

All That Remains

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A Play in Two Acts

By Ursula Jordaán

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THE PLAY

ALL THAT REMAINS is a dramatic two-act play set in a small rural town in Louisiana in the 1940's.

When Mae Moreley has a blessed miscarriage her life turns around for the better, or so she thinks. When she becomes unwillingly pregnant by her abusive partner Carl, Mae will be forced to make a dangerous decision of choosing to end her life or to stay alive and protect her newfound friends and the life she desires.

RUNNING TIME: Approximately 100 min

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MAE MORELEY(30's) - Biracial and in relationship with Carl.

HALEY WASHINGTON (30's) - African American, Mae's best friend.

HARPER WHITMORE(late 30's) - Caucasian, Mae's neighbor.

CARL BENNETT(30's-40's) - Caucasian, in relationship with Mae.

DR. JACKSON, (50's) - Caucasian middle class Doctor.

MRS. CARTER/BLOND/BRUNETTE (Late 30's) Upper class  
Caucasian/prostitutes.

TOTAL CAST SIZE OF 6

3 Characters played by one actor.

## SETTING

1940's Small rural town, Louisiana, USA.

The entire play takes place at the home of Mae and Carl.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

### THE SET/PROPS

The set is a reflection of Mae and her inner turmoil; it's rustic, beaten, and dilapidated where little attention has been paid to it's care. All the action takes place on this one set. Entrances and exits will take place on the both sides of the stage and one exit from the front of the stage into the audience.

### DIALECT

Louisiana 1940's. Dr. Jackson, being an educated man, could have trained as a doctor outside of the state so his dialect can be lighter. Carl and Haley will have the thickest of accents considering they have been poorly educated and will speak with more "I's, we's and they's", while Mae falls in between Dr. Jackson and Haley. Mrs. Carter has a cleaner and crisper tone. Harper hasn't spoken in 25 years so when he finally does, it's croaky and guttural; short and rough.

### The Tone

The feel of the play is meant to be stifling. The building of friction can be displayed creatively with lights and sounds; colors of orange, yellow's and red's. The sounds of insects buzzing the heat hissing are effective ways to express this.

### Music

Most the music will be organic hymns, meaning it will be sung, unless it's an occasional gospel song on the radio.

### Costumes

Are to be authentic to the period; poor and lower class with

dark/neutral tones. Mrs. Carter's clothing will be brighter, reflecting her status. Dr. Jackson is relatively casual in his trousers and neutral tops.

ACT I - SCENE 1 - RELIEF

SCENE 1

LIGHTS UP ON:

A RUNDOWN HOUSE belonging to MAE MORELEY and CARL BENNETT. The SOUNDS of birds chirping and insects buzzing fill the air.

The house is surrounded by a 5'0 high FENCE. Inside the yard is: a lopsided OUTHOUSE held open by a rope tied to the fence; a HAND WATER PUMP with JUG; a VEGETABLE GARDEN; LAUNDRY WIRES, and a GARBAGE BIN rest beside the house.

The house has a TWO PERSON BENCH on the deck and inside the house is a beat up ROCKING CHAIR with TWO TABLES used for eating and prepping FOODS. There is a STOVE with a shelf above it that holds a small assortment of HOUSEHOLD ITEMS, and an OLD RADIO that plays GOSPEL music.

Peeking over the fence, with his wild-matted hair and beard is HARPER WHITMORE. With the coast clear, Harper tosses a ROLL of TOILET PAPER into Mae's outhouse. Hearing noises inside within the house, Harper hunkers low.

Mae enters the scene in a sweat-drenched summer dress with a LAUNDRY BASKET in tow. She's in her first trimester and feeling very uncomfortable and ill. She rests to drink some WATER.

Forcing herself outside to pull laundry from the wire, she bends over from cramps and catches her breath.

MAE  
(winces)

Agh!

(Mae grabs her abdomen. She rushes to the outhouse and vomits, wiping her mouth with the thrown toilet paper.)

MAE (CONT'D)

Agh!!

(Mae reaches under her dress but it comes out clean. She vomits again. Searing pain erupts from her and a PLOP can be heard hitting the bottom; miscarriage.)

MAE (CONT'D)  
(begging)

Jesus... please.

(Gasping for air, Mae rocks back and forth. Reaching underneath again, her hand is covered in thick red BLOOD. She leans back with a look of RELIEF.)

MAE (CONT'D)  
(heavy breathing, tears)

Thank you Jesus... thank you.

(Mae gathers herself and gingerly exits. See's Harper.)

MAE (CONT'D)  
(covers herself)

Jesus, Harper!! Whachu doing there?

(Harper freaks.)

MAE (CONT'D)

Ain't right creeping around like that! Jesus, ya scared me. *(Beat)* Just go about ya business now.

(Harper, worried, still hovers low as Mae hastily cleans the residue on her dress. She accidentally she rips it, takes it off and decides to toss it in the garbage before rethinking and buries it within the garden.)

(DR. JACKSON and Carl are heard off stage. Mae panics.)

DR. JACKSON (O.S.)

Hello Carl.

CARL (O.S.)

Dr. Jackson!? Haven't seen you out this far before.

MAE

(whispers)

Go on now Harper; get!

(Mae enters the house to change just as Dr. Jackson and Carl enter. Carl has GROCERIES and a LUNCH PAIL in hand.)

DR. JACKSON

Only out on occasion. This a new place for ya?

CARL

Yup, just a little while now.

DR. JACKSON

Ah, so that's ya woman then that I'd seen; Mae right?

CARL

Oh, ya know her?

DR. JACKSON

Only seen her when I pass by and she's folding laundry or something.

CARL

Uh huh. *(Beat)* Does she say anything to ya?

DR. JACKSON

No more than an hello really.

CARL

Uh huh, yeah. *(Beat)* Say, have you ever checked up on that cripple I got next door?

DR. JACKSON

Harper, Carl, and yes I've seen him.

CARL

Kind of a strange freak ain't he? I saw him perching on the fence once then he's taking off faster than a damn squirrel.

DR. JACKSON

He's alright, just needs some help from time to time. Listen, I gotta check in on some other patients; nice to see ya again.

*(Dr. Jackson exits)*

*(Carl scopes the fence line for Harper, then enters the house.)*

CARL

Mae!?

MAE (O.S.)

Be right down.

*(Carl yanks a bottle of WHISKEY from the shelf and takes a long pull.)*

MAE

*(hiding her discomfort)*

Did I hear ya talking to somebody?

*(Mae unpacks the grocery bag.)*

CARL

Dr. Jackson. We were talking about that cripple next door. Have ya seen him?

MAE

Dr. Jackson? Not so much.

CARL

The cripple!! Ya ever seen him?

MAE

Harper mostly keeps to himself.

CARL

Oh, so ya know his name then?! So ya talking to him?

MAE

Oh we don't talk, he's just popping his head over a few times. Think he's curious is all.

CARL

Odd is what that is.

MAE

Carl you got the wrong supplies again. I needed All Spice and Cinnamon.

CARL

Same shit... and it's cheaper.

MAE

But it don't taste the same.

(Mae uses the ingredients anyway to finish the mostly prepared APPLE PIE.)

CARL

Why ya moving like that; what's up with you?

MAE

(deflecting)

Just under the weather is all. How's work?

(Carl finishes the bottle and dumps it in the garbage bin.)

CARL

Another goddamn day with Jacob riding our asses! Me, Frank and Albert are felling and limbing those tress as hard as any man out there, and that cheap bastard still won't give us no raise!

(Carl opens a new bottle.)

CARL (CONT'D)

Something outta be done.

MAE

(indifferent)

Ain't fair y'all working so hard.

CARL

(suspicious)

You say you saw the Doc?

MAE

Sometimes.

CARL

He say anything to ya?

MAE

Uh, hello mostly, nothing much. He checks in on Harper and others around these parts. What did he say to ya?

CARL

Just warned me is all.

MAE

Warned you of what?

CARL

Said you ought to be staying out of the town... being ya kind and all.

MAE

Me?! I ain't never going into town Carl, you know that.

CARL

I told him that but he said some folks ain't liking no *mixes* walking the streets; saying your kind be the ugly spawn of the devil; shit like that. A few got roughed up real bad. *(Beat)* Don't worry about it, I told ya this before you staying out here is just fine. Better for ya.

MAE

(taken aback)

Oh... why wouldn't he say anything like that to me?

(Mae puts pie in oven.)

CARL

Why would he; you friends or something?!

MAE

No, I just thought -

CARL

He ain't gotta do nothing, understand?! And don't you be asking him about it neither! Nice of him to say anything to me so I can protect ya. *(Beat)* I don't want nothing to happen to ya Mae; don't know what I'd do without ya.

*(Carl's strokes her, lifts her dress.)*

MAE

No Carl, I can't. I ... I ain't feeling so well, I told ya that.

CARL

C'mon Mae, I'll make ya feel good.

*(Mae tries to shove him off but Carl is more forceful.)*

CARL (CONT'D)

*(eager)*

This always makes ya better.

MAE

I'm bleeding Carl! Stop it.

*(Carl looks in her panties; shoves her away.)*

CARL

Ack! Goddamnit!

MAE

*(upset)*

I'll... I'll just make some supper.

*(Pause.)*

CARL

What's for supper?

MAE

Baked biscuits, and got some okra and sweet potatoes outta the garden today. They're growing like a weed out there -

(Carl's indifferent; looks outside.)

MAE (CONT'D)

Them turnips about ready to come out... maybe I'll make some turnip soup. Get some greens and if you can get us a chicken -

CARL

What?! You think I got a goddamn chicken farm out back? How the hell am I gonna pay for that Mae?

MAE

I just thought -

CARL

You thought what?

MAE

Well, your boss was being so nice a little while back when he gave us that chicken, he said he'd do it again. Thought now might be a nice time is all.

CARL

(caught of guard)

Well... maybe he don't give us nothing, ever think of that?

(Carl storms towards her, pinches her butt hard.)

CARL (CONT'D)

Maybe I can sell your ass to get some better food around here!

(Carl tosses food off table.)

CARL (CONT'D)

Ain't hungry for that shit anyway.

(Carl exits - staggering. Mae gingerly cleans up the kitchen.)

(HALEY WASHINGTON enters, fanning herself.)

HALEY

Hello? *(Beat)* Hey there, anybody home?

MAE

Hello?

(Mae wipes her tears and goes outside.)

HALEY

I'm Haley... Haley Washington, who are you?

MAE

I - uh, Mae Moreley.

HALEY

(thinks)

Moreley huh? *(Beat)* That's your man Carl right, Carl Bennett?

MAE

Yes, do ya know him?

HALEY

Not really. I see him always going to the Mill Pub though. He seems... *(Thinks)* a little tense most times. I heard he might finally have a woman but I never saw her in town before; then today I saw him buying baking supplies and I thought to myself, "*He just don't seem to be the baking kind.*" So I followed him out here to get a look at ya. *(Beat)* Damn, you're a pretty thing ain't ya?

MAE

(awkward)

Umm -

HALEY

Who'd you say your mama is?

MAE

Adda-Mae Moreley.

HALEY

Hmm, never heard of her.

MAE

Wouldn't think ya would, we weren't from around these parts. She died when I was five.

HALEY

Sorry to hear that.

(Haley starts snooping around.)

HALEY (CONT'D)

What about ya daddy?

MAE

Never knew my daddy.

