORUS**

WITH THE GIFT OF A LITTLE MORE TIME.

*(The slaves exit slowly.)*

*holding baby - forgets scarf wrapped around pole.*  
*(Margaret unties her scarf and wraps it around a pole. She then exits, the last of the slaves to leave.)*

*Too blatant - should dance w/ it during "play doll" 11 This action suggests flirtation*

*(Having completed the legal transaction with Edward, the auctioneer departs with the businessmen. Caroline remains, however, cheerfully conversing with their wives.)*

\*\*\*\*

*(Edward watches the last townspeople leave.)*

**EDWARD**

*(disappointed, somewhat disgusted)*

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

**CASEY**

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

**EDWARD**

*(turning back around, facing Casey)*

...TWENTY YEARS. *(to himself)*

THEY PRETEND.  
THEY LIE, AND THEY SAY THEY DON'T REMEMBER ME.

*(Margaret's scarf, tied to the pole, catches Edward's attention;  
he starts walking over towards it.)*

**CASEY**

*(looking in the other direction from Gaines)*

SOMETHING IN THE PAST, SIR?  
SOMETHING BEST FORGOTTEN?

*(Edward takes Margaret's scarf from the pole, and mindlessly puts it in his pocket.)*

**EDWARD**

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

*not  
mindless -  
w/ intention  
which leads  
to ff.  
re force.*



**CASEY**

BUT EVERY BOY HAS AN APPETITE, SIR.

**EDWARD**

I LEFT UNDER A CLOUD OF SUSPICION.  
IT WAS NOTHING, NOTHING TO RAISE EYEBROWS.

THE GIRL WAS SO YOUNG,  
AND FROM SUCH A FINE FAMILY;  
THINGS GOT A LITTLE OUT OF HAND. (*sotto voce*)  
SO NOW THEY PRETEND  
NEITHER I NOR IT EVER HAPPENED.

WHAT A SHAME.  
I REMEMBER!  
I REMEMBER EVERYTHING.

**ARIA:**  
"I Remember"

**EDWARD**

(*wistful, yet still optimistic*)

I REMEMBER THE CURVE OF EVERY HILL  
THE SWANS IN THE POND;  
I REMEMBER THEM STILL.

I REMEMBER EVERY TREE:  
MAPLE, BIRCH, WILLOWS AND PINE.

I CAN SEE THEM NOW  
SHADING THE DRIVE,  
SHELT'RING 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 BY THE LAKE.  
EVENINGS OF LAUGHTER  
WITH GIRLS WHO WANTED TO PLAY.

I REMEMBER EVERY TREE  
BUT NONE OF THEM REMEMBERS ME.

(*Edward catches Caroline's glance, and motions for her to join him.*)

**EDWARD**  
(*sotto voce*)

THEY WON'T FORGET ME AGAIN!

(*Edward exits, with Caroline at his side. Casey follows them.*)

**End of Act One, Scene One**

\*\*\*\*\*

**[ORCHESTRAL INTERLUDE I]**



**Act I, scene ii:**  
**Harvest time, about six months later.**

The slaves -- some of whom are children, barely 10 or 12 years old -- return to their quarters after a day of working in the fields. In rhythm with the percussion's strong, syncopated beat, they perform a series of domestic chores: chopping wood, pumping water, beating rags, etc.

**CHORUS:**

**"O Mother, O Father, Don't Abandon Me!"**

**ROBERT**

TURN MY FACE TO THE DYING SUN

**SLAVE CHORUS**

TURN MY FACE TO THE DYING SUN

**ROBERT**

CAN'T STRAIGHTEN MY BACK  
TIL THE WORK IS DONE.

**SLAVE CHORUS**

CAN'T STRAIGHTEN MY BACK  
TIL THE WORK IS DONE.

**ROBERT**

PLOWED THE FIELD, BALED THE HAY

**SLAVE CHORUS**

PLOWED THE FIELD, BALED THE HAY

**ROBERT**

GOING TO DANCE  
ON THE LEAD MULE'S BACK SOMEDAY.

**SLAVE CHORUS**

GOING TO DANCE  
ON THE LEAD MULE'S BACK SOMEDAY.

**ALL**

O MOTHER, O FATHER  
DON'T ABANDON ME  
WHILE MY SWEAT STILL SWEETS THE RICH BROWN SOIL  
OF DEAR OLD KENTUCKY.

O MOTHER, O FATHER  
DON'T ABANDON ME.

**MARGARET**

BOSS IS HAPPY AT HIS PLATE

**SLAVE CHORUS**

LONG AS HE GETS HIS FOWL;

**MARGARET**

IF I STAND AT HIS COOKING STOVE,

**SLAVE CHORUS**

HIS SUPPER WILL BE FOUL!

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
*(shouted like gospel singers)*

BELIEVE IT!

**ALL**

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



O MOTHER, O FATHER  
DON'T ABANDON ME  
WHILE MY SWEAT STILL SWEETS THE RICH BROWN SOIL  
OF DEAR OLD KENTUCKY.

CRACK UH BACK

CUT UH CANE

PULL UH MULE

CHOP UH COTTON

SPLIT UH WOOD

(a little louder)

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;

CRACK, CUT,  
PULL, CHOP, SPLIT!

#### **FEMALE CHORISTERS**

(soprano soloist) BOSS IS HAPPY IN HIS BED

(all) LONG AS HIS PILLOW'S DOWNEY;

(soprano soloist) IF I STOOD BY HIS SLEEPY HEAD

(all) HIS FACE WOULD BE AS FLUFFY.

**MALE CHORISTERS**  
*(like gospel singers)*

TELL IT TO ME!

**ROBERT**

PLOWED THE FIELD, BALED THE HAY

**CHORUS**

PLOWED THE FIELD, BALED THE HAY

**ROBERT**

GOING TO DANCE  
ON THE LEAD MULE'S BACK SOMEDAY.

**SLAVE CHORUS**

GOING TO DANCE  
ON THE LEAD MULE'S BACK SOMEDAY.

**ALL**

O MOTHER, O FATHER  
DON'T ABANDON ME  
WHILE MY TEARS MUDDY THE RICH BROWN SOIL  
OF DEAR OLD KENTUCKY.

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
*(shouted like gospel singers)*

SING IT TO ME!

**ALL**

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



CRACK UH BACK

CUT UH CANE

PULL UH MULE

CHOP UH COTTON

SPLIT UH WOOD

*(a little louder)*

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;

CRACK, CUT,  
PULL, CHOP, SPLIT!

*(Upon hearing the dinner bell, the workers wash up for supper. Cilla is waiting at Margaret and Robert's cabin to welcome them home.)*

**CILLA**

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

*(Cilla, Robert, and Margaret go inside the cabin, and begin preparing dinner.)*

**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  
TIL THE LIGHT'S TOO POOR.

**CILLA**

THIS GAINES IS NOT LIKE THE LAST ONE.  
A MEAN STREAK RIDES HIS BROW.  
THE OTHER ONE HAD A HEART --  
SOMETIMES! (*jokingly*)

**MARGARET**

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

**ROBERT**

IF HE COULD HARVEST CORN IN HIS CHEST,

**ROBERT and MARGARET**  
(*laughing heartily*)

HE WOULD LEASE OUT HIS OWN HEART'S PLACE!

(*Cilla beckons for Robert and Margaret to sit down at the dinner table.*)

**CILLA**

EASE YOURSELVES, EASE YOURSELVES.  
THE TABLE IS LAID.  
THE SUPPER IS PLAIN BUT WARM.

**MARGARET**

... YOU'VE GOT MILK AND STRAWBERRIES TOO.

(*All three sit down to dinner.*)



**"Cilla's Prayer"**

**CILLA**

DEAR LORD IN HEAVEN,

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
(*interjecting, like a Responsorial*)

[Blessed Lord...]

**CILLA**

MAKE US GRATEFUL FOR OUR FOOD.

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
[Sweet Jesus...]

**CILLA**

KEEP US WELL AND IN YOUR SIGHT.

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
[mmm...]

**CILLA**

PROTECT THOSE IN DANGER,

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
[Take my hand...]

**CILLA**

AND LET US BE GUIDED BY YOUR HEAVENLY LIGHT.

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
[Precious Lord... mmm]

**CILLA**

AMEN.

\* \* \* \* \*

**ROBERT**  
(*exuberantly*)

YOU ARE A HUNDRED POUND BLESSING, MAMA.

**MARGARET**

*(to Cilla)*

HOW'S MY BABY?  
NOT CRYING FOR ME?  
HOW'S MY SWEETNESS?  
NOT MISSING ME?

**CILLA**

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

**ROBERT**

*(laughing)*

DID 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**

*(emphatically)*

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



**MARGARET**

SHE IS MY SUPPER,  
THE FOOD OF MY HEART.

**ROBERT**

AND WHAT AM I?  
THE LEAVINGS?

**MARGARET**

*(smiling, reaching out to Robert)*

OH NO. 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**

*(interrupting)*

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

*(Margaret goes to get the baby. As Cilla and Robert eat dinner, Margaret sings tenderly to the child.)*

**"Margaret's Lullaby"**

**MARGARET**

SAD THINGS, FAR AWAY  
SOFT THINGS, COME AND PLAY

LOVELY BABY ...

SLEEP IN THE MEADOW,  
SLEEP IN THE HAY  
BABY'S GOT A DREAMIN' ON THE WAY.

BAD THINGS, FAR AWAY  
PRETTY THINGS, HERE TO STAY

SWEET BABY, SMILE AT ME  
LOVELY BABY, GO TO SLEEP.

SLEEP IN THE MEADOW,  
SLEEP IN THE HAY  
BABY'S GONNA DREAM THE NIGHT AWAY.

LOVELY BABY, PRETTY BABY  
BABY'S GONNA DREAM THE NIGHT AWAY.

*(Casey approaches the cabin, armed with a double barrel shotgun and carrying a satchel. He loiters for a few minutes, passing the time by cleaning his gun.)*

SLEEP IN THE MEADOW,  
SLEEP IN THE HAY  
BABY'S GONNA DREAM ...  
BABY'S GONNA DREAM ... *(softer)*  
BABY'S GONNA DREAM ... *(softer still)*

**CASEY**

*(quietly, standing in the cabin doorway)*

NOT TONIGHT.  
NOBODY DREAMS TONIGHT.

**ROBERT**

WHAT D'YOU SAY?  
WHAT'S THAT YOU SAY?

*(Casey enters the cabin abruptly, and confronts Robert.)*

**CASEY**

*(sarcastically)*

WHAT'S THAT I SAY?  
WHAT'S THAT YOU SAY?

*(Casey points his gun at Robert.)*



**ROBERT**

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

**CASEY**

BETTER. MUCH BETTER.  
WHAT I SAY IS  
NO HAPPY DARKY DREAMIN' T'NIGHT.  
MISTER GAINES HAS OTHER PLANS... OTHER PLANS.

**CILLA**

WHAT PLANS, MISTER CASEY?

**CASEY**

I'M TALKIN' TO YOUR BOY, CILLA.  
*NOT YOU.*

**CASEY**

*(to Robert)*

YOU HAVE BEEN RENTED OUT, BOY.  
MISTER GAINES WANTS YOU ON YOUR WAY T'NIGHT  
*(aggressively)* 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.

*(pointing to the door)*

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.

*(quietly, with innuendo)*  
MISTER 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?  
AIN'T THAT NICE?

*(Casey pulls a stylish housedress out of his satchel. He waves the dress, like a red flag, in Robert's face, then tosses it at Margaret.)*

AIN'T THAT NICE?

*(Casey leaves.)*

*(Robert and Margaret exchange troubled glances; Cilla rocks the baby.)*

*(As he walks away, Casey sings a parody of Margaret's "Lullaby".)*

**CASEY**

LA-DA-DA-DA-DA  
LA-DA-DA-DAY.

*(He laughs derisively.)*



**ROBERT**

*(sotto voce; trying to contain his emotions)*

SKUNK! SNAKE!

*(erupting in rage)*

SON OF A WHORE!

*(Robert paces the room, his anger at the boiling point.)*

**CILLA**

PLEASE! DON'T WAKE THE BABY.

**ROBERT**

YELLOWBELLY!  
THAT SON OF A DOG!!

**MARGARET**

COOL DOWN, ROBERT!  
HE WILL HEAR YOU.

**ROBERT**

*(angrily)*

I AM A MAN!  
AIN'T I?

AIN'T I A MAN?  
AIN'T I?  
AIN'T I?

**MARGARET**

YES!  
YOU ARE TO ME.  
AND TO US.

**ROBERT**

*(almost stuttering in frustration)*

...I KNOW... I KNOW... I KNOW...  
WHAT IS ON HIS MIND.  
BASTARD!

**MARGARET**

*(lovingly)*

IT WON'T HAPPEN.  
IT WON'T HAPPEN, BELIEVE ME.  
BELIEVE ME!

**ROBERT**

HOW CAN YOU KNOW?  
HOW CAN YOU BE SURE?  
YOU CAN'T CONTROL A SNAKE IN HIS OWN NEST.

**MARGARET**

HIS DAUGHTER LIVES THERE TOO.  
HE WILL BEHAVE.