HALEY

Uh huh. Ya ever hear of the Brown family? A man named "Butcha Brown?"

MAE

No, did they live here?

HALEY

Nope, they all dead now.

MAE

Oh dear, I'm -

HALEY

No matter, all better for it. *(Beat)* So how long y'all been out here?

MAE

Few months now - Umm, Miss Washington?

HALEY

Haley is just fine.

MAE

Haley, was there something you came over for?

HALEY

I'm just saying hello and wondering why ya ain't around much. *(Beat)* Got to church at all?

MAE

Uh, no -

HALEY

Well that ain't right.

*(Haley scopes the outhouse.)*

HALEY (CONT'D)

My husband Willie can fix that for ya; handy fella sometimes. Is your man handy?

MAE

Not rea -

HALEY

No matter, Willie can do it for ya if ya like.

(Haley is on the deck then enters the house  
while Harper pops his head over the fence.)

HALEY (CONT'D)

What's that smell?

MAE

I'm baking an apple pie.

HALEY

Does it hurt to bake 'em?

MAE

Umm, no -

HALEY

Then why ya in pain? Can't fool me Mae, I seen ya wincing since I came into ya yard;  
what's going on?

MAE

Nothing muc -

HALEY

Ain't look like nothing. There ain't a woman around that hasn't been cramping like you is  
now; you pregnant or something? *(Laughs)* Shoot, that'd be news around here!

MAE

No!

HALEY

Not that it's any of my business and all. *(Beat)* Now I ain't no baker at all but something  
don't smell right with ya pie.

MAE

Carl brung the wrong supplies again. I asked for Cinnamon and All Spice and he got me...  
something that don't smell right.

HALEY

He'll go and get ya the right stuff then?

MAE

Probably not.

HALEY

Why don't ya go and get 'em yourself?

MAE

He tells me to stay here.

HALEY

Why?

MAE

Said they don't like my kind there; cause a fuss or something.

HALEY

Kind?

MAE

Too colored to be white, too white to be colored.

HALEY

(big laugh)

Shoot, hell we're all of bunch of misfits here Mae! I betcha that's why he's hushing you up out here 'cuz he'd probably be jealous with all them other men being sweet on ya! (*Laughs*) But if you ain't up to it I can get ya the supplies ya need, ain't no bother; ya seem nice enough. Can get ya some fresh apples too! Farmer Johnson's farm ain't that far away.

MAE

Really? Oh, I'm wanting some fresh apples instead of the canned ones he's getting. Ain't the same the way my mama used to make. She always knew just how much All Spice to add and put in extra butter to make is softer, ya know? Melt right in ya mouth.

HALEY

Well I'll get it for ya and you can make me one of your mama's pies and we call it even alright? Just tell me what they looks like because my eye sight ain't so good.

MAE

Well All Spice comes in a brown tin about yea big around and it says, "Capper All Spice"; and Cinnamon comes in a red tin; well you gotta know what Cinnamon is.

HALEY

Alright then, it's sure been a long time since I had some nice pie. Willie don't like my baking, says it takes like shit so he gives it to the kids so they can play with it. *(Laughs)*

MAE

Oh, how many kids ya got?

HALEY

Two, Sarah and Clyde. Damn sure is cute they are; take after their mama! You outta stop by and see 'em one time. Alright listen, I'll get what ya need for tomorrow and we can talk some more then.

*(Haley is about to exit when she sees Harper.)*

HALEY (CONT'D)

*(whispers)*

Jesus! You got some kind of white Birdman perching on ya fence!

MAE

*(whispers, looks)*

What? Oh, that's Harper, he does that from time-to-time.

HALEY

*(whispers)*

What's up with him? And that hair!?

MAE

*(whispers)*

Don't really know, maybe some kind of disability...? He's a little weird but he stays to his own side. *(Beat)* Don't talk though, not sure he can.

HALEY

Creepy is what that is. *(To Harper)* Birdman!! Whachu snooping at?

*(Harper freaks and exits.)*

MAE

Miss Haley! Hush now!

HALEY

Just making sure he stays there. Skittish creature eh? *(Beat)* Alright, I'll see ya tomorrow Mae, see if you're still alive. *(Laughs)*

MAE

Thanks for stopping by Miss Haley.

(Haley peeks over the fence to make sure Harper is gone and gives the “OK” signal to Mae.)

(Mae re-enters the house and pulls out the pie to cool, then exits upstairs.)

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT I -SCENE 2 - KIND GESTURE

SCENE 2

LIGHTS UP:

Hours later - Evening.

Harper carries a FLAT PILLOW and RATTY BLANKET. Quietly he climbs over the fence and hobbles towards Mae's deck setting them on the bench. He scurries back and watches.

Carl enters drunk and laughing with a BLOND prostitute in tow.

BLOND

Your woman sure do make a tidy home. Too bad she ain't good at nothing else. Frigid bitch.

CARL

(yanks her hard)

Don't ya be saying shit about Mae alright? Or you can walk back to the ditch where ya come from; ya hear?

BLOND

Ain't nothing bad baby, I'll give ya what ya pay for.

(Carl goes upstairs. The Blond picks at the pie.)

BLOND (CONT'D)

Ugh...

(Carl re-enters with a tired Mae.)

MAE

(groggy)

Carl, whachu doing?

CARL

You ain't feeling right, I'll fix that right now. Fresh air will do ya good.

MAE

You're hurting me... what's she doing here in my house?

CARL

This is my house and don't ya forget it none! You're lucky I took your ass in you fucking half-breed bitch!

(Carl tosses Mae outside and scoops up the Blond and heads upstairs.)

(Mae, stunned, starts crying and walks to the edge of the stage.)

MAE

(praying)

I know you're punishing me after today Lord. It's my penance... but just tell me Lord, was this the best plan ya had for me? Because I'd sure appreciate it if there was something better, someway to get me outta here... I just keep praying...

(Mae waits; listens; nothing)

MAE (CONT'D)

I just keep praying.

(Mae sits on the bench and wraps herself in the blanket.)

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT I -SCENE 3 - AWKWARD

SCENE 3

LIGHTS UP:

Early morning.

Mae is awkwardly asleep on the bench until Carl enters making a ruckus and tossing food into his lunch pail. He exits.

Mae and the Blond woman exchange uncomfortable looks.

BLOND

Your pie's missing something... don't ya think?

(Blond exits. Mae tosses out the pie. Haley enters with a BASKET of APPLES.)

HALEY

Who the hell is that yellow haired woman?

MAE

Friend of Carl's.

(Haley sees the pillow and blanket.)

HALEY

Oh, I see.

MAE

Did ya husband, umm, Willie, ever do something like that?

HALEY

Yup and I ended that right quick, ain't bringing no whores home, no suh! Don't need that shit in my house with my babies running around. Here, got ya some fresh apples from farmer Johnson.

MAE

Thank you! Oh, its been so long.

(Mae pulls out two TINS from the basket.)

MAE (CONT'D)

Oh, this ain't All Spice Haley, its Baker's flour.

HALEY

You said a brown tin this big and round and that's what I got ya.

MAE

But it says right on it, "*Baker's Flour*," look. Did ya put it elsewhere?

HALEY

No.

MAE

Hmmm.

HALEY

(getting upset)

Look Mae, I done what ya asked me too!

MAE

(surprised)

Oh, I know that Haley -

HALEY

Ain't no need to rub it in my face. If it be such a goddamn problem then why don't you take your scared ass into town and get it yourself?

(Haley goes to exit.)

MAE

Haley. Haley, wait! Stop, please!

HALEY

What?

MAE

I'm sorry, I meant no rudeness, c'mon now. I mean ya got the Cinnamon so that's gonna flavor nicely.

HALEY

(quietly)

I know that one.

MAE

Whachu mean; you ain't ever seen what All Spice is?

HALEY

No.

MAE

(thinks)

Seen it or read it?

HALEY

Listen Mae -

MAE

Can ya read Haley?

HALEY

Don't be thinking about making fun of me Mae!

MAE

I ain't making fun Haley, I'm just asking is all; a lot of folks don't know how to read, ain't no big thing.

HALEY

Ain't no big thing til ya black and blue in the face because they're thinking y'all stupid and crazy like ya daddy! You gonna be like them others, huh? I don't need that shit Mae, I'll tell ya that right now!

MAE

(softly)

Oh Haley, I'm sorry but I'm not making fun of ya, honest. I'm asking so I can help ya.

HALEY

'Cuz ya think I'm stupid?

MAE

No, I'm saying I can help teach ya if ya want.

HALEY

People always treating me like I'm stupid 'cuz I'm butcha Brown's big girl and thinking I don't know shit. Oh, they love teasing me behind my back; so I take care of my own. I got a different kind of smarts, understand?

MAE

I believe ya. Listen, you're kind enough to come around here and help me, wanna talk to me... shoot, at least I can help ya.

HALEY

How you know how to read?

MAE

Them nuns's at the orphanage taught me to read and write figuring I might as well have something. So then I'm teaching the other kids to do the same.

HALEY

So how'd you meet Carl?

MAE

He kept walking past the orphanage for awhile like he was looking for someone, and when it shutdown I didn't have anywhere to go. I ain't knowing any different; having no money.

HALEY

Yeah I get that. Is he treating ya right?

MAE

All I learned is that no one cares for people like me.

HALEY

I was told by my mama just to find a "good enough" man. "*Not like ya daddy, someone better than ya daddy,*" she said. "*Just find a 'good enough' man that don't beat ya and get out of this shitter; and remember to take care of yourself - at least learn that from ya daddy. Ain't no shame in that.*" *(Beat)* I didn't know any better then to see what I seen with my mama. Don't even have a grade five education before my butcha daddy said, "*You're full enough to work now Haley.*"

(Haley roughly grabs her breasts and buttocks to show "full enough.")

HALEY (CONT'D)

So mama takes me to do laundry with her 'cuz she doesn't want me doing nothing nasty, if ya know what I mean? So we clean some houses, take care of them gardens; stuff like that, so that's all I know. *(Beat)* Still doing that kind of work and it makes me money, but I tell ya Mae, I had me dreams. Oh, I wanted to sing! Mama said I got a gift of God right in my throat. So I'm singing one time when I saw my butcha daddy standing there with his eyes watering and I'm thinking, I did something special because he was smiling. Then he grabbed my throat so hard I couldn't scream.

HALEY (CONT'D)

“Ain't no good having that Haley, won't pay for nothing!” The only way I see it is, he took my dreams because someone takes his. *(Beat)* But I'm singing now Mae!

*(Haley sings the hymn Be Glad in the Lord.)*

“Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice,  
All ye that are upright in heart;  
And ye that have made Him your choice,  
Bid sadness and sorrow depart.

*(Refrain)*

Rejoice, rejoice,  
Be glad in the Lord and rejoice;  
Rejoice, rejoice,  
Be glad in the Lord and rejoice.”

MAE

That's beautiful Haley!

HALEY

I hear them songs at church and remember them, so I keep singing them all the way back home. And now my butcha daddy long dead so I sing sooooo loud because I know it pisses that bastard off! *(Laughs)*

*(Pause.)*

MAE

“Butcha Brown” was ya daddy then?

HALEY

Yeah.

*(Beat)*

MAE

Listen, I'd love to help ya Haley.

HALEY

No fooling?

MAE

No fooling. Besides, I need your help to make my mama's pies; and it's nice to have somebody to talk too around here.