**CILLA**

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

**MARGARET**

WE WILL FIND A WAY.  
STAY STRONG.

*(moving closer to Robert)*  
HE IS NOT THE MASTER OF ME.

Standing downstage center, Robert and Margaret are holding hands. As they sing, they gradually move apart; by the end of the duet, they are standing at opposite ends of the stage.

**DUET:**

**"Love is the Only Master"**

**MARGARET**

HOLD ME.

**ROBERT**

HOLD ON.



**MARGARET**

STAY, SWEET.

**ROBERT**

STAY STRONG.

**MARGARET**

BE MY MOONRISE.

**ROBERT**

BE MY DAWN.

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
*(together)*

YOU ARE MY SHOULDER.

**ROBERT**  
YOU ARE MY SPINE.

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
*(together)*

YOU ARE MY COURAGE.

**MARGARET**

AND YOU ARE THE SIGN

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
*(together)*

THAT LOVE IS THE ONLY MASTER  
THE HEART OBEYS;  
LOVE IS THE ONLY MASTER  
THAT MY HEART OBEYS.

*(Margaret and Robert now stand on opposite ends of the stage.)*

*(Evening falls as Robert leaves.)*

*(Fade to black.)*

\*\*\*\*\*

The lights go up to reveal Edward Gaines sitting in the parlor of Maplewood Plantation. Affecting the airs of an English aristocrat, he is elegantly dressed, drinks whiskey, and smokes an expensive cigar. The parlor is furnished sparsely, but reflects a sense of refinement.

**CASEY**

YOU ASKED ME TO REPORT, MISTER GAINES.

**EDWARD**

I DID;  
INDEED, I DID.  
ANY PROBLEMS THERE?

**CASEY**

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

**EDWARD**

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

**CASEY**

AS PLANNED, SIR.

**EDWARD**

THE GIRL?



**CASEY**

*(standing near Gaines)*

IN THE KITCHEN, SIR,  
HOLDING HER HEAD UP HIGH.  
SHE IS FEISTY, SIR.  
I DON'T LIKE THAT LOOK IN HER EYES.

*(Casey turns to leave.)*

**EDWARD**

LOVELY, LOVELY,  
WITH A FEISTY LOOK IN HER EYES.

NOW WAIT A MINUTE...

*(Casey looks back at Gaines.)*

**EDWARD**

*(a little anxious)*

TELL HER I WANT HER TO COME TO ME TONIGHT.

**CASEY**

AT YOUR PLEASURE, SIR.

*(He leaves.)*

*(Slightly inebriated, Gaines pulls Margaret's red scarf out of his front pocket; he holds it in his hands, stroking it.)*

**ARIA:**

**"A Little Solace"**

**EDWARD**

*(with a swagger)*

A LITTLE SOLACE  
FOR A HARD WORKING MAN.  
A RUBY RED SCARF  
SOOTHES A CALLOUSED HAND.  
SOME RESPITE FOR  
AN ACTIVE MIND IS DUE.  
IT'S TRUE.

*(While walking past the parlor's entrance, Caroline notices her father sitting inside, alone and drinking. Curious, she lingers at the doorway, but is careful not to be seen. The nature of his sentiments greatly troubles her: she is witnessing a disturbing side of her father's personality.)*

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

A LITTLE SOLACE  
FOR A HARDWORKING MAN.  
ALL WORK AND NO PLAY  
IS A VERY DULL PLAN.

*(Caroline walks into the room, and stands directly in front of her father; her tightly folded arms express her disapproval and disappointment. Although Edward senses that she is agitated, he doesn't get up from his chair; he merely raises his glass to her in a toast. Caroline storms out of the parlor.)*

*(Gaines now realizes that Caroline's presence at Maplewood ensures he will have to wait to have his way with Margaret. He picks up the red scarf, and as he leaves the parlor, stuffs it into his front pocket.)*

*(Fade to black.)*

## **End of Act One, Scene Two**

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## **[ORCHESTRAL INTERLUDE II]**



**Act I, scene iii:**  
**Maplewood Plantation, in the early summer of 1858.**

In the candlelit parlor at Maplewood Plantation, a wedding reception is being held to celebrate the marriage of Caroline Gaines, Edward's daughter, to George Hancock. The guests – the local townspeople whom Edward is very eager to impress – waltz to the gentle accompaniment of a parlor piano, and enjoy generous amounts of freely flowing champagne.

**EDWARD**

*(to the guests)*

PLEASE, MAY I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION?

*(gathering around)*

**THE GUESTS**

MISTER GAINES WANTS TO SPEAK.  
GATHER 'ROUND OUR GRACIOUS HOST.  
THERE IS NOTHING SO FINE AS SEEING A COUPLE IN LOVE!

**(Arioso)**

**EDWARD**

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

**THE GUESTS**

...BEAUTIFUL WORDS  
FROM OUR GENEROUS HOST!

**EDWARD**

A MAN OF STATURE AND LEARNING.

*(The guests blatantly examine the room's furnishings to judge their quality.)*

**THE GUESTS**

AND HER CHOICE OF HUSBAND  
IS EVERYTHING HER MOTHER WISHED FOR.

**CAROLINE**

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

**EDWARD**

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

**GEORGE**

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

**THE GUESTS**

THERE IS NOTHING SO WONDEROUS  
AS BEING IN LOVE.

**GUESTS**

THERE IS NOTHING SO WONDEROUS  
AS SEEING A MARRIAGE FOR LOVE.

**CAROLINE and GEORGE**

THERE IS NOTHING SO WONDEROUS  
AS BEING IN A MARRIAGE FOR LOVE!



**FEMALE GUESTS**

A MARRIAGE FOR LOVE...

**MALE GUESTS**

...A MARRIAGE FOR LOVE.

**EDWARD**

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

*(Caroline walks across the room to her father, who is waiting with open arms. He embraces her too tightly, however.)*

**CAROLINE**

*(lightheartedly)*

OH, FATHER, I CANNOT BREATHE.

*(Caroline makes light of the situation, then goes to mingle with the guests.)*

**EDWARD**

*(warmly)*

FORGIVE ME, CAROLINE;

*(Upon hearing her name, Caroline turns towards her father.)*

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

**CAROLINE**

*(reassuringly, taking her father's hands in hers)*

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

*(Caroline suddenly lets go of her father's hands, and turns away from him to walk towards George, who is downstage, on the other side of the room. George embraces Caroline tenderly.)*

**GEORGE**

*(sensing that Edward feels somewhat rejected)*

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, DAUGHTER!  
HE WILL DROWN YOU.

**CAROLINE**

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

**EDWARD**

*(slightly condescending)*

A MINUTE AGO  
YOU WERE GASPING FOR AIR.  
NOW YOU TRADE IT FOR WATER.

**THE GUESTS**

*(whispering)*

WHAT IS ALL THIS TALK ABOUT?  
WHAT IS ALL THIS TALK ABOUT?



**EDWARD**

YOUR CONFUSION DISTURBS ME, DAUGHTER.

*(To help avert their attention from the mounting friction between Edward and George, Caroline attempts to engage the guests in conversation. But her own focus quickly shifts back to George, at whom she looks adoringly.)*

**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 puts up his hand to interrupt George in mid-sentence.)*

**EDWARD**

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS AN IMPOSTER,  
HIDING IN DRESSES OF VERSE.

**GEORGE**

*(emphatically)*

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS A MAGICIAN,  
TURNING ROSES INTO DOVES ON THE WING.

**EDWARD**

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS AN INFANT'S HAND IN A FATHER'S GLOVE.

**GEORGE**

A RAFT IN A STORMY SEA,  
OFFERING RESCUE.

**THE GUESTS**

*(eagerly joining in the fray)*

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS OFTEN HARD TO EXPLAIN.  
IT MAY OFFER TRUE JOY,  
BUT IT CAN END IN SUCH PAIN!

**GEORGE**

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS A LIGHTHOUSE  
TO GUIDE US OVER HEAVY WAVES.

**EDWARD**

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS A THIEF RESPECTING NO HOUSEHOLD,  
STEALING THE LOVED ONES AWAY.

**THE GUESTS**

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS TOO COMPLEX TO BE KNOWN.  
WHAT IS BOUGHT WITHOUT PRICE,  
CAN NEVER BE OWNED!

**EDWARD**

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS AN IMPOSTER...

**GEORGE**

...IS A MAGICIAN...

**EDWARD**

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

**GEORGE**

...TURNING ROSES INTO DOVES ON THE WING!



## THE GUESTS

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS A DANGEROUS ART.  
IT CAN OPEN YOUR EYES  
OR IT WILL TEAR OUT YOUR HEART!

*(Embarrassed by the argument that has broken out between her father and her new husband, Caroline walks away. She goes over to an elegantly set side table and picks up a crystal champagne glass.)*

## EDWARD

*(holding back his frustration)*

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE  
IS AN IMPOSTER.

## GEORGE

IS A MAGICIAN.

## EDWARD

IT'S AN INFANT'S HAND IN A FATHER'S GLOVE...

## GEORGE

...IT'S A LIGHTHOUSE TO GUIDE US ...

## EDWARD

*(definitively, to end the discussion)*

...IT'S A THIEF RESPECTING NO HOUSEHOLD,  
STEALING THE LOVED ONES AWAY!

*(Caroline returns and makes a "grand entrance," holding her champagne glass up high.)*

## CAROLINE

*(in a celebratory mood)*

IT'S A CLIPPER SHIP  
WITH ROOM AFTER ROOM  
FOR DANCING  
AND CAKES AND TEA AND CHAMPAGNE!

*time between "love" question and Edward's "answer"*

(The newlyweds Caroline and George begin the traditional "first dance;" the others join in the waltz one couple at a time. Ironically, only Gaines is without a partner; he is forced to watch the festivities.)

(Margaret enters the room to bring in another tray of glasses. Although she is dressed more nicely now, in the uniform befitting a house servant, she acts in a more subjugated manner. Gaines, standing alone, quietly takes notice of her arrival.)

(The guests gradually conclude dancing. Gaines once again plays the gracious host; he toasts the newlyweds as Margaret serves the guests.)

**EDWARD**

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

*(Margaret starts to leave the room.)*

**CAROLINE**

*(warmly)*

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

**MARGARET**

*(somewhat surprised)*

EXCUSE ME, MA'AM?

**CAROLINE**

WHAT DO YOU THINK  
ABOUT LOVE?  
WE WERE DISCUSSING  
THE WORDS TO DESCRIBE IT.

**EDWARD**

CHILD! DEAR CHILD!



**CAROLINE**  
(to Margaret)

DO THEY HELP US TO LOVE?  
OR HURT US BEYOND REPAIR?

(to her father)  
I WANT TO KNOW -- I WANT TO KNOW -- WHAT SHE THINKS.

**EDWARD**  
(insistent)

CHILD!  
PLEASE, CHILD, NO MORE!

**THE GUESTS**  
(whispering)

WHAT IS ALL THIS TALK ABOUT,  
TALK ABOUT?  
WHAT IS ALL THIS TALK ABOUT?

OH DEAR. OH DEAR.  
WE THOUGHT HE WAS QUALITY.

OH DEAR. OH DEAR.  
THIS IS A MISTAKE  
QUALITY FOLK WOULD NEVER MAKE!

OH DEAR. OH DEAR.  
THIS IS A PROFOUND INSULT.  
THIS IS A MISTAKE  
QUALITY FOLK WOULD NEVER MAKE!

WHAT KIND OF HOUSE DOES HE RUN?  
WHAT KIND OF HOUSE DOES HE RUN?  
*WE DON'T BEHAVE THIS WAY!*

**EDWARD**

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

**CAROLINE**

WHY NOT?

(Arioso)

SHE HAS LOVED ME  
SERVED ME, TAUGHT ME  
IN THESE TWO YEARS;  
WATCHED OVER MY SLEEP.  
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.  
MISTER GAINES IS THE EXPERT HERE.

**CAROLINE**

...HIS LOVE IS ROUGH,  
WHILE YOURS IS TENDER.

**EDWARD**

YOU SEE?  
SHE HAS NOTHING TO SAY ON THE MATTER.  
LOVE IS NOT IN HER VOCABULARY.

**MARGARET**  
(thoughtfully)

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

**EDWARD**  
(agitated, wild)

ENOUGH! ENOUGH!

(angrily)  
WE HAVE ALL HAD ENOUGH OF THIS NONSENSE.

5th quest's  
"guilty" line  
9 p. 12

choral  
interjection  
cut,  
so as to  
tighten  
dramatic  
flow



I REFUSE TO HEAR A SLAVE COMMENT  
ON THINGS OUTSIDE HER SCOPE.  
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.

*(The parlor clock strikes 10 o'clock. A few of the guests realize that the late hour now gives them an alibi to leave the party.)*

**EDWARD**

*(to Caroline)*

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

**CAROLINE**

*(pleading with him to be reasonable)*

THERE ARE MANY KINDS OF LOVE, FATHER.

**CAROLINE and GEORGE**

*(looking into each other's eyes)*

AND MANY KINDS OF LOVERS.

**THE GUESTS**

THIS IS TOO SUBTLE FOR ME.  
... and me, and you...

PERHAPS IT IS TIME TO SAY GOOD NIGHT.  
... *good night, good night, and good night* ...

ARGUMENT CHILLS A PARTY.  
... *good night, good night, and good night*...

... GOOD NIGHT!

*(The guests leave, bowing stiffly; they disapprove of Gaines's behavior and act coolly towards him. He is angered and annoyed by their early departure.)*

**EDWARD**

FOOLS, IDIOTS.  
WHAT DO THEY KNOW ABOUT "QUALITY" FOLK?

*(to Caroline and George, 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**

DON'T THINK US UNGRATEFUL  
FOR THIS CELEBRATION.

**CAROLINE and GEORGE**

*(together)*

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

**EDWARD**

*(agitated)*

I AM NOT SO WEAK  
AS TO BE OFFENDED BY INNOCENCE.  
BUT I HAVE A REPUTATION TO MAINTAIN.



**CAROLINE**

FATHER, PLEASE TRY ...

**EDWARD**

...MY SWEET CAROLINE,  
IT DOESN'T MATTER.  
ALL IS WELL.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELVES.

*(tenderly kissing his daughter)*  
GOODBYE.

*(shaking George's hand)*  
TAKE CARE.

*(Caroline and George leave, eager to depart on their honeymoon. Gaines pauses, and somewhat wistfully watches them walk away.)*

**EDWARD**

*(regaining his inner strength)*

IT DOESN'T MATTER AT ALL.  
I HAVE SUCCEEDED  
JUST AS I SAID I WOULD.

*(looking around the room)*

ENVY IS THE TRUE PRICE OF WEALTH...  
WHICH I EASILY, HAPPILY PAY.

A RICH MAN HAS MANY REMEDIES.

*(Edward begins to leave, but when he notices Margaret returning to clear the champagne glasses, he lingers in a hiding place.)*

*(Margaret picks up a glass and holds it to the light, peering into it as if it were a crystal ball.)*

**MARGARET**

*(looking at the glass)*

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

**ARIA:**

*Change title to "Quality Love"*  
**"The Love of All Loves"**

**MARGARET**

ONLY UNHARNESSED HEARTS  
CAN SURVIVE A LOCKED-DOWN LIFE.

LIKE A RIVER RUSHING FROM THE GRIP OF ITS BANKS,  
AS LIGHT ESCAPES THE COLDEST STAR;  
A QUALITY LOVE -- THE LOVE OF ALL LOVES -- 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 WEAPON OF CHOICE: THE LOVE OF ALL LOVES.

NO PRETTY WORDS CAN EASE OR CURE  
WHAT HEAVY HANDS CAN DO.  
WHEN SORROW IS DEEP,  
THE SECRET SOUL KEEPS ITS QUALITY LOVE.

WHEN SORROW IS DEEP,  
THE SECRET SOUL KEEPS  
ITS WEAPON OF CHOICE: THE LOVE OF ALL LOVES!

*(Edward slowly emerges from his hiding place and walks towards Margaret, looking her over with unmistakable intent. She remains momentarily unaware of his presence, as she is looking down at the glass in her hand.)*

**EDWARD**

*(coolly; unintentionally startling Margaret)*

SUCH FINE SENTIMENTS.  
TOO FINE, I THINK  
FOR A SLAVE.



*(He gently takes the glass from her hand. Assuming an air of gentility, Edward then takes Margaret's red scarf from his pocket and slowly ties it around her neck.)*

BUT I HAVE MY REMEDIES.  
A MAN HAS MANY REMEDIES.

*(Margaret resists his advances.)*

**MARGARET**  
*(agitated)*

THEY CAN NOT TOUCH  
THE SECRET SOUL.

**EDWARD**  
*(losing control)*

...YOUR SOUL  
IS NOT ON MY MIND.

*is this the 1st time he takes her?*  
*(Margaret begins to struggle vehemently. But Edward overpowers her, and drags her forcibly out of the parlor.)*

*(The curtain falls slowly.)*

**End of Act One**

\*\*\*\*\*

**INTERMISSION**

## MARGARET GARNER

### Act II, scene i: January 1861.

While walking to Cilla's cabin, Margaret sees Casey interrogating a black man in the distance. She is anticipating a visit from Robert, who has been secretly visiting her there on Sunday nights. When Margaret arrives at the cabin, however, she finds Cilla packing a carpetbag.

**MARGARET**  
(*agitated*)

HAS HE COME?

**CILLA**

NOT YET.

**MARGARET**

IS HE HERE?  
HAS HE COME?

**CILLA**

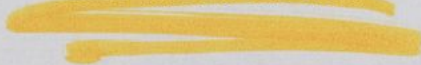
NOT YET.  
BUT SOON.

**MARGARET**  
(*noticing Cilla's carpetbag*)

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?  
WHERE ARE THE CHILDREN?

**CILLA**

ROBERT IS MY SON  
AND HIS WORD IS GOLD.  
CALM YOURSELF.  
YOUR DAUGHTER IS WITH KATE.  
SO IS THE LITTLE ONE.





**MARGARET**

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

**CILLA**

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

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

**MARGARET**

WHAT NEWS?  
PLEASE, CILLA.  
WHAT IS HAPPENING?

(Arioso)

**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  
THAT ALL IS IN PLACE.  
YOU'RE LEAVING TONIGHT!

**MARGARET**

SWEET JESUS!

**CILLA**

SWEETER THAN SYRUP  
AND RIGHT ON TIME.

*(Margaret picks up some articles of her children's clothing and pretends to "dance" with them, as if they were a wealthy couple at a fancy ball. She and Cilla sing Margaret's "Lullaby" in a lively, almost celebratory fashion.)*

**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.

**MARGARET and CILLA**

*(together)*

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.

*(Robert arrives and immediately embraces Margaret.)*

**MARGARET**

*(feigning anger at Robert)*

YOU DIDN'T SAY A WORD LAST SUNDAY.

**ROBERT**

*(taking her seriously)*

I COULDN'T.  
I HAD TO BE SURE.

**MARGARET**

*(teasing, but slightly sarcastically)*

YOU OUGHT TO TELL ME  
WHAT YOU'RE DOING ... SOMETIMES!

**ROBERT**

YOU NEED TO KEEP IT *QUIET* IN HERE.



**MARGARET**

ALRIGHT.  
WHEN DO WE LEAVE?

**ROBERT**

THREE HOURS FROM NOW.

**MARGARET**

OH LORD.  
I AM GONNA CRY.

**ROBERT**

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

*(Robert tries to embrace Margaret, but she pulls away, embarrassed to show her tears.)*

IT'S ALL RIGHT.  
IT'S ALL RIGHT.

**ARIA:**  
"Go Cry, Girl"

**ROBERT**

GO CRY, GIRL  
YOU HAVE WON YOUR TEARS;  
GO CRY, GIRL  
OBEY YOUR TENDER YEARS.  
THE STRING IS CUT,  
THE TALE IS TOLD.  
I KNOW.  
DON'T THINK I DON'T KNOW.

THE GATE IS OPEN  
THE WAY IS CLEAR;  
THE WORK IS DONE  
AND THE TIME HAS COME, I KNOW.  
DON'T THINK I DON'T KNOW.  
GO CRY, GIRL  
GIRL, GO CRY.

**MARGARET**

*(recovering her composure, but still anxious)*

WHERE WILL WE GO?

**ROBERT**

*(reassuringly)* IT'S ALRIGHT.

**MARGARET**

ARE THERE OTHERS?

**ROBERT**

IT'S ALRIGHT.

**MARGARET**

DO WE HAVE MONEY?  
WHERE WILL WE HIDE?

**ROBERT**

IT'S ALRIGHT.

**ROBERT**

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

*(Robert leaves.)*

**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.  
YOU KNOW I WON'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.

**ARIA:**  
"He is By"

**CILLA**

HE IS BY,  
FOREVER BY ME.  
IN HIS SHADOW  
I WILL LINGER ON A WHILE  
TIL HE CALLS ME.

HE IS BY,  
FOREVER BY ME.  
NO TRUMPETS OR STREETS OF GOLD  
HE WILL COME IN SILENCE  
AND GATHER ME IN HIS ARMS.

HE IS BY,  
FOREVER BY ME.  
NO TRUMPETS OR STREETS OF GOLD  
HE WILL COME IN SILENCE  
AND GATHER ME IN HIS ARMS.

**MARGARET**

*(sung in counterpoint with Cilla)*

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,  
GIVE US YOUR ARMS.

**CILLA and MARGARET**  
*(together)*

AMEN.

**MARGARET**

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

**CILLA**

HUSH, CHILD.  
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!

REAR UP, NOW.  
HELP ROBERT WITH THE CHILDREN.

*(They hear footsteps approaching the cabin.)*

HERE HE COMES.

*(Margaret and Cilla recoil in fear when Casey, not Robert, storms into the cabin.)*

*(Casey glances around the cabin, then picks up one of their carpetbags  
and throws it across the room.)*

**CASEY**  
*(trying to humiliate them)*

PLANNING A LITTLE TRIP?  
OR JUST CLEANIN' OUT THE STY?



**ROBERT**

*(calling from outside)*

THE CHILDREN ARE COMING!  
THE CHILDREN ARE ...

*(Upon entering the cabin, Robert quickly halts when he sees Casey.)*

**CASEY**

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

*(Robert, Margaret and Cilla are terrified.)*

**CASEY** *(to Cilla)*

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

*(pulling a pistol out of his coat)*

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

*(Pointing the pistol at Cilla's mouth, Casey motions to Robert and Margaret with his free hand.)*

LET'S JUST LINE UP OVER THERE.

*(Impulsively, Robert attacks Casey. A violent struggle ensues, during which Robert manages to wrest away Casey's pistol. He points the pistol at Casey, yet hesitates to shoot him.)*

**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'S ALREADY DEAD.

**CASEY** *(to Margaret)*

YOU BLACK SLUT!  
DON'T YA BEG FOR ME!

**ROBERT**

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

*(He shoots Casey, who dies within a few minutes.)*

**CILLA**

LAP OF GOD, ROBERT.  
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

**ROBERT**

PROVED MY WORTH  
AS A MAN AND YOUR SON.

**CILLA**

*(clasping her hands)*

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.

*(She covers Casey's body.)*

**ROBERT**

MARGARET.  
OH, MY SWEET, LOVING WOMAN!

**MARGARET**

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

**ROBERT**

BE THERE.  
WHEN THE MOONLIGHT...

**ROBERT and MARGARET**  
*(together)*

...TOUCHES PINE.

**ROBERT**

LISTEN FOR THE ...

**ROBERT and MARGARET**  
*(together)*

...WAGON WHEELS.

**ROBERT**

WATCH FOR THE...

**ROBERT and MARGARET**  
*(together)*

... MOONLIGHT,  
THE MOONLIGHT.

**MARGARET**

WE'LL MEET YOU  
IN THE MOONLIGHT.

*(Robert kisses her.)*

**MARGARET**  
*(almost whispered)*

GO!

*(Robert runs away quickly.)*

**End of Act Two, Scene One**

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**[ORCHESTRAL INTERLUDE]**



weeks

**Act II, scene ii:**  
**in the Free State of Ohio, two months later.**

Robert and Margaret have escaped from their masters; they successfully crossed the Ohio River and reached Cincinnati, a city in the Free State of Ohio. It is twilight, in late March of 1861; a storm threatens. Robert is standing underneath a huge elm tree, near the entrance to an underground shed where he and Margaret, now both outlaws, are hiding with their children in an attempt to avoid being recaptured and returned to their masters. Glimmering hot coals can be seen in a hole in the shed's earthen floor.

*They will not  
have survived  
or escaped  
alone."  
"Shed  
No  
senses on  
the run."*

**MARGARET**

(emerging from the shed)

WHAT ELSE HAVE YOU HEARD?  
WHAT ARE THEY SAYING ABOUT HIM?

**ROBERT**

THEY SAY THIS NEW PRESIDENT  
DOESN'T HISS LIKE A SNAKE;  
THAT HE TALKS LIKE A MAN.

**MARGARET**

WHAT ELSE HAVE YOU HEARD?  
WHAT HAS HE SAID?

**ROBERT**

THAT A HOUSE DIVIDED  
CANNOT STAND.  
AND THAT THE UNION IS SACRED.

**MARGARET**

YOU BETTER MAKE YOUR SPIRIT READY, DARLING.  
THAT MEANS WAR...

OH ROBERT,  
THE CHILDREN ARE TROUBLED.  
THEY CRY IN THEIR SLEEP.

**ROBERT**

I KNOW, 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?  
IS IT BEAUTIFUL?

**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?



**ROBERT**

IT WILL BE JUST SO.

**MARGARET**

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... TELL ME.

**ROBERT**

THEY WILL.  
IT WILL BE JUST SO.

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

**MARGARET**

THAT IS HOW IT WILL ALWAYS BE.

**ROBERT**

THAT IS HOW I WILL ALWAYS BE.

**MARGARET and ROBERT**  
*(together)*

THAT IS HOW IT WILL ALWAYS BE.