HALEY

Well alright then.

(Enter Dr. Jackson.)

HALEY  
(surprised)

Dr. Jackson?

DR. JACKSON  
Morning ladies. Miss Haley nice to see you, how's your family?

HALEY  
Can't complain Doc, thanks for asking.

DR. JACKSON  
Miss Mae, nice to see ya out and about.

MAE  
Hello Dr. Jackson; ya coming by to check up on Harper?

DR. JACKSON  
Yes, I wanted to make an early visit before I check in on some others.

HALEY  
Doc, what's up with that Birdman anyway?

DR. JACKSON  
His name is Harper and there's nothing wrong with him.

HALEY  
(folds arms and huffs)  
I ain't taking to no fibbing Doc. Now I like ya and all, especially whacha done for Willie, but he's a freak over there and I -

DR. JACKSON  
(firmly)  
Haley! Harper's a little different -

HALEY  
(animated)  
He's creeping around here and poking his nose about! Think he's trying to get close to my friend and kill her off, ever think of that?!! I don't want to see my friend done and murdered. He's weird and I don't like it and I think you know something. *(Beat)* Mae even says he's weird.

MAE  
Haley! *(Covering)* He's, uh, a little peculiar sometimes Dr. Jackson.

DR. JACKSON

He's... different, but I'll talk to him for ya Mae.

(Dr. Jackson exits towards Harper's house.)

MAE

I think you scared him.

HALEY

The Doc?! Hell no, he's harmless. How often does he come by?

(Mae goes to retrieve the blanket and pillow  
handing it back to Haley.)

MAE

Often enough I guess, checks in on him a couple of times a week. Here, I folded your blanket for ya.

HALEY

Oh, that ain't mine; I'd never make something that ugly.

MAE

Oh, I assumed it was your 'cuz it ain't mine either.

HALEY

Maybe ya just don't remember ya brought it out last night. *(Beat, thinks, gasps)* Shoot Mae, ya think the Birdman left it for ya? Getting closer, sleeping on ya bench?! Ya think he gonna come after ya in the night?!

MAE

Shush now, stop trying to freak me out! You heard Dr. Jackson, said there was nothing to worry about. And Harper ain't done anything like that before.

HALEY

The Doc is hiding something, I can feel it.

MAE

Well if I'm dead by the time you get that All Spice then we'll know you're right.

HALEY

Pffft, fine! I gotta see Reverend Robertson at the church anyway. You just make sure you're alive when I get back.

MAE

I promise to make ya a pie before I die, don't worry.

(Haley exits. Mae looks over the blanket.)

MAE (CONT'D)

Who would have - ?? (*Figures it out.*)

(Harper and Dr. Jackson peek from the side of the house, unbeknownst to Mae. Harper points to Mae's house and urges Dr. Jackson on.)

DR. JACKSON

Uh, Mae?

MAE

Oh Dr. Jackson, I want to apologize for Haley... well, I don't know her quite well yet. She's a little forward is all.

(Harper rubs his belly and points towards Mae.)

DR. JACKSON

No harm done, I can handle Haley. She's just what I call excitable. Listen, I uh, wanted to see how you're doing?

MAE

Oh?

DR. JACKSON

Yeah... I uh... haven't really spoken much to you and I wanted to see if you're alright?

MAE

Why?

(Harper persistently points.)

DR. JACKSON

I don't mean any rudeness in asking, you just seem a little pale... have you an illness or a stomach ailment at all?

MAE

Oh, no I'm fine Dr. Jackson. I think Harper saw me sick yesterday but it's a woman thing.

DR. JACKSON

(relieved)

Ah, okay then. Well I'll just leave ya be -

MAE

Dr. Jackson, if you don't mind me asking about Harper; you're saying he's different, but how?

DR. JACKSON

(deflecting)

He's a cripple Mae, people think it's odd.

(Dr. Jackson tries to leave.)

MAE

People don't think cripples are odd Dr. Jackson, people think no talking, snooping, and fence perching is odd. *(Beat)* I figured he's the one that left this blanket out for me last night because it doesn't belong to anybody else; so I'm wondering how he knew to do that?

DR. JACKSON

You were out here last night?

(Harper tries to flag him off.)

MAE

I... uh... it was too hot to sleep inside.

DR. JACKSON

Uh huh.

MAE

I ain't telling anybody. I know what it's like to be different; to be alone. *(Whispers)* I just gotta know if he's crazy or something? Gonna to do something?

DR. JACKSON

No Mae, he's not crazy. His mind just works in a different way; he sees the world differently is all, but he's no harm to ya I can vouch for that. Ya have a good day now.

MAE

Thanks, you too Dr. Jackson.

(Dr. Jackson exits.)

(Harper awkwardly runs around the house. Mae pours two glasses of SWEET TEA and takes the pillow and blanket with her.)

MAE  
(tentative)

Ahem, Harper? Ya here?

(Harper climbs the fence; panting.)

MAE  
Umm, hello Harper.

(Harper shyly nods.)

MAE (CONT'D)  
I, uh... were you just running?

(Harper shakes his head no.)

MAE (CONT'D)  
(rambles)  
Oh, would you like some sweet tea... is this your blanket? (*Fumbles with everything*) Oh here, hang on. This is ya blanket right?

(Harper looks away.)

MAE  
(mimics Haley)  
I ain't taking to no fibbing Harper.

(Harper reluctantly nods and Mae sets it on the fence.)

MAE (CONT'D)  
Okay then, I'll just leave it here for ya then... umm, thank you.

(Awkward pause.)

MAE (CONT'D)  
How'd ya know I needed it?

(Harper shrugs.)

MAE

I guess you're seeing a lot around here, with me and Carl?

(Harper awkwardly shrugs.)

MAE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about that but I ain't wanting ya snooping up on me now either, understand? That ain't right... and it's creepy. Yesterday there was nothing going on for you to know about.

(Harper reluctantly nods.)

MAE (CONT'D)

It's a hot day out.

(Harper looks up and around the area like he never thought about it before.)

MAE (CONT'D)

I just saw the Doctor... nice man... he comes to see ya a lot.

(Harper nods.)

MAE (CONT'D)

So, ya lived here long then?

(Harper nods.)

MAE (CONT'D)

I ain't never seen ya family; is your mama around?

(Harper vehemently shakes his head.)

MAE (CONT'D)

Oh, sorry.

(Harper pulls out a LOCKET from his pocket and drapes it on the fence. Mae takes it.)

MAE (CONT'D)

*"Whitmore," (Opens locket)* You're mama was colored?

(Harper shakes his head and motions that it was a woman who took care of him.)

MAE (CONT'D)

Oh, she's beautiful; ya must of loved her.

(Harper nods.)

MAE (CONT'D)

I haven't ever seen her -

(Harper sadly shakes his head.)

MAE (CONT'D)

Oh, oh dear.

(Harper nods and polishes off the drink, picks up the locket and gets off the fence; he's done talking.)

MAE (CONT'D)

Oh, uh... sorry.

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT I -SCENE 4 - WHITMORE

SCENE 4

LIGHTS UP:

Later that afternoon.

Mae has the radio on, prepping dough.

Haley enters.

HALEY

Mae, I got ya that All Spice we needed. This be it, right?

MAE

That's it! Oh now they're gonna taste like mama's! The kids and nuns at the orphanage went crazy over it. They threatened that it was the only reason why they kept me so long. Mama always said the first ingredient was Love, but I knew it was the butter.

(Together they mix and get pies into plates.)

MAE (CONT'D)

Haley, you know a lot of people around here, right?

HALEY

Yes'm, most of them.

MAE

Did ya ever hear of the name Whitmore?

HALEY

(taken aback)

Whitmore!?! Oh yeah, I heard about them long time ago. They was these rich white folk living up on Ridger's Hill; on the other side of town. They'd have these grand parties for their other rich white friends - politicians and church folk mostly. They'd party all night long. I heard the Mr. was nice but that Mrs. was a nasty piece of work. Mama always said they devil be under those eyes.

MAE

Did they have any children?

HALEY

I heard they had one. Rumor was he was a little strange in the head, ya know; seeing things, talking weird, stuff like that. Then one night their house caught on fire and that devil woman went all crazy! Heard that child died in the fire and Mr. Whitmore gone and left that devil woman after that. *(Beat)* But I don't think anybody knows the real truth about that fire and if they do, they ain't talking. Why ya asking about the Whitmore's for?

MAE

*(whispers)*

I'm not sure that child died Haley.

HALEY

What?! Sweet Jesus! Whachu know?!

MAE

*(whispers)*

Hush now! *(Beat)* Harper showed me a locket of his that had the name Whitmore etched into it.

*(Haley drops everything.)*

HALEY

*(crosses herself)*

SWEET JESUS CHRIST!

MAE

Shush!!

HALEY

*(quieter)*

Damn Mae, you got a death wish or something?

MAE

What? C'mon now.

HALEY

Don't be messing with that Birdman! Shit, he could come after ya. You got a shotgun around here or something?

MAE

No Haley and shush! *(Beat)* I don't think he's like that, he's never done anything... I think he's just lonely is all.

HALEY

Then how'd he stay alive?

MAE

Some colored woman took care of him. Saw her picture in the locket. Did you know who lived next door?

HALEY

Nah, that musta been awhile ago. C'mon now Mae, you can't get too close; you said he was weird.

MAE

Well... maybe I ain't so certain anymore. I mean, he did leave that blanket for me; that don't sound weird.

HALEY

*HE* left you the blanket?

MAE

Well it don't belong to anyone else. *(Beat)* Listen, don't be saying nothing alright?

HALEY

Ain't gotta be that goddamn creepy -

MAE

I know, but don't say nothing; swear?

HALEY

Damn woman, I swear I ain't gonna tell nobody.

MAE

I want to give him a piece of pie to thank him.

HALEY

*(exasperates)*

Ugh, Mae!

MAE

Haley!

HALEY

I just don't want to see ya done and murdered. If he is that Whitmore child, he had a devil-bitch mama and you don't know what's been passed down. *(Beat)* I'm just saying is all.

MAE

I've been warned, thank you. Now take these pies home to bake, I need to get dinner ready.

HALEY

Fine! I gotta see Reverend Robertson anyway, they're having a pit BBQ tonight. *(Beat)* I think you should come with me and clean off any "spirits" lingering over ya.

MAE

*(pushes her out)*

Bye Haley.

HALEY

I'm just saying is all.

*(Haley goes to leave but stops off at the fence.)*

HALEY (CONT'D)

Birdman, where the hell you at?!

*(Harper peers over the fence; as far from Haley as possible.)*

HALEY (CONT'D)

I'm Haley, Haley Washington, Mae's best friend; you got that?

*(Harper nods as Haley eyes him down.)*

HALEY (CONT'D)

You that Whitmore child? And I ain't taking to no fibbing.

*(Harper slowly nods.)*

HALEY (CONT'D)

You do something to my friend and I'm gonna lay a beating on ya, understand? And that wasn't a question either! *(Beat)* Now do something with your goddamn hair, it freaks me out!

*(Harper looks confused but nods.)*

*(Haley exits but stops when Carl enters.)*

CARL

Who the hell are you?

HALEY

Haley, Haley Washington. Mae's best friend.

CARL

Uh huh. Whacha doing with those?

HALEY

Gonna bake ‘em.

(They stare at each other.)

CARL

(sneers)

Then why ya still here?

HALEY

Just leaving.

(Haley exits. Carl watches her leave, trying to remember how he knows her.)

(Mae has dinner ready as he enters. Awkward silence.)

CARL

How you know her? *(Long pause.)* What? You not talking to me now?

MAE

(quietly)

You tossed me out like I was a dog Carl.

CARL

(indifferent)

I checked on ya; ya seemed fine.

(Carl grabs a whiskey bottle and sits at the table while Mae sets his dinner down. He scarfs the food down quickly, causing him to choke and cough.)

MAE

Carl, I’m thinking of going with Haley to the church one day.

CARL

Church?! *(Coughs, sputters)* Hell no. You go to church and you’re sure gonna get in trouble. Dangerous enough as it is, remember what the Doctor say?

*(Quietly to her)* You're a half-breed Mae, even God didn't know what to do with ya. Remember when I found ya?

CARL (CONT'D)

Nobody wanted to take ya in, but I did and I've taken good care of ya. I've even gotten a few black eyes for ya; ya just don't know it.

MAE

She's my friend Carl, the only one I get to talk to around here. I just thought it'd be nice to get out of here and meet some people.

*(Carl pushes her away.)*

CARL

Ain't gonna happen! They piss and spit at ya and then what? I gotta leave work to come and get ya and then I lose my job; take another beating for ya! Now, I don't want to talk about it. I'm saying no 'cuz I'm protecting ya Mae, but I don't want to get mad about it neither.

*(Carl takes the bottle and steps out onto the deck as Mae cleans up.)*

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT I -SCENE 5 - THE OFFERING

SCENE 5

LIGHTS UP:

Later that night.

Mae cuts a large piece of pie and walks towards the fence and leaves it there. Walking back to the deck, she waits.

Harper peers up, too scared to touch the pie at first; he looks around, then sniffs it. He begins to eat it; savoring it. He catches Mae peeking at him; caught with deer in the headlights look.

MAE

(whispers)

Slowly, eat it slowly. It tastes better that way.

Harper graciously nods and eats more slowly.

Mae smiles, then enters the house.

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT I - SCENE 6 - THE PRICE

SCENE 6

LIGHTS UP:

A week later.

Mae walks to the fence and sets a tin of HAIR GREASE down then leaves.

Harper pops up, reads it, smells it, and glops it in his hair. Styling it awkwardly, he stops when he hears Haley and hunkers low.

Haley enters with her arms full, struggling with two full baskets of apples and screams for help.

HALEY

Mae!!?

(When Haley screams it freaks Harper out and he pops his head up freaking Haley out and she drops the baskets.)

HALEY (CONT'D)

SWEET JESUS!! *(Beat)* What the hell did ya do to ya hair!? Mae!!?

(Harper tries to fix his hair while Haley chases the apples.)

MAE

Whachu hollering for woman?! *(Sees Harper)* Morning Harp - oh my - ya hair!

HALEY

Damn near scared me to death with that! Never mind him, come give me a hand before they get bruised.

MAE

*(whispers to Harper)*

Maybe try wetting your hair first next time. Then pat it down some.

(Mae scoops the apples in her apron meets Haley in the kitchen.)

HALEY

Damn fool don't need a gun, he'd kill anyone with that frock of hair. Did you see that?

MAE

He's trying, now leave him be! *(Beat)* And where ya getting all these apple from all the time?

HALEY

Near town?

MAE

*(unconvinced)*

Haley?

HALEY

What? Don't cost me nothing and they work fine.

MAE

Not if they're right there huh?

*(Beat)*

HALEY

I don't think I like your tone Mae.

MAE

*(accusing)*

You've been stealing these apples the whole time, haven't ya?

HALEY

It ain't stealing if it's sitting on God's green earth waiting for me.

MAE

Near or ON farmer Johnson's land?

HALEY

You bake 'em into pies and he gets it right back. No harm done. 'Sides, I need you to make me one.

MAE

*(waves to all the apples)*

Just one??

HALEY

(jibing)

You got something better to do?

MAE

No.

HALEY

Well as many as you can make then! 'Sides, he ain't complaining when he eats them.

MAE

'Cept he's now paying for them apples that he would've had for free!

HALEY

But it tastes better this way; and I'm doing him a kindness, what are they gonna do on the ground except rot anyway?

MAE

Ugh, fine. So what's so special happening at the church this time?

HALEY

Just a function. Reverend Robertson needs a donation.

MAE

You're doing a lot for him lately, what's in it for ya?

HALEY

Well, his wife died some time ago so I keep him company from time to time. And I think he's a little sweet on me since I've been bringing him some of your pie.

MAE

You're married Haley!

(Mae hands over recipe card.)

HALEY

I know that woman, but I ain't dead neither! When the last time you got a nice smile from a man?

MAE

Don't recall I ever had one. *(Beat)* So he smiles at ya huh, nothing more?

HALEY

Hell no! It ain't like I'm cheating on Willie neither; I ain't ever been like that. Willie take the Reverend's head if something like that was done. (*Reads card slowly*) One... quaaarter c...

MAE

Sound it out remember.

HALEY

Coop... no cup! One quarter cup! (*Beat*) Look, I ain't much to look at Mae, so when a nice widower wanna pass me a smile, well, he deserves a nice piece of pie for that.

MAE

Sure is *a - lot* - of pie Haley.

HALEY

It's - a - function! Doing the Lord's work is all.

MAE

You're the worst goddamn liar there is.

HALEY

(ignores)

Twooo cups o' - buh-ta. Buhta...oh, butter. Shoot, I should know that. Two cups of butter.

(Mae thinks the ingredients into the bowl.)

HALEY (CONT'D)

Damnit Mae, can't I have nothing for myself without you snooping in?

MAE

Feel like confessing something there church lady? (*Readies the pie plates*) Why ya need all this pie?

HALEY

So I get a sip of wine sometimes goddamnit; ain't no harm in that. (*Long beat*) It soothes my aching soul.

MAE

Oh it hurt that bad huh?

HALEY

Yes it do! I'm sitting with the Reverend after having a bout with Willie and he's kind and sweet and said it ain't my fault Willie being so mad and all; so he gave me a sip of the wine to help calm me down.

MAE

And??

HALEY

Well... he smiles so nice so we just kept on talking; told me about his wife passing and how things have been since; and we drank all that wine. So next time I see him, we talk some more -

MAE

And ya drank some more wine.

HALEY

It - soothes - my - soul. Willie don't know of course. *(Beat)* You could come one time Mae. Shoot, you could a bottle yourself.

MAE

Maybe.

HALEY

Carl still won't let ya go?

MAE

No.

HALEY

You could just go in spite of him. *(Looks at peeled apples)* How many pies ya think we're gonna get outta this?

MAE

How many sips ya want?!

HALEY

*(big laugh)*

As many as I can get; the better the pie the better the wine. I tell ya Mae, Reverend Robertson really gonna like all this. I'll sneak ya some wine.

MAE

If I wanted a sip I could take some of Carl's here.

HALEY

That shit ain't no good. The Reverend's got the good wine - dark red. *(Hinting)* I'm suspecting he's getting a donation if ya know what I mean?

MAE

What kind of church they running over there?

HALEY

The kind that helps everybody, whachu think? (*Beat*) Shoot Mae, you need to come and get away from that bastard. You don't need to be treated like this; like some kind of a kept maid.

MAE

I know Haley -

HALEY

He ain't worth it, no man is, and you deserve better. I seen my butcha daddy toss my mama around the house like he was packing meat! I'd cry all the time and mama got so mad she says, "*Hush up now child - you hush it ya hear!*"

So I did... for a long time. Til one night when butcha daddy was gone I asked her, "Mama, why am I hushing it?" She looks at me with a bruised eye and a cut mouth and says,

*"I'm protecting ya baby girl. I take it so he don't come after ya. Now ya see what he's done so maybe you learn a thing or two about protecting yourself; but you don't take it like me baby girl, you got to be strong. You got the smarts to get out here, out of this shitter and you do it girl, ya do it for your mama okay? Do what ya gotta do baby, ain't no shame in that."*

I ain't never gone far Mae, not like my mama wanted me too; shoot, just moved right across this damn town. I ain't got much but a few bits rolling around up here (*Points to head*), but it's done me enough. But I ain't my mama either! So when Willie try and start up shit with me, I ended that right quick!

MAE

Whachu do?

HALEY

He come charging at me after we had a row and I grab that knife like my butcha daddy had done, and I point it right at him.

(Haley proficiently twists and spins the knife in her hand and demonstrates on Mae's privates.)

HALEY (CONT'D)

Down there ya know? And I jiggle it! He looks at me with those eyes and I know if I let go I'm gonna die.

He says, *"I'm gonna roll thunder over your ass, you ain't seen nothing coming!"* That damn fool is thinking I ain't serious! I move that knife just a tad and his eyes pop open real wide now.

HALEY (CONT'D)

I said, "Baby..." real calm like now, "...the lightning gonna strike before the thunder come." Well he takes a blow at me and as promised I swipe that knife up the inside of his leg, *(Demonstrates)* and I say, "Looks like the lightning gone and took ya thunder baby!" *(Laughs)* Oh don't worry Mae, I didn't snip everything, only took the one. He's screaming and hollering trying to hold himself together now. Well, I bend down and pick it up, "Damn baby, I'm gonna make something nice outta this."

He's ringing up Dr. Jackson, *"Get here now Dr. Jackie; I need ya now... it's an emergency... I can't say over the phone."*

I'm strolling with my knife still in hand when he tries to come at me again, damn fool! I point it down there again and say, "Careful Willie, or this time we're gonna have to change you're name." *(Big laugh)* He's backing up real slow now and heads to the bedroom.

*"Tracker accident?"* I hear the Doc saying, *"How'd you get your wiener bits caught in them tracker parts?"*

*"Never you mind how... I fell."*

*"Fell?"*

*"Can ya fix it?"*

*"Well, where is it?"*

Willie's mumbling about how he lost it in the field or something, too scared to say I got it.

MAE

What did ya do with it?

HALEY

Well, I left to go make meatball sandwiches figuring the Doc might be hungry -

MAE

Oh, no you didn't - you didn't Haley?!

HALEY

Oh hell no! I put that thing in the shitter right where it belongs! But Willie don't need to know any different, do he? *(Beat)* Now he don't think twice about coming at me again; damn fool never come close and that's a blessing. He's scared I'm gonna take the other one.

MAE

Does he still do any of that?

HALEY

Hell no, women all think he got that Lepers disease! *(Laughs, beat)* It's all fine now Mae, he's like, "Yes ma'am, no ma'am," that kind of talk.

MAE

He's not still mad at ya?

HALEY

Oh I used to hear him bitching from time to time until I give him a quick reminder; "Was the sun out today Willie?" That usually shuts him up.

MAE

I don't understand.

HALEY

You see when the sun comes up and rises in the morning, Willie's still thankful that so do he! *(Laughs)* He's got one good bit, he don't need two and it works just fine. We had Clyde to remind him of that.

MAE

Does he do anything to the kids?

HALEY

Hell no! I'd end that right quick. *(Beat)* Listen, I did what I needed to do to give my babies a chance in this world and to teach them proper. Mama would be proud of that much, but don't think God turns His head if you do something to protect yourself, because He turned His back when something was done to you! Ain't no shame.

*(Pause.)*

HALEY (CONT'D)

Whachu thinking?

MAE

Do you think we could make enough money from all this? Enough for us to keep?