*(Margaret picks a leaf from the tree and caresses Robert's face with it. They dance a teasing, catch-me dance around the tree.)*

**ROBERT**

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

*(He places the leaf in her hair. They return to the shed.)*

*(Soon, loud hoof beats are heard approaching. Robert grabs his pistol, and Margaret runs to protect her children, sleeping in the corner behind a blanket. Accompanied by a group of slave catchers, Edward Gaines pounds on the shed door.)*

**EDWARD and SLAVE CATCHERS**

OPEN! OPEN UP!

*(No sound is heard from inside the shed.)*

**EDWARD**

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

**EDWARD and SLAVE CATCHERS**

OPEN! OPEN UP!

**EDWARD and SLAVE CATCHERS**

NO HARM.  
COME SOFTLY.

**SLAVE CATCHERS**

NO HARM.  
OPEN UP. OPEN UP!

**EDWARD**

THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO.

*expansion*



**SLAVE CATCHERS**

WE CAN WAIT. WE WILL WAIT.

**EDWARD**

AS LONG AS WE HAVE TO.  
I JUST WANT WHAT IS MINE.

**SLAVE CATCHERS**

OPEN UP! OPEN UP!

**EDWARD**

THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO.

*(Intoxicated, Gaines breaks down the shed door and fires his pistol in the air. Robert shoots at Gaines, but misses his target. The slave catchers knock Robert to the ground and tie him up. Screaming, Margaret emerges from behind the childrens' blanket.)*

**MARGARET**

NO! NO MORE!  
WHY CAN'T YOU LEAVE US BE?  
WHY CAN'T YOU LEAVE US ALONE?

**EDWARD**

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

*(in an angry tone, although in his drunken state he thinks he is being tender)*

I OWN YOU.

*(Edward roughly grabs Margaret from behind, twirling her around.)*

**MARGARET**

*(moaning as she sees Robert being dragged out)*

SOMEBODY HELP US!  
PLEASE, SOMEBODY!  
PLEASE, NO MORE!

*(Margaret begins weeping, silently.)*

**EDWARD**

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

**MARGARET**

*(breaking loose)*

HERE THEY ARE!  
TAKE THEM! TAKE THEM!

*(With her bare hands, Margaret grabs some coal out of the smoldering fire and lunges at Gaines, attempting to burn him. He manages to grasp her wrists, and forces her to her knees. When Margaret finally drops the coal, Gaines notices that her hands have been scorched.)*

**EDWARD**

PRETEND TO BE CRAZY AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE.  
MANGLE YOURSELF, I DON'T CARE.

*(He throws her flat on the ground. The children cry loudly.)*

**EDWARD**

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

*(A slave catcher returns to the shed.)*

**SLAVE CATCHER**

HE'S BOUND AND READY, SIR.

**MARGARET**

*(on her knees, looking down and crying softly)*

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



*(Gaines takes off his coat, loosens his tie, and starts pulling off his suspenders.)*

**EDWARD**

*(to the slave catcher)*

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

*(In the dim light, Robert can be seen standing outside on a tall box underneath the tree. A noose is hanging around his neck. )*

**ROBERT**

MARGARET! MARGARET!  
I LOVE YOU! I LOVE...  
...YOU. *(barely audible)*

*(In the sudden stillness after the box has been kicked away, Margaret pulls the leaf from her hair and holds it in her scorched hands, weeping.)*

## **End of Act Two, Scene Two**

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## **[INTERLUDE]**

**Act II, scene iii:**  
**a few days later, in the beginning of April 1861.**

At dawn on the banks of the Ohio River, two fishermen sort gear near their moored boat.

**FIRST FISHERMAN**

TELL ME, WHAT IS REAL  
IN THIS TALE I'VE BEEN HEARING.  
COMMOTION ABOARD A SHIP? PASSENGERS ALARMED?  
LAWMEN CALLED TO THE FRAY?

**SECOND FISHERMAN**

DREADFUL! AWFUL! LET ME TELL YOU.  
AIN'T SEEN NOTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE.

**SECOND FISHERMAN**

SOME RICH MEN WERE SAILING TO DOWN-RIVER MARKETS.

**FIRST FISHERMAN**

WHERE PRICES FOR SLAVES ARE QUICK AND HIGH.

**SECOND FISHERMAN**

THE SLAVES BELOW DECK,  
THE OWNERS ABOVE:  
WITH CARDS AND MONEY,  
AND DRINK, DRINK, DRINK.

**FIRST FISHERMAN**

AND WOMEN.  
TO PASS THE TIME,  
TO WHILE AWAY THE NIGHT,  
THE RICH PLAY SUCH LOVELY GAMES OF CHANCE.

**SECOND FISHERMAN**

YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE.  
ONE OF THEM LOST HEAVILY,  
AND TO COVER HIS LOSSES  
WAGERED A SLAVE AND HER CHILDREN.



**FIRST FISHERMAN**

*(entering into the tale with glee)*

A HA! THE PLAYERS REFUSE,  
DOUBTING THE VALUE OF THE PAWN.

**SECOND FISHERMAN**

TO SHOW THEIR WORTH,  
THE LOSER ORDERS THEM  
BROUGHT UP TO THE GAME!

*(He mimes a woman strutting flirtatiously.)*

The stage divides into two playing areas. In a "Silhouette" upstage, Edward attempts to sell Margaret and her two children as slaves. Downstage, the Fishermen narrate and reenact in mime the recent events about which they have heard. These depictions of Margaret's story represent two markedly different perspectives; they play off each other in a visual counterpoint.

**FIRST and SECOND FISHERMAN**

*(together)*

THE PRICE IS AGREED ON.

DOWNSTAGE

[the Fishermen shake hands]

SILHOUETTE UPSTAGE

[Margaret and her two children stand before Edward and some Gamblers. Her hands are visibly bandaged; she still suffers from the burns she received from picking up hot coals and attempting to burn Edward with them. A Gambler considers purchasing Margaret, but after examining her hands, simply shakes his head - for she is "damaged goods."

Edward points  
unhesitatingly to the  
children for the Gambler's  
consideration. After  
scrupulously examining  
their bodies (teeth, arms,  
legs, etc.) for physical  
defects or weaknesses, the  
Gambler agrees to Edward's  
purchase price.]

**FIRST and SECOND FISHERMAN**  
(together)

THE SLAVE LOT IS DISMISSED.

[he waves away Margaret  
and the children]

**FIRST FISHERMAN**

AND THE GAME CONTINUES ANEW.

[dealing a deck of cards]

**SECOND FISHERMAN**

THAT'S WHEN THE SLAVE RAISES HER PRICE  
UP TO A LEVEL NO ONE CAN PAY.

["snatching" the children]

[Margaret caresses the  
children with her bandaged  
hands.]

**FIRST FISHERMAN**

WHAT DA YA MEAN?  
SHE WANTS TO BE PRICELESS?



**SECOND FISHERMAN**

SHE BELIEVES SHE IS PRICELESS.

**SECOND FISHERMAN**

SHE RAN TO THE RAIL,  
WITH A CHILD IN EACH ARM.

[flinging the children  
overboard one at a time]

AND LET THE RIVER TAKE THEM DOWN.

[holding the children in her  
arms, Margaret leans  
backward over the boat's  
railing.]

**FIRST AND SECOND FISHERMEN**  
(together)

[looking overboard]

AND LET THE RIVER TAKE THEM DOWN.

The Silhouette of Margaret and her children disappears; the other Silhouette, of Edward and the Gamblers animatedly gesticulating, gradually fades.

**SECOND FISHERMAN**

THEY FISH HER OUT WITH A HOOK AND A NET;  
THE CATCH IS ALIVE AND DRIPPING WET.

**FIRST FISHERMAN**

BUT THE CHILDREN ARE SWEEPED AWAY.

**FIRST and SECOND FISHERMAN**  
(together)

HER OWN CHILDREN ARE SWEEPED AWAY.

**Duet:**  
**"What Kind of Mother"**

**FIRST FISHERMAN**

WHAT KIND OF MOTHER IS THAT?

**SECOND FISHERMAN**

WHAT KIND OF MOTHER IS THAT?

**FIRST and SECOND FISHERMAN**  
*(together)*

NO KIND OF MOTHER  
KILLS HER YOUNG.  
WHAT KIND OF MOTHER IS THAT?  
WHAT KIND OF MOTHER KILLS HER YOUNG?

WHAT KIND OF MOTHER KILLS HER YOUNG?  
NO KIND OF MOTHER IS SHE.  
NO KIND OF MOTHER KILLS HER YOUNG.  
WHAT KIND OF MOTHER IS THAT?

WHAT KIND OF MOTHER DROWNS HER CHILD?  
NO KIND OF MOTHER IS SHE.  
NO KIND OF MOTHER DROWNS HER CHILD.  
WHAT KIND OF MOTHER IS THAT?

WHAT KIND OF MOTHER IS THAT?  
WHAT KIND OF MOTHER IS THAT?

*(The sound of a country fiddle in the distance eventually breaks the silence.)*

**SECOND FISHERMAN**

LOOK. THAT'S HER.

**FIRST FISHERMAN**

WHERE?

**SECOND FISHERMAN**

OUT THERE. ON A FLAT BED.  
TIED TO A POLE. YOU SEE?



**FIRST FISHERMAN**

I SEE NOTHIN' BUT FOG.

**SECOND FISHERMAN**

LOOK HARD.  
A GUARD WATCHES HER.  
SEE THE OARSMAN PULLING?

**FIRST FISHERMAN**

*(peering into the distance)*

FOG TAKES ON SHAPES IN THE WIND.  
MAKES YOU IMAGINE DEMONS AND THINGS.

**SECOND FISHERMAN**

THE MIST IS BREAKING.  
SEE THERE -- THE LAMP?

**FIRST FISHERMAN**

THERE SHE IS.  
LOOK HOW STILL SHE STANDS.

**FIRST and SECOND FISHERMAN**

*(together)*

POOR LITTLE MONSTER.  
HELL IS HER ONLY HOME NOW.

\* \* \* \*

A flatbed boat comes into view. Margaret, whose hands are visibly bandaged, is tied to the boat's mast. The oarsman and the guard watching her share a bottle of bourbon.

Margaret's state of mind clearly has changed; she seems to be slowly losing her grasp on reality.

**MARGARET**

LIKE A RIVER RUSHING  
FROM THE GRIP OF ITS BANKS.

SWEET BABY, SMILE AT ME  
LOVELY BABY, GO TO SLEEP.

DO YOU HEAR THEM?  
YOU HEAR?

WILL I PLANT A GARDEN?  
IT WILL BE JUST SO.  
CAN YOU HEAR THEM?  
IT WILL BE JUST SO.

BAD THINGS, FAR AWAY  
PRETTY THINGS HERE TO STAY.

*(In a moment of sudden clarity, Margaret accepts -- indeed, embraces -- her life's circumstances.)*

DARKNESS, I SALUTE YOU.  
REASON HAS NO POWER  
OVER THE DISCONSOLATE.  
GRIEF IS MY PLEASURE;  
THIEF OF LIFE MY LOVER, NOW.

DARKNESS, I SALUTE YOU.

**End of Act Two, Scene Three**

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N.B. Note big cut at the beginning of <sup>this</sup> scene from Urtext.

**ACT II, scene iv:  
in a Courtroom, the next day.**

Having followed the trial of Margaret Garner with great interest and curiosity, the townspeople fill the courtroom in anticipation of her sentencing by the three presiding judges. Margaret sits in court surrounded by militia officers; Caroline, George, and Edward deliver final testimony.

**JUDGES**

WHAT IS THE CHARGE?

**EDWARD**

THEFT, YOUR HONORS.

**JUDGES**

AND THE VALUE OF THE THEFT?

**EDWARD**

HUNDREDS, YOUR HONORS.  
HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS LOST.

**JUDGES**

HAVE THE STOLEN GOODS BEEN FOUND?

**EDWARD**

THEY HAVE, SIR.

**JUDGES**

AND WHAT IS THE CONDITION OF THESE GOODS?

**EDWARD**

*(looking at Margaret with menace)*

RUINED. USELESS.

**JUDGES**

HOW DID THEY COME TO BE RUINED?

**EDWARD**

THE ACCUSED DESTROYED THEM, YOUR HONORS.

**JUDGES**

BY ACCIDENT OR DELIBERATELY?

**EDWARD**

DELIBERATELY.

**JUDGES**

DESCRIBE, PLEASE, THE DESTROYED GOODS.

**EDWARD**

CHILDREN, SIRS.  
TWO CHILDREN, BOTH MINE.  
I MEAN, BOTH MY PROPERTY.

**CAROLINE**

*(interrupting)*

YOUR HONORS, MAY I SPEAK?

*(The judges nod their consent.)*

THE CHARGE IS FALSE.  
NOT THEFT, BUT MURDER  
IT SHOULD BE.

**JUDGES**

THAT IS A VERY DIFFERENT MATTER,  
YET IT COMES TO THE SAME THING.

THE ISSUE BEFORE US  
IS A CASE OF PROPERTY...  
A FINANCIAL LOSS ...  
AND THE GUILTY PARTY WHO CAUSED IT.



**CAROLINE and GEORGE**

RESPECTFULLY, WE BEG TO DIFFER.  
A MOTHER WHO *KILLS* HER CHILDREN  
CANNOT BE SAID TO *STEAL* THEM.