HALEY

I think it's possible; people at the church love the pies, they just need to pay more for something this good. But if you're thinking of getting out on your own -

MAE

Do you know if there'd be any place for me to go?

HALEY

You'd think Carl would let ya go?

MAE

(reality sets in)

It was just a thought.

HALEY

Still is. We could definitely make money from these pies if we make more.

MAE

(hinting)

So what about Reverend Robertson's donation?

HALEY

Sell these and trim his donation? (*Thinks*) Oh, he don't need that many pies.

(Dr. Jackson enters with MRS. CARTER.)

HALEY

(whispers)

Oh my Lord Mae, get on over here.

MAE

(whispers)

What?

HALEY

(whispers)

That'd be that Carter woman; rich white woman married to a fancy lawyer. What the hell is the Doc bringing her here for?

DR. JACKSON

Miss Mae, Miss Haley, how are ya?

MAE

Hello Dr. Jackson, what brings you on by?

DR. JACKSON

I hope you don't mind me stopping on by like this Mae. This here is Mrs. Carter, a friend of ours.

MRS. CARTER

(overly polite)

HOW DO YOU DO?

MAE

Uh, nice to meet you Mrs. Carter.

MRS. CARTER

I HOPE YOU DON'T MINE ME INTRUDING ON YOUR TIME?

HALEY

(whispers)

She deaf or something?

MAE

Hush. Not at all Mrs. Carter, just not sure what brung y'all out here?

DR. JACKSON

That'd be my fault Mae. Our maid Sissy gave my wife Adele a slice of one of your pies -

MRS. CARTER

ADELE'S BEEN TELLING ME ALL ABOUT IT!

HALEY

WHAT YA YELLING FOR?!

MRS. CARTER

(quickly)

Oh sorry, I get a little loud when I'm nervous; it's a nasty tick. (*Awkward laugh*) Adele said it'd be the best pie she ever had and she let me try a bite and I nearly fell over! Her maid had no more -

HALEY

Oh I know Sissy, she's goes to my church.

MRS. CARTER

I wanted to ask you about your pies if you've got some time Mae?

MAE

Sure, why don't ya come in and I can fix ya a glass of sweet tea.

MRS. CARTER

Oh that'd be lovely; it's been so hot out. *(Beat)* Makes it terribly difficult to sleep sometimes.

*(They all leave Dr. Jackson in the yard.)*

DR. JACKSON

I'll just -

*(Dr. Jackson walks aimlessly in the yard.)*

MAE

Sorry, nothing fancy in here.

MRS. CARTER

*(looks around)*

Uh... it's... quaint, but you sure do have a lovely garden out there. *(Beat)* So y'all making money with your pies?

HALEY

Hell, everyone at the church can't get enough; I keep telling Mae that.

MRS. CARTER

Oh?

MAE

Haley helps me an awful lot; I couldn't do it without her.

MRS. CARTER

Well that's why I'm here Mae, I got a ladies bazaar coming up this Sunday and I was wondering if you could bake some fresh for me?

MAE

Oh?

MRS. CARTER

That's not a problem is it?

HALEY

No ma'am, we'd love to be baking for ya. *(Elbows Mae)* Right?

MAE

Uh, yes! Would love to.

HALEY

How many were ya looking for Mrs. Carter?

MRS. CARTER

Well I think five outta cover it -

HALEY

Five! Won't be a problem!

MAE

(whispers to Haley)

We don't have enough supplies for that?

MRS. CARTER

I'll pay for the pies up front of course. I've got \$8.00 right here and if you don't mind bringing them into town I'll give you another \$2.00 to drop them off.

HALEY

We definitely have enough supplies for that, and I don't mind dropping 'em off for ya!

MRS. CARTER

Oh, that'd be lovely! (*Hands over money*) The ladies will be most pleased.

MAE

That's very kind of you Mrs. Carter.

MRS. CARTER

WELL I DARESAY I'M EXCITED! Oh damn, there I go again, tsk tsk. Well I'll be leaving so y'all can get what you need. (*Exiting*) Dr. Jackson, we can go now; and could I trouble you kindly for another prescription; this hot weather gives me such headaches and makes it terribly hard to sleep.

DR. JACKSON

We'll stop by my office on the way back.

MRS. CARTER

Thank you so much.

(Mrs. Carter exits with Dr. Jackson.)

(Haley and Mae are frozen in a dream and don't whoop until the coast is clear.)

HALEY

Goddamnit Mae! Look at all this money. Shoot, they only give \$0.75 at the church, barely enough to cover supplies!

MAE

Eight whole dollars!

HALEY

And \$2.00 for walking them into town. Hell, it's a travelling fee, I ain't never been paid a travelling fee before.

MAE

And we'll have plenty left over to save. How much do ya need for supplies?

HALEY

Not all that.

(Mae takes the extra money and places it in a TIN above the stove.)

HALEY (CONT'D)

Now we're starting something! (*Mimics Mrs. Carter*) I daresay I'm excited!

(Haley laughs and exits.)

(Mae walks to the edge of the stage.)

MAE

Lord, I know my mama's up there with you and I hope you're both proud of me. We're making your pies mama!! And people are buying them too... and (*Beat*)... and I feel like for the first time mama that I've got a real friend. Someone to talk too and laugh with - well okay, Haley does most of the talking, but I love hearing her stories! (*Beat*) I'm praying this is your plan for me Lord, to finally step out and take care of myself. Ha, I daresay I'm excited too!

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT I - SCENE 7 - RAPE

SCENE 7

LIGHTS UP:

Later that evening.

Pies are on the table being cooled. Gospel music plays on the radio.

Mae takes clothes off the line while humming to the music and doesn't see Harper trying to get her attention. He opens his mouth but nothing comes out.

Mae enters the house and starts folding.

Carl enters staggering, and upon seeing Harper throws the bottle at him. Harper scurries away.

Carl sneaks up on Mae and covers her mouth. She tries to fight.

CARL

Shhhhh, now. I'm gonna make y'all better... remember?

(Carl moves her to the table, bends her over and rips her clothes. He rapes her quickly. When he's done, he leans over her body and rips out a hunk of pie, chewing it in her ear. She cries.)

CARL

(heavy breathing)

Mmmmm, damn baby, no one can make 'em pies like you do.

(Carl staggers upstairs.)

(Mae, trembling takes the damaged pie and tosses it in the garbage. She collapses on the ground and cries.)

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT I - SCENE 8 - REVEAL

LIGHTS UP:

SCENE 8

Weeks later. Mae's on the deck in her first trimester of pregnancy. She's quiet and listless.

Haley enters with her hands full carrying an APPLE BUSH that looks like it's just been ripped out of the ground.

Harper tries to get Haley's attention by pointing to the garden but she shoos him off.

HALEY

Can't ya see I'm busy. Go catch some flies elsewhere. Mae! I thought it's time we grow some applies ourselves!

MAE

You *stole* and apple tree. When you gonna stop thieving?

HALEY

When you start coming with me to pick up all these apples and haul them over here, that's when! *(Beat)* You can't give up Mae. He don't know what we're doing.

MAE

Farmer Johnson still gets 'em for free.

HALEY

Yeah, yeah, he still gets 'em for free.

*(Haley peers outside and still sees Harper pointing at the garden.)*

HALEY (CONT'D)

*(to herself)*

Damn Birdman; surprised he ain't take flight yet. *(To Mae)* You got something in the garden?

MAE

Potatoes, turnips, peas, carrots. Help yourself.

(Mae hands Haley a pot; she takes it and starts to dig.)

HALEY

The Reverend asked me if you can bake a cake?

MAE

(unenthusiastic)

Yeah, what kind of cake?

(Harper comes over and cautiously helps Haley dig.)

HALEY

Whachu doing Birdman?

(But Harper just helps her dig.)

MAE

Haley?

HALEY

(digs deeper)

Uh... some pound cake... I think.

MAE

Whachu mean you think? (*Sees what's happening*) Haley, no!

(But Haley pulls out the dried bloody dress.)

HALEY

(shocked)

What's this Mae? Why's this in ya garden?

MAE

Goddamn ya Harper! Get on home now!

HALEY

Mae?!!

MAE

Was nothing alright!

(Mae charges at Harper but Haley stops her.)

HALEY

What the hell ya been doing?

MAE

None of ya business. He didn't need to see that!

(Mae snatches dress back and leaves but Haley spins her around.)

MAE (CONT'D)

I had a miscarriage alright!

(Pause.)

HALEY

Shoot Mae, I know it's awful but -

MAE

(ashamed)

Awful?? I'm glad it's gone Haley! Isn't that what's awful; that I'm happy about it? That I'm relieved about it?! *(Beat)* And the Lord is punishing me for it too.

HALEY

Whachu mean?

MAE

(cries)

Because I'm pregnant again! I don't know what to do, and I'm scared Haley... you wouldn't understand.

HALEY

I get scared too -

MAE

People are scared of you Haley, you ain't afraid of them.

HALEY

Bullshit! You think I don't wake up every morning being afraid for my life and the life of my kids!? You think I did that to Willie without having a thought that he might come and get me... still come and get me?

MAE

I thought you made that up.

HALEY

Well... maybe a bit here and there... but I know what your thinking because I make people think that way about me Mae. Mama never said how hard it was to be strong, but I saw on her how hard it was to be weak, and she ain't get very far with that.

MAE

(breaks down)

I don't know where I belong in this world Haley. Shit, I don't even have dreams! He's the best of the *'good enough's* for me. So after all this time I'm thinking that maybe he's right, I ain't good for nothing.

HALEY

He ain't right -

MAE

So when I was pregnant before, I didn't know what to do. I kept praying to the Lord to help me and everyday I'm thanking him for sparing me that child, but I can't pray it away every time.

HALEY

Why didn't ya tell me?

MAE

And do what? I got some smarts Haley but I ain't got ya strength, I could never do to Carl what you've done to Willie. It's not like I don't want children, but you tell me how I can raise a quarter-colored child in this world!? (*Beat*) I don't want it suffering like I am.

HALEY

(thinks)

We can take care of the baby Mae, if ya want, I can help ya with that because I got something. Then we figure out something to do to get ya outta here, alright? See what money we've got saved up and -

MAE

You don't know Carl like I do, it ain't gonna happen. He ain't gonna leave me and he won't let me go either.

HALEY

(tears)

I ain't losing my only friend Mae! I won't let ya do nothing nasty to yourself, ya understand?

MAE

Haley -

HALEY

NO! Wait here, I'm gonna be back to help ya. We're gonna take care of that baby. Birdman, watch out for her. *(To Mae)* And don't be shooin' him off either!

*(Haley runs off.)*

MAE

*(twisting dress)*

Damn you Harper!

*(Harper approaches her.)*

MAE (CONT'D)

No! Get outta here!

*(Harper shakes his head.)*

MAE (CONT'D)

Get!

*(Mae storms him. He flinches but doesn't move.)*

MAE (CONT'D)

Why can't ya let me go!?

*(Harper shakes his head, struggles for words.)*

MAE (CONT'D)

Why?! What did ya do it for?

*(Harper point to his heart then at her. Frustrated, Mae goes to leave.)*

HARPER

*(croaky, barely audible)*

I... I...

MAE

You say something?!

HARPER

*(a little louder)*

Sorry.

MAE  
(shocked)

So you *can* talk?

(Harper shrugs.)

MAE (CONT'D)

No, I want you to tell me.

HARPER  
(with difficulty; guttural)

Don't want... you... to go.

MAE

You knew?

(Harper nods and points to his head.)

MAE (CONT'D)  
(exhales)

You knew? *(Beat, laughs)* Haley's right, we're all a bunch of misfits here.

(Harper pulls out locket and gives it to her. He sits.)

MAE (CONT'D)

Harper, I - *(Sits)* You picked the wrong time to start up a conversation, ya know that?  
*(Long beat)* Have ya ever left this place?

(Harper shakes his head.)

MAE (CONT'D)

I've thought of it... a lot.

(Haley returns. In her hand is a small foot long  
WOODEN CLUB engraved with African  
symbols.)

MAE (CONT'D)

That was fast.

HALEY

(hard panting)

Wanted to - make sure - you didn't do - *(Beat)* Shit *(Breathes)* - do anything to yourself. Goddamn I need me a seat. *(Sits on bench)* How well do you remember your mama Mae? She ever tell ya about anything; the way us women do things when we get into trouble?

MAE

No; what's that?

HALEY

This has been my mama's and her mama's before that. The women pass it down from one to another every generation. It's been called many things but I call it a wet club.

*(Mae takes it. She's intrigued and grossed out.)*

HALEY (CONT'D)

A few ...

*(Haley demonstrates by giving two sharp thrusts upward.)*

HALEY (CONT'D)

And that'll do it. Sometimes God births them early, sometimes God births them dead, and sometimes we got to help God out when we know the time ain't right for children. I don't think the Lord is punishing you Mae. *(Beat)* So where did ya bury it?

MAE

*(pointing to outhouse)*

I didn't. It happened in there.

HALEY

Okay... Well, we'll at least say goodbye. Did ya say your goodbye's?

MAE

I... I didn't know.

HALEY

That's alright, c'mon.

*(Harper digs a hole and Haley plants the apple bush.)*

HALEY

Now's a good a time as any.

MAE

Haley I don't think -

HALEY

It's a symbol so ya don't forget. We plant it so you know what you're living for; know where ya been to know where ya going. You say your prayers now and then put the dirt in.

MAE

I don't know what to say.

HALEY

Well, at least you ain't lying then.

(Haley fills jug while Mae packs dirt.)

MAE

(whispers her prayers)

You're better off without me.

(Haley hums the hymn from before and waters.)

MAE

Okay Haley, let's do it. (*Beat*) But come back early tomorrow after Carl leaves.

HALEY

Okay.

(Haley exits.)

(The club is on the porch.)

(Mae steps to the edge of the stage, wondering what it's like to be free.)

HARPER

No.

(Mae takes the chance and walks off the stage down the aisle.)

The *lights fade* on stage but a *spotlight* follows Mae as she does a loop through the aisles, staring at the sky, breathing, feeling free.)

MAE (CONT'D)

Lord, if you can hear me... if you got something better for me, now's the time... because I'm leaving.

(Feeling stronger Mae heads back. The *spotlight fades* and *light up* on the stage again. Harper is frantic and tries to pull her away.)

HARPER

(whispers)

Leave!

MAE

Whachu doing?

HARPER

(whispers)

Don't -

MAE

Harper stop -

HARPER

Don't go - inside!

(Carl steps onto the deck with the club in hand.)

CARL

MAE! Get inside, now!

(Harper pushes Mae away and Carl storms at him, beating him with the club.)

MAE

(intervenes)

No!! Carl stop! Please stop!

(Carl knocks her down and Harper lunges at him.)

HARPER

(deep and guttural)

Noooooo!

Goddamn freak!

CARL

(Carl knocks Harper out.)

Stop it Carl!

MAE

(Carl turns towards Mae and yanks her hard by the arm, forcing her back inside the house. She fights until he takes up the club and strikes her twice with it and on the third strike - INSTANT BLACKOUT - SILENCE.)

END ACT I.

ACT II - SCENE 9 - AFTERMATH

LIGHTS UP:

SCENE 9

A *spotlight* on a small pool of blood in the living room. Mae enters and circles around it.

Haley emerges with TOWELS in hand and starts to clean up.

MAE

Haley, what are you doing? *(Beat)* Haley?

*(Haley sings "Where Shall My Wondering Soul Being." As she sings; soft white light and fog highlight the area around the apple tree.)*

HALEY

Where shall my wondering soul begin?  
How shall I all to heaven aspire?  
A slave redeemed from death and sin,  
A brand plucked from eternal fire,  
How shall I equal triumphs raise,  
Or sing my great Deliverer's praise?

*(Emerging from the fog is Harper. He's walking normally, peacefully, and his hair is parted neatly.)*

HARPER

Mae.

MAE

*(moves to Harper)*

Harper? I was trying to talk to Haley -

HARPER

She can't hear you.

MAE

Why - *(Beat)* you're speaking so clearly. What happened to you?

HARPER

Same as you.

MAE

I don't understand; what is this place?

HARPER

It's the in-between. (*Remembering*) I've been here before.

MAE

In between what?

HARPER

Whatever we choose.

MAE

Are we dead then?

HARPER

Not yet.

HALEY

(sings)

For you the purple current flowed  
In pardons from His wounded side,  
Languished for you the eternal God,  
For you the Prince of the glory died:  
Believe, and all your sin's forgiven;  
Only believe, and yours is Heaven!

(Mae watches Haley and moves towards her, as she does she feels more pain. She backs into the fog and feels better.)

MAE

I'm dying.

HARPER

It's what you wanted, wasn't it?

(Pause.)

MAE

I didn't see how I could ever get away from Carl. (*Rubs belly*) But not like this. Not with you here and Haley doing that. It ain't right. (*Beat*) Why are you here?

HARPER

Same reason as you. I'm deciding.

MAE

Can we go back?

HARPER

Would you like too?

MAE

Yes. (*Thinks*) Will you come?

HARPER

Yes.

(As Mae moves towards the house, Harper moves towards the fence.)

HARPER

Mae? When the time comes, drop your hands.

(Harper demonstrates by dropping his hands sharply in a downward motion. Then with ease and grace, Harper goes over the fence.)

MAE

(confused)

What? Drop my hands??

(The *spotlight* goes out and Mae goes upstairs. The *lights brighten*.)

(Haley finishes up as Dr. Jackson comes downstairs.)

HALEY

How she doing Doc?

DR. JACKSON

(deep breath)

She's going to be alright, but she'll need lots of rest.

HALEY  
I'll make sure of it. What chance of the baby?

DR. JACKSON  
Still alive.

(Pause.)

HALEY  
I'll be damned. *(Beat)* She didn't want it Doc.

DR. JACKSON  
What?

HALEY  
Didn't want to raise a child... not with him.

DR. JACKSON  
(nods, exhausted)  
Just let her rest for now.

(Haley fixes the Dr. Jackson a drink, she swigs from bottle.)

HALEY  
You okay Doc?

DR. JACKSON  
He ever hurts either of them again and I'll kill him myself.

HALEY  
Harper then?

(Dr. Jackson just nods heavily.)

HALEY (CONT'D)  
I think he's a little sweet on Mae.

DR. JACKSON  
You think? *(Laughs)*

HALEY  
He's kinda strange, ain't he Doc?  
(Haley waits but gets no answer.)  
You gonna stay for supper?

(Haley starts prepping some dinner and takes out a large KNIFE and carves into the BEEF.)

DR. JACKSON

(finishes drink)

Thank you kindly but I gotta head back now. You'll watch over her for now? I'll come back in a while.

HALEY

No problem Doc.

(Dr. Jackson exits and Haley preps dinner until she sees Carl enter.)

CARL

What the hell are you -

HALEY

(flipping knife)

You know Carl, I learned from my butcha daddy.

CARL

Oh yeah, whachu learn butcha bitch?

(Haley SLAMS the beef down, chunks fly.)

HALEY

I seen him butcha a bull when that bull be trying to fight him off. See, the bull's no good no more, its gone sick in the head. So my daddy takes his knife - like the one I got right here - and cuts that bull up real fine; just like so... while it's still alive. Nothing the bull could do because daddy be that good.

CARL

Your daddy was a -

HALEY

A sick bull gotta be taken down!! Can't have it scaring all the cows now can it?

(Haley stabs the beef. Carl's scared.)

HALEY (CONT'D)

(wide-eyed)

Know what I'm saying Carl?

(Carl exits the house but stays in the yard.)

CARL  
(quietly to himself)  
Yeah, now I remember you. "Butcha Brown's" girl.

(Carl exits.)

(Haley preps dinner as Mae enters.)

MAE  
(exhausted, speaks quickly)  
Haley, where's Harper? Is he okay? What happened to him?

HALEY  
Whoa easy now Mae, ya still got to rest. (*Helps her*) Harper's fine, don't worry.

MAE  
He hurt bad?

HALEY  
He's got bruises like you, but he's resting up. Doc checked in on him. (*Beat*) Both held ya own against that bastard. Sit here while I make supper.

MAE  
You're cooking me supper?

HALEY  
(teases)  
I said my baking is the shits but my cooking's just fine! Stop harassing me.

(Mae takes warm cup of coffee.)

HALEY (CONT'D)  
(choked up)  
I... I'm sorry for what happened to ya both. It was my fault for leaving ya the club.

MAE  
Ain't ya fault Haley.

HALEY  
I should've taken it back home... I should've been here or something.

MAE  
Carl would've used something else, it don't matter to him what he uses. Where is it?

HALEY  
(hands it to her)

I wasn't sure what ya still wanted to do.

MAE

I think you can take it home now.

HALEY

You ain't gonna use it... for later?

MAE

I had this strange dream... I could feel her, in my belly ya know? I mean, if Carl couldn't take it away with what he done, I don't think we could've done any better. *(Beat)*  
Where's Carl?

HALEY

He ain't been around much.

MAE

What'd you do?

HALEY

I ain't done nothing.

MAE

Haley?

HALEY

Scared him a bit is all, but he ever come at you and Harper again and I ain't the only one who be doing something. The Doc kill him before I even get a knife to him; he said so himself.

MAE

Really?

HALEY

Yes'm. *(Beat)* You thinking you still wanna leave?

MAE

I don't know if leaving is enough. With the baby coming we're gonna need more money, but I gotta rest up first. *(Beat)* And you know we can't leave Harper here.

HALEY

I know. *(Beat)* I'll let this cook up and go change your bed sheets.

MAE

Thanks for staying Haley.

(Haley exits upstairs.)

(Mae goes outside as Harper carefully peers over the fence.)

MAE

Harper? (*Gasps*) Oh Harper, ya face!

(Harper tries to shield himself.)

MAE (CONT'D)

No, stop, please. Can I get ya anything? Would you like some coffee -

(Harper shakes his head.)

MAE (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry Harper, this should've never happened to ya. I really - (*Notices locket*) Oh no.

(Mae picks up broken pieces and puts it on the fence.)

MAE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about your locket. Is there any way to fix it?

(Harper shrugs)

MAE (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

HARPER

(with difficulty)

No... more....

MAE

I don't want this happen no more either.

HARPER

(waves her off)

No... more... mind.

MAE

It's my fault, I'm sorry, I should've listened to you, You saw what was -

HARPER

Hurts too much.

(Harper gets off the fence.)

MAE

No, please don't go.

(Harper exits.)

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT II - SCENE 10 - HARPER'S TALE

LIGHTS UP:

SCENE 10

Days later.