**EDWARD**

*(interrupting angrily)*

THEY DID NOT BELONG TO HER.  
SHE HAS NO RIGHT TO THEM,  
LIVING OR DEAD.

IT IS CLEAR IN OUR SYSTEM  
SHE OWNS *NOTHING* --  
LEAST OF ALL MY SLAVES.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

YES. LISTEN TO HIM.  
HE IS RIGHT.  
HE HAS THE RIGHT IDEA.

**JUDGES**

ORDER!  
ORDER IN THE COURT!  
ORDER IN THE COURT OF THE LAW OF THIS COUNTRY!

*(Silence suddenly fills the courtroom.)*

**CAROLINE**

*(quietly, with respect but also conviction)*

SHE BORE THEM, YOUR HONORS.  
THEY ARE HERS UNTIL THEY COME OF AGE.  
SHE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR LIVES.

**JUDGES**

*(cynically)*

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, MADAM?  
ON AN ISLAND IN THE SEA?  
YOU ARE SPEAKING OF A SLAVE,  
NOT SOMEONE LIKE YOU OR ME.

THE LAW IS CLEAR  
IN THE BIBLE AND HERE. *(repeats)*

SLAVERY IS NOT A MATTER  
FOR A SLAVE TO JUDGE.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

INFANTICIDE.  
INFANTICIDE IS SAVAGE.  
SAVAGE.  
AN UNNATURAL CRIME.

**GEORGE**

EXACTLY! A CRIME!  
WHERE *LIFE* IS TAKEN,  
NOT A BAG OF GOLD.

**CAROLINE**

IF SHE IS TO DIE,  
LET IT BE FOR SOMETHING SERIOUS.

**GEORGE**

HOW CAN YOU CONDEMN HER,  
AND NOT THE CRIME THAT BELITTLES HER CRIME?

**JUDGES**

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, SIR?  
ON AN ISLAND IN THE SEA?  
YOU ARE SPEAKING OF A SLAVE,  
NOT SOMEONE LIKE YOU OR ME.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

THE LAW IS CLEAR  
IN THE BIBLE AND HERE. *(repeats)*

SLAVERY IS NOT A MATTER  
FOR A SLAVE TO JUDGE.



**CAROLINE**  
(to Edward)

FATHER,  
MARGARET IS OF NO VALUE TO YOU,  
(looking at Margaret) OR ANYONE.

SHE WAS MORE THAN A MOTHER TO ME.

NOW HER SILENCE SCREAMS A GRIEF  
WE DARE NOT KNOW.

**JUDGES**

THE LAW IS CLEAR  
IN THE BIBLE AND HERE.

**EDWARD**

I HAVE COMMITTED NO CRIME.

**CAROLINE**

BUT YOU CAN **HELP** CHANGE THE DEBATE  
RAGING THE LAND.

**JUDGES**

THE LAW IS CLEAR  
IN THE BIBLE AND HERE.

**EDWARD**

I HAVE COMMITTED NO CRIME.

**CAROLINE**  
(alone)

LET THE CHARGE REFLECT  
OUR CRIMES AS WELL AS HERS.

**EDWARD**

I HAVE COMMITTED NO CRIME.

**JUDGES**

THE LAW IS CLEAR  
IN THE BIBLE AND HERE.

WE DO NOT MAKE LAWS  
OR FORSAKE LAWS,  
WE FOLLOW THEM PRECISELY.

THE CHARGE IS THEFT,  
THE SENTENCE IS JUST:  
THIS ONE WILL BE  
MADE READY FOR EXECUTION.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(relieved)*

BOUND AND MADE READY  
BOUND AND MADE READY  
BOUND AND MADE READY FOR EXECUTION.

SHE IS NOT LIKE YOU OR ME!  
AND SHE IS NOT ...LIKE YOU ...OR ME!

BOUND AND MADE READY  
BOUND AND MADE READY  
BOUND AND MADE READY FOR EXECUTION.

**MARGARET**

*(quietly, to herself)*

I AM NOT LIKE YOU.  
I AM ME.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(to one another)*

SHE IS NOT LIKE YOU OR ME.

*(Margaret suddenly rises from her chair, and glances around the courtroom,  
glaring at the onlookers.)*

**MARGARET**

*(emphatically)*

I AM NOT LIKE YOU.  
I AM ME!



**JUDGES**

*(to Margaret)*

SILENCE!  
YOU HAVE NO AUTHORITY.

**MARGARET**

*(to the judges; refusing to sit down)*

YOU HAVE NO AUTHORITY.  
I AM NOT LIKE YOU.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(to one another)*

*(women)* SHE IS *NOT* LIKE YOU  
OR ME...  
*(men)* ...SHE IS *NOT* LIKE YOU  
OR ME.

**JUDGES**

SILENCE!

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(men)* SHE IS *NOT* LIKE YOU  
OR ME...  
*(women)* ...SHE IS *NOT* LIKE YOU  
OR ME.

**JUDGES**

SILENCE!

**JUDGE III**

I ORDER YOU  
IN THE NAME OF THE LAW OF THIS LAND  
TO REMAIN SILENT!

**MARGARET**

*(standing tall in defiance)*

I AM NOT LIKE YOU.  
I AM ME!

I AM ME!  
I AM!

*(The Militia Officers restrain Margaret.)*

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

BOUND AND MADE READY  
BOUND AND MADE READY...

**JUDGE I**

I ORDER YOU  
IN THE NAME OF THE LAW OF THIS LAND  
TO BE EXECUTED  
BY SUNRISE TOMORROW!

**TOWNSPEOPLE**

*(feeling their status in society affirmed by the judges' decision)*

SHE IS NOT LIKE YOU OR ME  
SHE IS NOT LIKE YOU OR ME... *(exiting the courtroom)*

*(Margaret is led away.)*

**CAROLINE**

*(dismayed by the verdict)*

FATHER,  
YOU MUST URGE CLEMENCY  
FROM THE COURT.  
THEY WILL HEAR YOU.  
THEY WILL LISTEN TO YOU.

**GEORGE**

DON'T LET HER DIE  
WITHOUT DIGNITY.  
DON'T LET HER HANG  
FOR THE WRONG REASON.

**EDWARD**

*(a little disturbed, but displaying no outer sign of emotion)*

SHE MUST SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES  
OF WHAT SHE HAS DONE.

*— Edward's  
speech  
out*



**CAROLINE and GEORGE**

AND SO MUST YOU.

**EDWARD**

*(angrily)*

MEANING WHAT, EXACTLY?

**CAROLINE**

WE ARE SO AT ODDS  
IN THESE PAST FEW YEARS.  
OUR LAND WILL NOT SURVIVE  
THIS VIOLENT TEST.

**EDWARD**

DAUGHTER, ARE YOU THREATENING ME?

**CAROLINE and GEORGE**

*(together)*

NO. NO.  
WE ARE BEGGING YOU.

**CAROLINE**

DON'T FAIL ME.  
IT IS ALL IN YOUR HANDS.

*(Edward turns away as George and Caroline start to leave the courtroom. Caroline looks back at her father, then impulsively runs to him. She takes his hands, presses one against her cheek, and kisses it.)*

*(Caroline and George exit.)*

*(Lights out.)*

**End of Act Two, Scene Four**

\*\*\*\*\*

**ACT II, scene v:  
the next morning.**

Alone, in the darkness before dawn, Edward contemplates the course of his life.

**Arioso**

**EDWARD**

*(examining his hands)*

NOTHING. I SEE NOTHING AT ALL.  
NO WOUND, NO RASH.  
YET THEY BURN.

WHAT LIGHTS THE FLAME?  
IS IT CAROLINE'S KISS,  
OR MARGARET'S COALS OF FIRE?

*(dismissing any such questions)*

DAMN IT TO HELL!  
I AM APPROVED.  
CLEARLY WHAT THE WORLD INSISTS  
I SHOULD BE.  
LAW AND CUSTOM ENDORSE ME.

*(reconsidering)*

YET MY ONLY CHILD  
LOOKS AT ME WITH STRANGE EYES;  
COLD APPRAISAL WHERE NAKED ADORATION  
USED TO LIVE.

*(aggressively)*

AM I NOT A LEGAL MAN, A LOVING FATHER?  
GOD'S BLUEPRINT,  
FLAWED IN MERELY ORDINARY WAYS?

HATS STILL TIP,  
GENTLEWOMEN DIP THEIR HEADS COURTEOUSLY  
TO ME.

AND YET. AND YET.  
THEY SEAR LIKE MOLTEN LEAD.

*(inwardly, glancing at his hands)*  
(LOOK AT THEM. LOOK AT THEM!)



IF THE FLAW IS IN THE BLUEPRINT  
WHY MUST I CHOOSE?

(upon reflection)

IF THE FLAW IS IN THE BLUEPRINT --  
THEN I MUST CHOOSE.

(The spotlight on Gaines gradually dims.)

\*\*\*\*\*

Traces of sunlight can be seen on the horizon. Cilla, barely visible, is kneeling at the base of an executioner's scaffold; she quietly sings a spiritual to herself.

**CILLA**

O, Bye and bye, bye and bye  
I'm gonna lay down my heavy load.

I know my robe's gonna fit me well  
I'm gonna lay down this heavy load  
I tried it on at the gates of hell  
I'm gonna lay down my heavy load.

O, Bye and bye, bye and bye  
I'm gonna lay down my heavy load.

Hell is deep and dark despair  
I'm gonna lay down this heavy load  
Stop poor sinner and don'tcha go there  
I'm gonna lay down my heavy load.

O, Bye and bye, bye and bye  
I'm gonna lay down my heavy load.

(daybreak)

\*\*\*\*\*

(At dawn, a group of local citizens -- including the town authorities; Caroline and George; and Cilla, as well as some slaves from nearby plantations -- processes somberly into the townsquare; they are accompanying Margaret Garner to her execution. All are sobered by the imminence of death, and great sorrow fills the air. Seemingly, the only person not in the crowded plaza is Edward Gaines.)

(The hangman brings forth the condemned prisoner. He then leads Margaret, whose hands still are bandaged from her burns, up a series of scaffold steps, and places a

noose around her neck when she reaches the top of the platform. Soon afterwards, Edward Gaines runs in, anxiously waving a document in his hand.)

**EDWARD**  
(breathlessly)

HOLD ON! HOLD ON!  
I'M TELLING YOU, HOLD ON.  
THE JUDGES HAVE GRANTED CLEMENCY...

(in a pointed aside to George and Caroline)  
CLEMENCY.

(looking around at the crowd)  
AND IF THE GUILTY PARTY REPENTS  
HER MONSTROUS CRIME,  
SHE WILL BE REMANDED  
TO MY CUSTODY.

(The hangman comes over to accept the legal document from Edward. Caroline embraces her father; George shakes Gaines's hand.)

**CAROLINE and GEORGE**  
(together)

THANK GOD. THANK YOU.

**GEORGE**  
(shaking Edward's hand)

THANK GOD. THANK YOU.

**CILLA**  
(stepping forward, thrilled)

THANK YOU, SWEET JESUS.

(to Margaret)  
DO YOU HEAR THAT?  
YOU WILL LIVE, DAUGHTER.  
PRAISE MY MAKER,  
YOU WILL LIVE, MY ANGEL.

**MARGARET**

OH YES. I WILL LIVE.  
I WILL LIVE.



I WILL LIVE AMONG THE CHERISHED.  
IT WILL BE JUST SO.  
SIDE BY SIDE IN OUR GARDEN  
IT WILL BE JUST SO.

RINGED BY A HARVEST OF LOVE.  
NO MORE BRUTAL DAYS OR NIGHTS.  
GOODBYE, SORROW...  
DEATH IS DEAD FOREVER.

I LIVE.  
OH YES, I LIVE!

*(Margaret kicks away the scaffold stool and hangs herself.)*

**CILLA**

MARGARET... NO!  
MARGARET!

**SLAVE CHORUS**

DEAR GOD, NO MORE.

*(Caroline notices Margaret's scarf in her father's front pocket. She removes it, silently ascends the scaffold, and reverently ties it around Margaret's waist.)*

**GEORGE and CAROLINE**

SHE HAS SWALLOWED HER TROUBLE,  
AND LEFT US TO TASTE OUR OWN.

*(They leave.)*

**EDWARD**

*(stunned; calling after Caroline)*

I CHOSE! I CHOSE!

*(looking at his hands once more)*

NO BREEZE, NO COOL STREAM  
CALMS THESE PALMS.  
UNHEALED, THERE IS NO PEACE.

*(He walks away.)*

*(The hangman frees Margaret's body from the noose, and holds her in his arms before the townspeople. The light begins to dim; eventually, all that is visible is Margaret's body, which seems to float alone and above the crowd.)*

**ALL**

SWEET JESUS,  
HELP US BREAK THROUGH THE NIGHT.

**WHITE CHORUS**

CHASTENED BY THY HOLY MIGHT,

**SLAVE CHORUS**

*(including Cilla)*

GUIDED BY THY HOLY LIGHT  
INTO THY BLESSED SIGHT.

**ALL**

*(but Cilla)*

HAVE MERCY. HAVE MERCY ON **US.**  
HELP US BREAK THROUGH THE NIGHT.

**CILLA**

SOON, SOON MY BOLD-HEARTED GIRL  
I'LL BE THERE. I'LL BE THERE.

**SLAVE CHORUS**

*(without Cilla)*

BREAK THROUGH THE NIGHT,  
BREAK THROUGH THE NIGHT;  
LET HER LINGER A WHILE  
AND RIDE THE LIGHT.

\* \* \* \* \*



**END OF OPERA**

"Urtext" for  
Act 2 (w/old  
Act 3)

## MARGARET GARNER

### Act II

#### Act II: Scene I - Winter, four years later (January 1861).

In the shadows beyond CILLA's cabin, CASEY can be seen assaulting a black man. Later, MARGARET goes to CILLA's cabin, anticipating a visit from ROBERT, who has been secretly visiting her there on Sunday nights. When she arrives, MARGARET finds CILLA packing a carpetbag.

**MARGARET**

HAS HE COME?

**CILLA**

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

**MARGARET**

*(noticing CILLA's carpetbag)*

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?  
WHERE ARE THE CHILDREN?

**CILLA**

CALM YOURSELF.  
YOUR DAUGHTER IS WITH KATE.  
SO ARE THE TWINS. *little one*  
*K*

**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?

**(Arioso)**

**CILLA**

*(pulling MARGARET into a dark corner of the room)*

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.  
YOU'RE LEAVING TONIGHT.

**MARGARET**

SWEET JESUS!

**CILLA**

SWEETER THAN SYRUP  
AND RIGHT ON TIME.

*(MARGARET picks up some articles of her children's clothing and pretends to "dance" with them, as if they were a wealthy couple at a fancy ball. She reprises a verse of her "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

*(ROBERT arrives; he and MARGARET embrace)*

**MARGARET**

YOU DIDN'T SAY A WORD LAST SUNDAY.

**ROBERT**

I COULDN'T.  
I HAD TO BE SURE.

**MARGARET**

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?

*(Several times, ROBERT tries to embrace MARGARET, but she pulls away, embarrassed to show her tears.)*

IT'S ALL RIGHT.

**ARIA**

**ROBERT**

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 her composure, but still anxious)*

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

**ROBERT**

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

(ROBERT *leaves*)

**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.

**ARIA**

**CILLA**

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

**MARGARET**

*(sung in counterpoint with CILLA)*

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

**CILLA** *(alone)*

AMEN.

**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!

*(they hear footsteps approaching the cabin)*

**CILLA**

*(smiling nervously)*

REAR UP, NOW.  
HELP ROBERT WITH THE CHILDREN.

*(CASEY storms into the cabin. Shocked, MARGARET and CILLA recoil in fear.)*

**CASEY**

*(looking around)*

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

**ROBERT**

*(calling from outside)*

THE CHILDREN ARE COMING!

*(Upon entering the cabin, ROBERT quickly halts when he sees CASEY.)*

THEY...

**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 *and* CILLA freeze 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.

(pulling a pistol out of his coat)

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

(Pointing the pistol at CILLA's mouth, CASEY motions to ROBERT and MARGARET with his free hand.)

LET'S JUST LINE UP OVER THERE.

(Impulsively, ROBERT attacks CASEY. A violent struggle ensues, during which ROBERT manages to wrest away CASEY'S pistol. He points the pistol at CASEY, yet hesitates to shoot him.)

**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!

*(he shoots CASEY dead)*

**CILLA**

LAP OF GOD, ROBERT.  
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

**ROBERT**

PROVED MY WORTH  
AS A MAN AND YOUR SON.

**CILLA**

*(clasping her hands)*

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.

*(she drags CASEY's body away)*

**ROBERT**

MARGARET.  
OH, MY SWEET WOMAN!

**MARGARET**

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

**ROBERT**

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*)

**End of Act Two, Scene One**

\*\*\*\*\*

**[ORCHESTRAL INTERLUDE IV]**



917  
868 0172

**Act II: Scene ii - One week later, at twilight.**

ROBERT and MARGARET have escaped from their masters; they have successfully crossed the Ohio River and reached Cincinnati, a city in the Free State of Ohio. A winter storm threatens. ROBERT is standing underneath a huge elm tree, near the entrance to an underground shed where he and MARGARET, now both outlaws, are hiding with their children in an attempt to avoid being recaptured and returned to their masters. Glimmering hot coals can be seen in a hole in the shed's earthen floor.

**MARGARET**

*(emerging from the shed)*

WHAT ELSE HAVE YOU HEARD?

**ROBERT**

THEY SAY THIS NEW PRESIDENT  
DOESN'T HISS LIKE A SNAKE;  
THAT HE TALKS LIKE A MAN.

**MARGARET**

WHAT HAS HE SAID?

**ROBERT**

THAT A HOUSE DIVIDED  
CANNOT STAND.  
AND THAT THE UNION IS SACRED.

**MARGARET**

THAT MEANS WAR...

*(music to provide a shift in mood/drama)*

**MARGARET**

OH ROBERT,  
THE CHILDREN ARE TROUBLED.  
THEY CRY IN THEIR SLEEP.

**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 ROBERT'S face with it.  
They dance a teasing, catch-me dance around the tree.)*

**MARGARET**

THAT IS HOW IT WILL ALWAYS BE.

**ROBERT**

THAT IS HOW I WILL ALWAYS BE.

*(places the leaf in her hair)*

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

*(They return to the shed.)*

*(Soon, loud hoof beats are heard approaching. ROBERT grabs his pistol, and MARGARET runs to protect her children, sleeping in the corner behind a blanket. Accompanied by four SLAVE CATCHERS, EDWARD GAINES pounds on the shed door.)*

**EDWARD**

OPEN! OPEN UP!

*(no sound is heard from inside the shed)*

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

**EDWARD and SLAVE CATCHERS**

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.

*(Intoxicated, GAINES breaks down the shed door and fires his pistol in the air. ROBERT shoots at GAINES, but misses his target. The SLAVE CATCHERS knock ROBERT to the ground and tie him up. Screaming, MARGARET emerges from behind the childrens' blanket.)*



**MARGARET**

NO! NO MORE!  
WHY CAN'T YOU LEAVE US BE?

**EDWARD**

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

*(in an angry tone, although in his drunken state he thinks  
he is being tender)*

I OWN YOU.

*(EDWARD roughly grabs MARGARET from behind, twirling her around)*

**MARGARET**

*(moaning as she sees ROBERT being dragged out)*

SOMEBODY HELP US! SOMEBODY!

**EDWARD**

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

**MARGARET**

*(breaking loose)*

HERE THEY ARE!  
TAKE THEM! TAKE THEM!

*(MARGARET plunges her hand into the smoldering fire, and grabs a piece of coal to throw at GAINES. She continues to throw bits of coal at him, but he successfully dodges them. Grabbing MARGARET'S wrists, GAINES looks at her scorched hands, then forces her to her knees.)*

**EDWARD**

PRETEND TO BE CRAZY AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE.  
MANGLE YOURSELF, I DON'T CARE.

*(He throws her flat on the ground. The children cry loudly.)*

**EDWARD**

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

*(A SLAVE CATCHER returns to the shed.)*

**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.

*(In silhouette, ROBERT is seen standing outside on a tall box underneath the elm tree. A noose is hanging around his neck. )*

**ROBERT**

MARGARET! MARGARET!  
I LOVE YOU! I LOVE ...



*(As the box is kicked away, ROBERT's voice is cut off abruptly. In the sudden stillness, MARGARET pulls the leaf from her hair, and holds it in her scorched hands, weeping.)*

**CURTAIN**

**END OF ACT TWO**

\*\*\*\*\*

**INTERMISSION**

## MARGARET GARNER

### ACT II: Scene 3

Twilight a few days later. On the banks of the Ohio River. Two Fishermen sort gear near their moored boat.

#### First Fisherman

Tell me, what is real  
In this tale I've been hearing.  
Commotion aboard a ship? Passengers alarmed?  
Lawmen called to the fray?

#### Second Fisherman

Dreadful! Awful! Let me tell you.

[During the following exchange the Fishermen mimic, pantomime, the action they are describing.]

#### Second Fisherman

Some rich men were sailing to down-river markets.

#### First Fisherman

Where prices for slaves are quick and high.

#### Second Fisherman

The slaves below deck  
The owners above  
With cards, money and  
Drink, drink, drink.

#### First Fisherman

And women?  
To pass the time,  
To while away the night  
The rich play such lovely games of chance.

#### Second Fisherman

One of them lost heavily  
And to cover his losses  
Wagered a slave and her children.



**First Fisherman**

[entering the tale with glee]

Aha! The players refuse,  
Doubting the value of the pawn.

**Second Fisherman**

To show their worth  
The loser orders them  
Brought up to the game.  
[mimes a woman strutting flirtatiously]

["Silhouettes" appear above/in back of the Fishermen downstage: Margaret and her two children standing before Edward and the gamblers. Through the balance of this scene the miming of the Fishermen and the gestures of the Silhouettes are markedly different; two versions play against each other.]

**First Fisherman**

The price is agreed on.  
[both Fishermen shake hands]

[Margaret's hands are bandaged (from the grabbing of hot coals earlier). Gambler examines them, shakes his head—she is damaged—; Edward points to children. Player examines each: teeth, arms, legs etc. He agrees to price.]

**Second Fisherman**

The slave lot is dismissed.  
[waves Margaret and children away]

**First Fisherman**

The game continues anew.  
[Fishermen deal cards]

**Second Fisherman**

That's when the slave raises her price  
To a level no one can pay.  
["snatches" children]

[Margaret caresses children with her bandaged hands.]

**First Fisherman**

What?  
She wants to be priceless?

**Second Fisherman**

She believes she is priceless.

**Second Fisherman**

She ran to the rail  
A child in each arm.

[Fisherman runs and flings children one at a time overboard]

And let the river take them down.

[Margaret, holding children in her arms leans backward over the rail]

**Both Fishermen**

[looking overboard]

And let the river take them down.

[Silhouettes of **Margaret** and children disappear; Silhouette of Edward and Gamblers gesticulating then fading]

**Second Fisherman**

They fish her out with a hook and a net  
The catch is alive and dripping wet.

**First Fisherman**

But the children are swept away.

**First Fisherman and Second Fisherman together**

What kind of mother is that?  
No kind of mother  
Kills her young.  
No kind of mother is she.

[Silence. Then into the silence the sound of an harmonica.]

**Second Fisherman**

Look. That's her.

**First Fisherman**

Where?

**Second Fisherman**

Out there. On a flat bed. Tied to a pole. See?



**First Fisherman**

I see fog.

**Second Fisherman**

Look hard. A guard watches her. The oarsman pulls.

**First Fisherman**

[Peering]

Fog takes on shapes in the wind.  
Makes you imagine demons and things.

**Second Fisherman**

The mist is breaking. See there, the lamp.

**First Fisherman**

Oh. Look how still she stands.

**First and Second Fisherman together**

Poor little monster. Hell is her only home now.

[**Margaret** on flatbed comes into view. Hands bandaged in thick rags, strapped to a "mast." She is singing her memories; lines from previous songs.]

**Margaret**

Bad things, far away  
Pretty things here to stay  
Sweet baby smile at me  
Lovely baby go to sleep

Go, cry girl.  
You have won your tears.  
Go cry, girl.

Will I plant a garden?  
It will be just so.

Do you hear them?

By the mimosa  
When the moon hits...  
The secret soul keeps...  
See this tree?  
That is how I will always be.

[Sudden change from mourning to a fierce acceptance of her state.]

Darkness, I salute you.  
Reason has no power  
Over the disconsolate.  
Grief is my pleasure;  
Thief of life my lover, now.



[Close]



## MARGARET GARNER

ACT II: Scene 4

Lobby of Courthouse the next day. Edward, Caroline, George.

**Caroline**

Father, this is madness.

**Edward**

Madness, yes. Hers, not mine.

**George**

All the more reason to spare her.

**Edward**

Spare her? She is a savage.  
A danger to society.  
Can't you see?

**George and Caroline**

We don't condone child murder.  
No human could.

**Edward**

Then step aside.

**Caroline**

Father!

**Edward**

Let the trial begin.

Scene changes to interior of Courtroom. Caroline, George and Edward enter. Three Judges sit on raised bench. Townspeople to stage left. Militia Officers posted near Margaret who is seated in the middle of the floor.

**Judges**

What is the charge?

**Edward**

Theft, your honors.

**Judges**

And the value of the theft?

**Edward**

Hundreds, your honors. Hundreds of dollars lost.

**Judges**

Have the stolen goods been found?

**Edward**

They have, sir.

**Judges**

And what is the condition of these goods?

**Edward**

[looking menacingly at Margaret]

Ruined. Useless.

**Judges**

How did they come to be ruined?

**Edward**

The accused destroyed them, your honors.

**Judges**

By accident or deliberately?

**Edward**

Deliberately.

**Judges**

Describe, please, the destroyed goods.



**Edward**

Children, sirs. Two children.  
Both my property.

**Caroline** [interrupting]

Your honors, may I speak?  
The charge is false.  
Not theft but murder  
It should be.

**Judges**

That is a very different matter  
Yet it comes to the same thing.  
The matter before us  
Is financial loss  
And the guilty party who caused it.