Dr. Jackson is checking over Mae.

MAE

Haley's been doing a good job of nursing me back.

DR. JACKSON

Yes, I can see that.

MAE

I can't thank you enough for what you're doing for me and Harper.

DR. JACKSON

I'm glad I can help.

MAE

Why are you so kind to people like us?

DR. JACKSON

There ain't no school that's going to teach a man to be kind, that he's got to learn on his own.

MAE

How'd ya learn it then?

DR. JACKSON

From Harper.

MAE

(pleading)

Then please tell me Doc because I can't understand it all and I can't understand him. Why is he the way he is?

DR. JACKSON

I've said before Mae, it ain't -

MAE

No Dr. Jackson, you're gonna tell me now! *(Beat)* Sorry, but I ain't like those other folks and he's my friend! I deserve to know so I can help him too... like the way he helps me. *(Beat)* I had a dream - that night - and I remember seeing Harper with me, standing there tall and saying things. He spoke so... *(Searching)* normal.

DR. JACKSON

That's how he would've been I suspect.

MAE

Whachu mean? Please.

DR. JACKSON

When I first met Harper he was just a shy young boy, but his mother Eleanor insisted that I fix him; if you were. She said the '*spirits*' had got to him, maybe even the devil himself had taken over because Harper was seeing strange things; talking weird.

MAE

What kind of things?

DR. JACKSON

Events, moments, incidents -

MAE

Before they happen right?

DR. JACKSON

*(surprised)*

That's right.

MAE

I told ya, he's been helping me.

DR. JACKSON

It was a bit odd but I took it that he was just lonely; making things up in his mind, but then he told me that he saw my son drowning. I didn't believe it at first because Thomas doesn't like to swim, but then later that day at a BBQ some kids teased Thomas and pulled him into the river. Well, I got there just in time to save my son. *(Beat)* It wasn't the devil that got to Harper but the gifts of God, and most people can't understand that. Eleanor didn't and she nearly beat the life outta that boy.

MAE

Jesus. *(Beat)* So who took care of him?

DR. JACKSON

Their maid, Mrs. Blackburn. Mr. Whitmore left some money with her to help raise Harper then he shot himself. Eleanor decided to burn everything in that house; wanted nothing to do with anything, including Harper. She was never seen since. Mrs. Blackburn was a kind woman and loved Harper until her death a few years back.

MAE

Is that why you help him?

DR. JACKSON

I owe him Mae. I don't know if I could've saved my son if I didn't think to look by the river. I keep a close eye on Harper; he calls when he needs things. *(Beat)* I think he's just looking out for you Mae. There haven't been many people he's cared about that have been kind in return.

MAE

*(sheepish)*

I haven't always been -

DR. JACKSON

You've been friendly enough.

MAE

Is that why you're helping me, because of Harper?

DR. JACKSON

No, I'm helping you because you need it.

MAE

It's my fault this happened to him. *(Beat)* In the dream he said something like, "*Drop your hands.*" Then did this. *(Demonstrates)* That mean anything to ya?

DR. JACKSON

No, I'm sorry.

*(Pause.)*

MAE

He said he didn't want it anymore, his mind, said it hurts too much.

DR. JACKSON

I think it reminds him of the past.

MAE

Can he get rid of it like that?

DR. JACKSON

I'm not sure, but it hasn't been easy on him Mae. Leave him be for now and see if he comes around. I'll keep a watch on him.

MAE

Thanks Doc.

DR. JACKSON

Any chance you'll make some more pies soon?

MAE

When I do, I'll make sure you get one.

DR. JACKSON

I'll pay of cour -

MAE

Never! After what you've done, I'll always make sure you have them for free.

DR. JACKSON

Very kind of you. Take care now.

(Dr. Jackson exits.)

(Carl enters with OLD FLOWERS in hand. He looks for signs of Haley, then sets them on Mae's lap.)

CARL

I ... I didn't know you were pregnant.

MAE

Did it matter?

CARL

(leans in)

It's my boy in there. I'm gonna take better care of ya -

MAE

(repulsed)

Get off me.

(Mae pushes back the flowers and exits upstairs.)

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT II - SCENE 11 - HOPE

LIGHTS UP:

SCENE 11

A couple of weeks later.

Haley enters with a huge bouquet of FLOWERS and a basket of apples and two tins of hair grease. She sets the basket and flowers on the deck.

HALEY

(whispers)

Birdman, where you at?

(Haley walks up and down the fence line.)

HALEY (CONT'D)

(whispers louder)

Harp... Harper? I know ya out here somewhere, c'mon now, I brung ya some grease for ya hair. You just need to use less is all. Listen, I know ya helped Mae and well... I thought we can try and be friends. (*Nothing happens*). Well, I'll just leave it hear for ya then.

(Haley sets the grease down. Purposefully knocks over the apples.)

HALEY (CONT'D)

Damnit!

(Harper slowly peers over; he looks better.)

HALEY (CONT'D)

Ha, I knew it! I see ya there. C'mon now, get on over and give me a hand.

(Harper grunts unwillingness.)

HALEY (CONT'D)

Ain't gotta be giving me attitude now. Good for ya to be moving anyway. Gotta be quick or they're -

HARPER

(slowly)

Gonna bruise.

(Haley drops the apples and stares at Harper.)

HALEY

SWEET JESUS - CHRIST! MAE!! *(to Harper)* You can talk?!? Mae!!

(Mae exits with a larger belly.)

MAE

Jesus Haley! Did ya pick up Mrs. Carter's tick or something?

HALEY

He's talking! Harper's talking, I heard him just now!

MAE

I know.

HALEY

(shocked)

Whachu mean ya know?! How long has he been doing this?

MAE

There's a lot you don't know about -

HALEY

How long you been talking Harper?

HARPER

Ummm -

HALEY

C'mon now, couldn't shut ya up a second ago.

HARPER

A little... while.

HALEY

(stunned)

Well I'll be. *(Beat)* Goddamnit if we could just do something with ya hair! *(Beat)* Why ya shutting up now?

HARPER

You talk... alllll the time.

HALEY

Well!! *(to Mae)* What's so funny?

MAE

It's true, but I love ya stories anyway. C'mon now before you make his hair stand on end.

(They enter and Harper finishes picking up.)

HALEY

Coffee on? Good, I could use a strong cup after that. How long ya known?

MAE

That night was the first time he spoke.

HALEY

Really?

MAE

Yup, he's getting there. Wanted him to do it on his own ya know? Now, what's this for?

(Haley grabs splintered VASE and fills it.)

HALEY

Flowers from the church! They all got something from their gardens and pieced it together.

MAE

Really?

HALEY

Reverend Robertson is being a little cheap on the wine now because I think he won't give up the good stuff until he gets some goodies from ya.

MAE

Oh I see, you're soul hurting again is it?

HALEY

Well I ain't gonna lie now, it's been a little sore lately.

MAE

Uh huh. I see ya stealing again.

HALEY

Did not! Farmer Johnson give 'em straight up -

MRS. CARTER (O.S.)

HELLOOOO? ANYBODY HOME?!

(Harper scampers away as Mrs. Carter enters.)

HALEY

Damn that woman can wake up the woods with that screech.

MAE

She's no the only one this morning.

MRS. CARTER

GOOD MORNING!

HALEY

Ya tick getting away on ya again Mrs. Carter!

MRS. CARTER

Oh damn, (*Nervous laugh*) there it is. I came all by myself this time and found my way!

HALEY

(mocking)

All by yourself eh?

MRS. CARTER

(tuckered out)

Well... I got a little lost, almost ended up in the woods. It's a long way out here and I had to leave the car on the outskirts and walk in. Whew!

MAE

Would some sweet tea calm ya down?

MRS. CARTER

Why, yes it would Mae. Thank you kindly.

HALEY

(teasing)

Hope that little walk didn't do ya in?

MRS. CARTER

(fanning herself)

Oh, well of course I'm fine, a little walk never hurt anybody. (*Whispers*) What was that creature that just hopped over the fence?

HALEY

(whispers)

Mae's neighbor.

MRS. CARTER

(whispers)

Oh, thought it was a large rodent.

MAE

Surprised to see ya again Mrs. Carter.

MRS. CARTER

Oh pish posh. I see your tree is growing out there!

HALEY

We'll be baking a lot more pies when it's all grown.

MRS. CARTER

I daresay I hope so, it's been a while since I've had anything and I've got a few functions coming up! Addison Bailey has her French Patisserie up and running now -

HALEY

Oh I heard that!

MRS. CARTER

Well I don't know what's she's thinking with that, trying to be French and all. Nobody told her that she can't bake worth a damn. Have you tried it?

HALEY

No ma'am; can't afford anything in her shop.

MRS. CARTER

Her chocolate croissants taste like petrified horse shit. Oh, pardon my language, you didn't hear that from me, but you can take my word for it. That's why I come back all this way; it's been too long Mae!

MAE

I haven't been up to Mrs. Carter.

MRS. CARTER

Yes, I heard. Damn shame about that, but don't worry Mae, I won't be saying anything. *(Whispers)* They can be awful critters sometimes can't they? *(Beat - normal voice)* Dr. Jackson prescribes me something to help me from time to time when I have a hard time sleeping *(Hinting)* you know? That can be terribly disturbing and all.

MAE  
(confused)  
Uh... not sure -

HALEY  
(confused)  
What?

(Mrs. Carter pulls out a small bottle of pills.)

MRS. CARTER  
This helps me sleep better because I'm sure you're aware of how difficult it can be to sleep at night. (*Whispers*) On occasion; rare as they are of course, I'll add an extra pill... or six into Mr. Carter's bourbon just to *make sure* I get a good night's sleep.

HALEY  
(whispers)  
Ohhhhh, Mrs. Carter.

MRS. CARTER  
I really do require it; I just can't stand having them headaches at night. I'm sure y'all understand.

HALEY  
We do now.

MRS. CARTER  
(whispers)  
Does your man like bourbon Mae?

MAE  
(whispers)  
Whiskey.

MRS. CARTER  
(whispers)  
Oh, well don't matter, this works in everything.

HALEY  
(whispers)  
Do we need to keep whispering?

(Mrs. Carter grabs one of Carl's bottles.)

MRS. CARTER  
(whispers)  
Phew! That's right awful that is.

MAE

(whispers)

That's his Wednesday bottle.

MRS. CARTER

(whispers)

Is that right? (*Add pills*) I think you need a good sleep on Wednesday Mae.

HALEY

(grabs other bottles)

Oh, what about Thursday and Friday.

(Mrs. Carter drops pills in those too. Places the bottles back on the shelf. They don't see Carl entering yard.)

MRS. CARTER

Well I daresay I'm excited to have you back Mae! Now, how about baking cakes and pastries, are you any good at those? Like riding a horse I'm guessing, just gotta get back on. Now I've got \$25.00 here to get you started; the ladies would like to try new things. A cake - make it a marble layer - small pieces - two lemon pound cakes, two peach cobblers, and four apple pies still, yes?

HALEY

And I can deliver them to ya again if ya like?

MRS. CARTER

Yes, I'll give ya another \$4.00 considering there'll be more to carry.

(Carl enters.)

CARL

She can bake anything ya like ma'am, that's my Mae for ya; telling her that all the time!

MRS. CARTER

(startled)

Who are you?

CARL

Carl, and this be my house you're standing in and my Mae you're talking too ma'am.