**Caroline and George**

Respectfully, we beg to differ.  
A mother who kills her children  
cannot be said to steal them.

**Judges**

How so?

**Edward**

[interrupting angrily]

They did not belong to her.  
She has no right to them  
Living or dead.  
It is clear in our system  
She owns nothing  
Least of all my slaves.

**Townspeople**

[in agitation]

Yes. Listen to him.  
He is right.

**Judges**

Order!

[into the sudden silence]

**Caroline**

She bore them, your honors.  
They are hers until they come of age.  
She is responsible for their lives.

**Judges**

Where have you been, Madam?  
On an island in the sea?  
You are speaking of a slave  
Not some one like you or me.  
The law is clear  
In the Bible and here.  
Slavery is not a matter  
For the slave to judge.

**Townspeople**

Infanticide is savage.  
An unnatural crime.

**George**

Exactly! A crime!  
Where life is taken  
Not a bag of gold.

**Caroline**

If she is to die  
Let it be for something serious.  
Not a cruel joke!

**George**

How can you condemn her  
And not the crime that belittles her crime?

**Judges**

Where have you been, Sir?  
On an island in the sea?  
You are speaking of a slave  
Not someone like you or me.



**Townspeople**

The law is clear  
In the Bible and here.  
Slavery is not a matter for  
A slave to judge.

**George**

Then let us judge it fairly.  
Or we are the dangers [looking at Edward]  
To civilized society.

**Caroline** [to Edward]

Father, Margaret is of no value to you  
[looking at Margaret]  
Or anyone.  
She was more than a mother to me.  
Now her silence screams a grief  
We dare not know.  
But you can change the debate  
Raging the land.  
Let the charge reflect  
Our crimes as well as hers.

**Edward**

I have committed no crime.

**Townspeople**

He has committed no crime.  
The law is clear  
In the Bible and here.

**Judges**

We do not make laws  
Or forsake laws  
We follow them to a T.  
The charge is theft  
The sentence is just:  
This woman will be  
Made ready for execution.

**Townspeople**

[with relief]

Bound and made ready  
For execution  
She is not like you or me

**Margaret**  
[rising]

I am not like you.  
I am me.

[Singing in counterpoint with the **Townspeople**]

**Townspeople**  
[to each other]

She is not like you or me.

**Margaret**

I am not like you. I am me.

**Judges**

You have no authority.

**Margaret**

You have no authority.  
I am not like you.

**Townspeople**  
[to each other]

She is not like you  
Or me.

**Margaret**

I am me!

[Officers take hold of Margaret. All Exit except Caroline, George and Edward]

**Caroline**

Father.  
You must urge clemency from the Court.  
They will listen to you.

Edward

A radical now?  
You defy convention.



**George**

Don't let her hang  
For the wrong reason

**Edward**

She must suffer the consequences  
Of what she has done.

**Caroline and George**

And so must you.

**Edward**

Meaning what?

**Caroline**

We are so at odds.  
Our family, like this whole land,  
Will not survive  
This violent test.

**Edward**

Are you threatening me?

**Caroline and George**

No. No. We are begging you.

[Edward turns away. George and Caroline move to leave. Caroline turns to look at Edward then, impulsively, runs back to him and takes her father's hands. Holding one against her cheek, she kisses it.]

**Caroline**

Don't fail me.  
It's all in your hands.

[Exits with George]

## MARGARET GARNER

### ACT 11; Scene 5

Edward alone in spotlight. It is early morning.

Edward  
[examining his hands]

Nothing. I see nothing at all.  
No wound, no rash.  
Yet they burn.  
What lights the flame?  
Is it Caroline's kiss  
Or Margaret's coals of fire?

[dismissing his questions]

Rot!  
I am approved.  
Clearly what the world insists  
I should be.  
Law and custom endorse me.  
[re-considering]

Yet my only child  
Looks at me with strange eyes,  
Cold appraisal where naked adoration  
Used to live.

[aggressively]  
Am I not a legal man, a loving father  
God's blueprint  
Flawed in merely ordinary ways?

Hat's still tip,  
Gentlewomen dip their heads courteously  
To me.

Yet. Yet.  
[looking at his hands]

They sear like molten lead.

If the flaw is in the blueprint  
Why must I choose?  
[reflectively]  
If the flaw is in the blueprint  
Then I must choose.



Lights up revealing the Town Square at twilight. A crowd has assembled. Caroline, George, Slaves including Cilla, Townspeople. Margaret is being led up steps to a scaffold. Her hands are still bandaged (therefore no need to tie them). As she reaches the platform, she is held by the Hangman before the final three or four steps of a separate set. It is on this last step where the noose will be fixed. The Slaves are humming—no words yet—but in great dismay and sorrow. Margaret climbs the last steps. The Hangman places the noose around her neck. Suddenly (as in the first scene of Act 1) Edward enters. He is waving a document.

Edward

Hold on! Hold on!  
I'm telling you hold on.  
The Judges have granted clemency.  
If, if the guilty party repents  
Her monstrous crime,  
She will be remanded  
To my custody.

[The Hangman moves away from Margaret to accept Edward's paper.]

Caroline [embracing her father] George [shaking his hand]

Thank God. Thank you.

Cilla  
[stepping forward, thrilled]

You will live, daughter.  
Praise my Maker, you will live.

Margaret

Oh yes. I will live. I will live  
Among the cherished.  
Side by side  
In our own garden  
Ringed by a harvest of love.  
No more brutal days or nights.  
Goodbye, sorrow.  
Death is dead.  
I live. Oh yes, I live.

[Margaret kicks away the steps and hangs herself]

Cilla

Margaret, no!

Edward, Caroline, George, et al.  
[reminiscent of the "No's" sung by the Slaves in Act 1, scene 1]

No! No!  
Please God, no.

George and Caroline

She has swallowed her trouble  
And left us to taste our own.

[they Exit]

Edward  
[stunned; calling to Caroline's back]

I chose! I chose!  
[then examining his hands once more]

Yet no breeze, no cool stream  
Calms these palms.  
Unhealed, there is no peace.

[Exits]

During the following, Cilla's voice is distinctive, rising at times above the others. The Black and White Choruses sing the same song, occasionally with different lines. Meanwhile the Hangman lifts Margaret's body free and holds her in his arms before the Crowd. Together they seem to form a cross. As the scene proceeds, light slowly dims on the Hangman's figure and rises on Margaret's until all that is visible is her horizontal body floating alone and above everyone.

All

Sweet Jesus,  
Help us break through the night.

White Chorus

Chastened by Thy holy light

Black Chorus

Guided by Thy holy light

All

Into Thy blessed sight.

White Chorus

Your justice is hard but clean.



Black Chorus

The hands of justice are not clean.

White Chorus

Your wrath is sublime.

Black Chorus

Pride is the crime.

All

Have mercy. Have mercy on me.

Cilla

Soon, soon my bold-hearted girl  
I'll be there. I'll be there.

Black Chorus

Break through the night  
Break through the night  
Let her linger a while  
And ride the light.

END

# MARGARET GARNER

## Act II

### Act II: Scene I - Winter, four years later (January 1861).

In the shadows beyond CILLA's cabin, CASEY can be seen assaulting a black man. Later, MARGARET goes to CILLA's cabin, anticipating a visit from ROBERT, who has been secretly visiting her there on Sunday nights. When she arrives, MARGARET finds CILLA packing a carpetbag.

**MARGARET**

HAS HE COME?

**CILLA**

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

**MARGARET**

*(noticing CILLA's carpetbag)*

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?

(Arioso)

**CILLA**

*(pulling MARGARET into a dark corner of the room)*

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.  
YOU'RE LEAVING TONIGHT.

**MARGARET**

SWEET JESUS!

**CILLA**

SWEETER THAN SYRUP  
AND RIGHT ON TIME.

*(MARGARET picks up some articles of her children's clothing and pretends to "dance" with them, as if they were a wealthy couple at a fancy ball. She reprises a verse of her "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

*(ROBERT arrives; he and MARGARET embrace)*

**MARGARET**

YOU DIDN'T SAY A WORD LAST SUNDAY.

**ROBERT**

I COULDN'T.  
I HAD TO BE SURE.

**MARGARET**

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?

*(Several times, ROBERT tries to embrace MARGARET, but she pulls away, embarrassed to show her tears.)*

IT'S ALL RIGHT.

**ARIA**

**ROBERT**

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 her composure, but still anxious)*

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

**ROBERT**

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

(ROBERT *leaves*)

**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.

**ARIA**

**CILLA**

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

**MARGARET**

*(sung in counterpoint with CILLA)*

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

**CILLA** *(alone)*

AMEN.

**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!

*(they hear footsteps approaching the cabin)*

**CILLA**

*(smiling nervously)*

REAR UP, NOW.  
HELP ROBERT WITH THE CHILDREN.

---

*(CASEY storms into the cabin. Shocked, MARGARET and CILLA recoil in fear.)*

**CASEY**

*(looking around)*

---

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

**ROBERT**

*(calling from outside)*

THE CHILDREN ARE COMING!

*(Upon entering the cabin, ROBERT quickly halts when he sees CASEY.)*

THEY...

**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 and CILLA freeze 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.

(pulling a pistol out of his coat)

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

(Pointing the pistol at CILLA's mouth, CASEY motions to ROBERT and MARGARET with his free hand.)

LET'S JUST LINE UP OVER THERE.

(Impulsively, ROBERT attacks CASEY. A violent struggle ensues, during which ROBERT manages to wrest away CASEY'S pistol. He points the pistol at CASEY, yet hesitates to shoot him.)

**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!

*(he shoots CASEY dead)*

**CILLA**

LAP OF GOD, ROBERT.  
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

**ROBERT**

PROVED MY WORTH  
AS A MAN AND YOUR SON.

**CILLA**

*(clasping her hands)*

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.

*(she drags CASEY's body away)*

**ROBERT**

MARGARET.  
OH, MY SWEET WOMAN!

**MARGARET**

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

**ROBERT**

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*)

**End of Act Two, Scene One**

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**[ORCHESTRAL INTERLUDE IV]**



**Act II: Scene ii - One week later, at twilight.**

ROBERT and MARGARET have escaped from their masters; they have successfully crossed the Ohio River and reached Cincinnati, a city in the Free State of Ohio. A winter storm threatens. ROBERT is standing underneath a huge elm tree, near the entrance to an underground shed where he and MARGARET, now both outlaws, are hiding with their children in an attempt to avoid being recaptured and returned to their masters. Glimmering hot coals can be seen in a hole in the shed's earthen floor.

**MARGARET**

*(emerging from the shed)*

WHAT ELSE HAVE YOU HEARD?

**ROBERT**

THEY SAY THIS NEW PRESIDENT  
DOESN'T HISS LIKE A SNAKE;  
THAT HE TALKS LIKE A MAN.

**MARGARET**

WHAT HAS HE SAID?

**ROBERT**

THAT A HOUSE DIVIDED  
CANNOT STAND.  
AND THAT THE UNION IS SACRED.

**MARGARET**

THAT MEANS WAR...

*(music to provide a shift in mood/drama)*

**MARGARET**

OH ROBERT,  
THE CHILDREN ARE TROUBLED.  
THEY CRY IN THEIR SLEEP.

**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 ROBERT'S face with it.  
They dance a teasing, catch-me dance around the tree.)*

**MARGARET**

THAT IS HOW IT WILL ALWAYS BE.

**ROBERT**

THAT IS HOW I WILL ALWAYS BE.

*(places the leaf in her hair)*

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

*(They return to the shed.)*

*(Soon, loud hoof beats are heard approaching. ROBERT grabs his pistol, and MARGARET runs to protect her children, sleeping in the corner behind a blanket. Accompanied by four SLAVE CATCHERS, EDWARD GAINES pounds on the shed door.)*

**EDWARD**

OPEN! OPEN UP!

*(no sound is heard from inside the shed)*

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

**EDWARD and SLAVE CATCHERS**

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.

*(Intoxicated, GAINES breaks down the shed door and fires his pistol in the air. ROBERT shoots at GAINES, but misses his target. The SLAVE CATCHERS knock ROBERT to the ground and tie him up. Screaming, MARGARET emerges from behind the childrens' blanket.)*



**MARGARET**

NO! NO MORE!  
WHY CAN'T YOU LEAVE US BE?

**EDWARD**

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

*(in an angry tone, although in his drunken state he thinks  
he is being tender)*

I OWN YOU.

*(EDWARD roughly grabs MARGARET from behind, twirling her around)*

**MARGARET**

*(moaning as she sees ROBERT being dragged out)*

SOMEBODY HELP US! SOMEBODY!

**EDWARD**

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

**MARGARET**

*(breaking loose)*

HERE THEY ARE!  
TAKE THEM! TAKE THEM!

*(MARGARET plunges her hand into the smoldering fire, and grabs a piece of coal to throw at GAINES. She continues to throw bits of coal at him, but he successfully dodges them. Grabbing MARGARET'S wrists, GAINES looks at her scorched hands, then forces her to her knees.)*

**EDWARD**

PRETEND TO BE CRAZY AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE.  
MANGLE YOURSELF, I DON'T CARE.

*(He throws her flat on the ground. The children cry loudly.)*

**EDWARD**

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

*(A SLAVE CATCHER returns to the shed.)*

**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.

*(In silhouette, ROBERT is seen standing outside on a tall box underneath the elm tree. A noose is hanging around his neck. )*

**ROBERT**

MARGARET! MARGARET!  
I LOVE YOU! I LOVE ...



*(As the box is kicked away, ROBERT's voice is cut off abruptly. In the sudden stillness, MARGARET pulls the leaf from her hair, and holds it in her scorched hands, weeping.)*

**CURTAIN**

**END OF ACT TWO**

\*\*\*\*\*

**INTERMISSION**

## MARGARET GARNER

### ACT II: Scene 3

Twilight a few days later. On the banks of the Ohio River. Two Fishermen sort gear near their moored boat.

#### First Fisherman

Tell me, what is real  
In this tale I've been hearing.  
Commotion aboard a ship? Passengers alarmed?  
Lawmen called to the fray?

#### Second Fisherman

Dreadful! Awful! Let me tell you.

[During the following exchange the Fishermen mimic, pantomime, the action they are describing.]

#### Second Fisherman

Some rich men were sailing to down-river markets.

#### First Fisherman

Where prices for slaves are quick and high.

#### Second Fisherman

The slaves below deck  
The owners above  
With cards, money and  
Drink, drink, drink.

#### First Fisherman

And women?  
To pass the time,  
To while away the night  
The rich play such lovely games of chance.

#### Second Fisherman

One of them lost heavily  
And to cover his losses  
Wagered a slave and her children.



**First Fisherman**

[entering the tale with glee]

Aha! The players refuse,  
Doubting the value of the pawn.

**Second Fisherman**

To show their worth  
The loser orders them  
Brought up to the game.  
[mimes a woman strutting flirtatiously]

[“Silhouettes” appear above/in back of the Fishermen downstage: Margaret and her two children standing before Edward and the gamblers. Through the balance of this scene the miming of the Fishermen and the gestures of the Silhouettes are markedly different; two versions play against each other.]

**First Fisherman**

The price is agreed on.  
[both Fishermen shake hands]

[Margaret’s hands are bandaged (from the grabbing of hot coals earlier). Gambler examines them, shakes his head—she is damaged—; Edward points to children. Player examines each: teeth, arms, legs etc. He agrees to price.]

**Second Fisherman**

The slave lot is dismissed.  
[waves Margaret and children away]

**First Fisherman**

The game continues anew.  
[Fishermen deal cards]

**Second Fisherman**

That’s when the slave raises her price  
To a level no one can pay.  
[“snatches” children]

[Margaret caresses children with her bandaged hands.]

**First Fisherman**

What?  
She wants to be priceless?

**Second Fisherman**

She believes she is priceless.

**Second Fisherman**

She ran to the rail  
A child in each arm.

[Fisherman runs and flings children one at a time overboard]

And let the river take them down.

[Margaret, holding children in her arms leans backward over the rail]

**Both Fishermen**

[looking overboard]

And let the river take them down.

[Silhouettes of **Margaret** and children disappear; Silhouette of Edward and Gamblers gesticulating then fading]

**Second Fisherman**

They fish her out with a hook and a net  
The catch is alive and dripping wet.

**First Fisherman**

But the children are swept away.

**First Fisherman and Second Fisherman together**

What kind of mother is that?  
No kind of mother  
Kills her young.  
No kind of mother is she.

[Silence. Then into the silence the sound of an harmonica.]

**Second Fisherman**

Look. That's her.

**First Fisherman**

Where?

**Second Fisherman**

Out there. On a flat bed. Tied to a pole. See?



**First Fisherman**

I see fog.

**Second Fisherman**

Look hard. A guard watches her. The oarsman pulls.

**First Fisherman**

[Peering]

Fog takes on shapes in the wind.  
Makes you imagine demons and things.

**Second Fisherman**

The mist is breaking. See there, the lamp.

**First Fisherman**

Oh. Look how still she stands.

**First and Second Fisherman together**

Poor little monster. Hell is her only home now.

---

[**Margaret** on flatbed comes into view. Hands bandaged in thick rags, strapped to a "mast." She is singing her memories; lines from previous songs.]

---

**Margaret**

Bad things, far away  
Pretty things here to stay  
Sweet baby smile at me  
Lovely baby go to sleep

Go, cry girl.  
You have won your tears.  
Go cry, girl.

Will I plant a garden?  
It will be just so.

Do you hear them?

By the mimosa  
When the moon hits...  
The secret soul keeps...  
See this tree?  
That is how I will always be.

[Sudden change from mourning to a fierce acceptance of her state.]

Darkness, I salute you.  
Reason has no power  
Over the disconsolate.  
Grief is my pleasure;  
Thief of life my lover, now.

[Close]



## MARGARET GARNER

ACT II: Scene 4

Lobby of Courthouse the next day. Edward, Caroline, George.

**Caroline**

Father, this is madness.

**Edward**

Madness, yes. Hers, not mine.

**George**

All the more reason to spare her.

**Edward**

Spare her? She is a savage.  
A danger to society.  
Can't you see?

**George and Caroline**

We don't condone child murder.  
No human could.

**Edward**

Then step aside.

**Caroline**

Father!

**Edward**

Let the trial begin.

Scene changes to interior of Courtroom. Caroline, George and Edward enter. Three Judges sit on raised bench. Townspeople to stage left. Militia Officers posted near Margaret who is seated in the middle of the floor.

**Judges**

What is the charge?

**Edward**

Theft, your honors.

**Judges**

And the value of the theft?

**Edward**

Hundreds, your honors. Hundreds of dollars lost.

**Judges**

Have the stolen goods been found?

**Edward**

They have, sir.

**Judges**

And what is the condition of these goods?

**Edward**

[looking menacingly at Margaret]

Ruined. Useless.

**Judges**

How did they come to be ruined?

**Edward**

The accused destroyed them, your honors.

**Judges**

By accident or deliberately?

**Edward**

Deliberately.

**Judges**

Describe, please, the destroyed goods.



**Edward**

Children, sirs. Two children.  
Both my property.

**Caroline** [interrupting]

Your honors, may I speak?  
The charge is false.  
Not theft but murder  
It should be.

**Judges**

That is a very different matter  
Yet it comes to the same thing.  
The matter before us  
Is financial loss  
And the guilty party who caused it.

**Caroline and George**

Respectfully, we beg to differ.  
A mother who kills her children  
cannot be said to steal them.

**Judges**

How so?

**Edward**

[interrupting angrily]

They did not belong to her.  
She has no right to them  
Living or dead.  
It is clear in our system  
She owns nothing  
Least of all my slaves.

**Townspeople**

[in agitation]

Yes. Listen to him.  
He is right.

**Judges**

Order!

[into the sudden silence]

**Caroline**

She bore them, your honors.  
They are hers until they come of age.  
She is responsible for their lives.

**Judges**

Where have you been, Madam?  
On an island in the sea?  
You are speaking of a slave  
Not some one like you or me.  
The law is clear  
In the Bible and here.  
Slavery is not a matter  
For the slave to judge.

**Townspeople**

Infanticide is savage.  
An unnatural crime.

**George**

Exactly! A crime!  
Where life is taken  
Not a bag of gold.

**Caroline**

If she is to die  
Let it be for something serious.  
Not a cruel joke!

**George**

How can you condemn her  
And not the crime that belittles her crime?

**Judges**

Where have you been, Sir?  
On an island in the sea?  
You are speaking of a slave  
Not someone like you or me.



**Townspeople**

The law is clear  
In the Bible and here.  
Slavery is not a matter for  
A slave to judge.

**George**

Then let us judge it fairly.  
Or we are the dangers [looking at Edward]  
To civilized society.

**Caroline** [to Edward]

Father, Margaret is of no value to you  
[looking at Margaret]  
Or anyone.  
She was more than a mother to me.  
Now her silence screams a grief  
We dare not know.  
But you can change the debate  
Raging the land.  
Let the charge reflect  
Our crimes as well as hers.

**Edward**

I have committed no crime.

**Townspeople**

He has committed no crime.  
The law is clear  
In the Bible and here.

**Judges**

We do not make laws  
Or forsake laws  
We follow them to a T.  
The charge is theft  
The sentence is just:  
This woman will be  
Made ready for execution.

**Townspeople**

[with relief]

Bound and made ready  
For execution  
She is not like you or me

**Margaret**

[rising]

I am not like you.

I am me.

[Singing in counterpoint with the **Townspeople**]

**Townspeople**

[to each other]

She is not like you or me.

**Margaret**

I am not like you. I am me.

**Judges**

You have no authority.

**Margaret**

You have no authority.

I am not like you.

**Townspeople**

[to each other]

She is not like you

Or me.

**Margaret**

I am me!

[Officers take hold of Margaret. All Exit except Caroline, George and Edward]

**Caroline**

Father.

You must urge clemency from the Court.

They will listen to you.

Edward

A radical now?

You defy convention.



**George**

Don't let her hang  
For the wrong reason

**Edward**

She must suffer the consequences  
Of what she has done.

**Caroline and George**

And so must you.

**Edward**

Meaning what?

**Caroline**

We are so at odds.  
Our family, like this whole land,  
Will not survive  
This violent test.

**Edward**

Are you threatening me?

**Caroline and George**

No. No. We are begging you.

[Edward turns away. George and Caroline move to leave. Caroline turns to look at Edward then, impulsively, runs back to him and takes her father's hands. Holding one against her cheek, she kisses it.]

**Caroline**

Don't fail me.  
It's all in your hands.

[Exits with George]

## MARGARET GARNER

### ACT 11; Scene 5

Edward alone in spotlight. It is early morning.

Edward  
[examining his hands]

Nothing. I see nothing at all.  
No wound, no rash.  
Yet they burn.  
What lights the flame?  
Is it Caroline's kiss  
Or Margaret's coals of fire?

[dismissing his questions]

Rot!  
I am approved.  
Clearly what the world insists  
I should be.  
Law and custom endorse me.  
[re-considering]

Yet my only child  
Looks at me with strange eyes,  
Cold appraisal where naked adoration  
Used to live.

[aggressively]  
Am I not a legal man, a loving father  
God's blueprint  
Flawed in merely ordinary ways?

Hat's still tip,  
Gentlewomen dip their heads courteously  
To me.

Yet. Yet.  
[looking at his hands]

They sear like molten lead.

If the flaw is in the blueprint  
Why must I choose?  
[reflectively]  
If the flaw is in the blueprint  
Then I must choose.



Lights up revealing the Town Square at twilight. A crowd has assembled. Caroline, George, Slaves including Cilla, Townspeople. Margaret is being led up steps to a scaffold. Her hands are still bandaged (therefore no need to tie them). As she reaches the platform, she is held by the Hangman before the final three or four steps of a separate set. It is on this last step where the noose will be fixed. The Slaves are humming—no words yet—but in great dismay and sorrow. Margaret climbs the last steps. The Hangman places the noose around her neck. Suddenly (as in the first scene of Act 1) Edward enters. He is waving a document.

Edward

Hold on! Hold on!  
I'm telling you hold on.  
The Judges have granted clemency.  
If, if the guilty party repents  
Her monstrous crime,  
She will be remanded  
To my custody.

[The Hangman moves away from Margaret to accept Edward's paper.]

Caroline [embracing her father] George [shaking his hand]

Thank God. Thank you.

Cilla  
[stepping forward, thrilled]

You will live, daughter.  
Praise my Maker, you will live.

Margaret

Oh yes. I will live. I will live  
Among the cherished.  
Side by side  
In our own garden  
Ringed by a harvest of love.  
No more brutal days or nights.  
Goodbye, sorrow.  
Death is dead.  
I live. Oh yes, I live.

[Margaret kicks away the steps and hangs herself]

Cilla

Margaret, no!

Edward, Caroline, George, et al.

[reminiscent of the "No's" sung by the Slaves in Act 1, scene 1]

No! No!  
Please God, no.

George and Caroline

She has swallowed her trouble  
And left us to taste our own.

[they Exit]

Edward  
[stunned; calling to Caroline's back]

I chose! I chose!  
[then examining his hands once more]

Yet no breeze, no cool stream  
Calms these palms.  
Unhealed, there is no peace.

[Exits]

During the following, Cilla's voice is distinctive, rising at times above the others. The Black and White Choruses sing the same song, occasionally with different lines. Meanwhile the Hangman lifts Margaret's body free and holds her in his arms before the Crowd. Together they seem to form a cross. As the scene proceeds, light slowly dims on the Hangman's figure and rises on Margaret's until all that is visible is her horizontal body floating alone and above everyone.

All

Sweet Jesus,  
Help us break through the night.

White Chorus

Chastened by Thy holy light

Black Chorus

Guided by Thy holy light

All

Into Thy blessed sight.

White Chorus

Your justice is hard but clean.



Black Chorus

The hands of justice are not clean.

White Chorus

Your wrath is sublime.

Black Chorus

Pride is the crime.

All

Have mercy. Have mercy on me.

Cilla

Soon, soon my bold-hearted girl  
I'll be there. I'll be there.

Black Chorus

Break through the night  
Break through the night  
Let her linger a while  
And ride the light.

END