MRS. CARTER

That's Mrs. Carter to you and mind your manners!

CARL

Oh... (*Sees money*) Mrs. Carter.

MRS. CARTER

That's right; my husband is Mr. Leonard Carter -

CARL

Uh, yes, he's that fine lawyer in town. So what are you folks doing in these parts?

MRS. CARTER

Well *this* folk really enjoys the baking of Miss Mae here and on behalf of me and my bazaar, we're are wanting more; why is that of interest to you?

CARL

I'll make sure my Mae is gonna make your pies but I don't want her working too hard since she's carrying my baby boy and all.

MRS. CARTER

(to Mae)

How far along are ya?

CARL

(proudly)

Quite a few months now.

MRS. CARTER

You're such a slight thing I could barely tell your bump. I'm sure you're all excited about it?

CARL

Yes we -

MRS. CARTER

(getting annoyed)

You still up to baking for me Mae?!

CARL

Of course -

MRS. CARTER

I wasn't talking to you!

MAE

I am Mrs. Carter, and with Haley's help we can get ya what ya like.

HALEY

Yes ma'am, we can.

MRS. CARTER

Well you gotta make sure you ain't working too hard and stay off your feet some; don't want anything to happen to you, but I need what Addison Bailey can't make, understand?

MAE

Yes ma'am.

MRS. CARTER

(to Carl)

Because any kind of stress or strain will make you lose the baby! Real upsetting for a woman and I'm sure you don't want that to happen?

CARL

No ma' - uh, Mrs. Carter.

MRS. CARTER

Much appreciated. Thank you ladies, I'll see myself out.

(Mrs. Carter is a little lost in the yard before exiting.)

(Carl takes the money.)

CARL

So this is what you're doing with all ya time, eh? Wondering why you've been baking more.

HALEY

Ain't none of ya business what -

CARL

Keeping all this money while I work my ass off! Where else ya keeping it huh?

(Carl tosses things around.)

MAE

Carl, stop it. Ain't nothing else around.

CARL

Ya got it stashed around here!?

HALEY

Goddamn dumb ass - *(Pulls at him)*

*(Carl shoves Haley and takes one of his bottles and breaks it, pointing it towards Haley.)*

MAE

Leave her alone!

CARL

You come any closer and I'll cut ya right up bitch!

MAE

Carl -

*(Mae jumps in front of Carl.)*

HALEY

You ain't got the guts -

*(Carl uses Mae as a shield, pointing the glass at her throat.)*

MAE

ARG! Carl, stop!

CARL

Oh, I know what ya looking for butcha bitch, but I hid them. So where's the money then -

*(Carl tosses the tin on the floor and the money spews out.)*

MAE

That pays for the supplies Carl. There ain't nothing left after we make the pies.

CARL

Nothing left eh? Sure looks like a lot more than nothing!

MAE

We worked hard for that!

HALEY

Bastard. I don't need a knife -

(Carl makes a small slice in Mae's face.)

CARL

Now, I don't want to hurt Mae, I wanna keep my promise, but you keep coming (*Puts glass on Mae's belly*) and I'll make sure Mae comes with me.

HALEY

You're a goddamn coward!

CARL

Maybe; or maybe I'm just smarter than you.

HALEY

What are you talking about?

CARL

You know what they do with *crazy* bitches like you that kill a white man?

MAE

Stop this! Haley just go on home now.

CARL

Of course ya don't because you're too stupid and crazy like ya daddy! Yeah, I remember you now, "Crazy Butcher Brown's" girl! (*Beat*) I remember him wiggling up there when they hung him, and you watching him with your bug eyes, but I didn't see ya cry; til I realized crazies can't cry!

MAE

Leave her be!

CARL

Oh, she ain't tell ya Mae?

HALEY

Shut up!

CARL

Last man to hang there was her daddy.

MAE

(frees herself)

Enough! Go on Haley.

CARL

Just like a bull ya said, right? No I'd be careful if I were you Crazy Haley. Ya see, I got my boys looking out for ya kids... what was their names again? Right, Sarah and Clyde. *(Pulls mini-noose from pocket)* Wouldn't want these to slip over their necks, would ya?

HALEY

*(freaking)*

You wouldn't?!

CARL

Then step away now.

*(Mae pushes Haley outside.)*

HALEY

I ain't crazy Mae, I ain't! You gotta believe me! I ain't crazy like daddy!

MAE

*(calming her)*

I know ya ain't and you're nothing like you're daddy. You're my friend understand? *(Beat)* Now, we're gonna gather ourselves and help out Mrs. Carter, ya hear? Go on and get some cake supplies; some lemon and icing sugar, alright? I'll see ya tomorrow. Go on now.

CARL

That's right! You're gonna keep doing whacha doing and nothing else is gonna happen. I'm gonna see all the money y'all are making.

*(Carl picks up the money and tosses Haley some change.)*

CARL (CONT'D)

Get whacha need and start making some shit. *(Laughs)*

*(Haley, finally beaten, exits.)*

CARL (CONT'D)

She had it coming Mae. Her and her whole goddamn family are a bunch of crazies; she'll hang yet! *(Tosses out broken bottle)* Goddamn waste if ya ask me. Guess I can afford another now eh?

*(Carl exits.)*

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT II - SCENE 12 - CHOICES

LIGHTS UP:

SCENE 12

Later that same day.

Mae, upset, crouches by the tree. Harper comes over to pump and pour water over the mound.

MAE

(awkwardly/upset)

Haley and I are going to be baking some pies again... won't that be nice? (*Uncomfortable laugh*) Ha, even Mrs. Carter is wanting cakes! Imagine that.

HARPER

She's loud.

MAE

(laughs)

Yes she is.

(Harper wipes the blood from her cheek.)

MAE (CONT'D)

I've never had a chance to thank you Harper... for everything. (*Long beat*) How ya been?

HARPER

Okay. You?

MAE

Doing better.

(Harper points to her belly.)

MAE (CONT'D)

Baby's fine too. (*Beat*) Haley brung ya some hair grease I see? (*Reaches for him*) I ain't gonna hurt ya, (*Fixes his hair*) there, that looks a bit better. I think it's time to get rid of that beard, don't ya think? (*Touches his face*) Have ya got yourself a razor?

HARPER

Knife.

MAE

Knife? That won't do. I'm sure Carl has a spare about.

(Harper just shrugs.)

MAE (CONT'D)

Well today's your special day, a razor and I'm gonna make ya a pie!

HARPER

Oh... no.

MAE

I'd like to Harper, and I really don't mind. Gonna bake one for Dr. Jackson too and there's still plenty for Mrs. Carter. *(Beat)* You know, there's a lot of apples and I could use a hand washing them... I mean, if it ain't too much trouble for ya, I'd love the help.

HARPER

(surprised, excited)

Really? *(Beat)* Yes.

MAE

Alright, c'mon then.

(Mae turns on the radio.)

MAE (CONT'D)

Mind if I have it on?

(Harper shakes his head. Loves the music.)

MAE

(hands him pots)

When you're done washing them, put them in here, okay?

(Harper goes to water pump with more skip in his step.)

MAE

(baby kicks)

Arg!

HARPER

Mae?

MAE

It's okay, I *(Kicks again)*, arg! Feisty.

HARPER

Hurts?

MAE

No, she's kicking. Here, feel it?

(Mae takes Harpers hand and places it on her belly, it kicks, he freaks.)

MAE (CONT'D)

It's okay. *(Laughs)* Ya felt it didn't ya. She's kicking Harper.

HARPER

It's a... girl?

MAE

(smiling, tears, excited)

I know it is. She's strong too.

(They wait for the kick again, excitement builds.)

HARPER

(worried)

Mae?

MAE

I won't let Carl take that away from me anymore.

(Carl returns with a BRUNETTE prostitute.)

CARL

What's going on; what the hell is that freak doing here?!

(Mae stands in front of Harper.)

MAE

He's helping me Carl! Leave him be.

CARL

I thought I told -

MAE

I can't do all this on my own! They're too heavy to wash and I ain't strong enough in case ya don't remember.

BRUNETTE

Maybe I outta leave.

CARL

You stay right here. *(Beat)* I got my eye on ya freak.

BRUNETTE

No really, I think -

CARL

Don't mind her, c'mon. I want what I'm paying for. *(Gropes her)* Goddamn you smell nice baby. Nice and soft too.

*(Carl takes her upstairs and Mae turns up the radio to drown out the "noises." She's looking determined; planning something.)*

MAE

I'm going to finish these up but I want ya to go home now okay? And stay there.

HARPER

*(worried)*

Mae?

MAE

Everything will be fine, but I need ya to stay at home.

HARPER

I don't -

MAE

It ain't your fight Harper, and I can't have ya around; not this time.

*(Harper slowly leaves but turns to say: )*

HARPER

Mae... drop your... hands.

MAE

Drop my ... It was real then? The dream was real?

*(Harper nods.)*

MAE (CONT'D)

But I thought you didn't want it anymore; turned your mind off?

HARPER

I... couldn't.

(Harper pulls out the repaired locket and gives it to Mae.)

HARPER (CONT'D)

Don't want you... to go.

MAE

You took out the picture.

(Harper nods. She grabs his hands.)

MAE (CONT'D)

No matter what people say Harper, there is nothing wrong with you, you understand? God gave ya something and no one can take that from you. Thank you for being my friend.

HARPER

(nods, then confirms)

It's a girl.

(Harper exits as Mae goes to edge of stage.)

MAE

Lord, I gotta do something tonight so I'm praying real hard now. You promise me that whatever happens to me you'll take care of Harper and Haley. Promise me that! *(Beat)* And if you're gonna help me now I'd be awfully grateful for it... *(Waits)* but if you can't, then you best turn your back and look away because I ain't got no shame for what I'm about to do.

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT II - SCENE 13 - AIN'T NO SHAME

LIGHTS UP:

SCENE 13

Hours later. Same night.

The pies are cooling and Mae sits in the rocker, turning the locket over and over in her hand.

The Brunette comes down the stairs.

BRUNETTE

(awkwardly)

Oh, uh... Can't stand assholes like that.

MAE

You're in a strange business to be saying that.

BRUNETTE

You've got every right to be mad at me.

MAE

I ain't made at ya; just don't understand it is all.

BRUNETTE

Because I got three kids at home and if taking a man or two at night can help feed them and keep them clean, then that's what's I gotta do.

MAE

You seem too smart to be doing something like this.

BRUNETTE

That's why I charge so much. *(Beat)* Do ya work?

MAE

Some baking.

BRUNETTE

Oh, does that pay well?

MAE

You tell me.

BRUNETTE

Oh shit... I... I'm sorry. (*Fumbles through purse.*)

MAE

Don't. You got kids to feed.

BRUNETTE

I see you got one on the way.

MAE

Yeah.

BRUNETTE

Then at least let me buy one pie for my kids because they sure do smell lovely.

(Mae pockets the money and the Brunette exits with the pie. Mae hears Carl moving about and grabs one of his drugged bottles and shakes it; putting it on the table. She grabs a knife and slices a large piece of pie, but strategically hides the knife near the pie plates.)

(Carl slinks in, turns off the radio, and grabs the bottle.)

MAE

Haven't ya had enough already?

CARL

Got all the pies done I see. (*Drinks*) Freak help ya and all?

MAE

Things are changing Carl.

CARL

Whachu talking about?

MAE

Things are gonna be different with the baby coming. I ain't gonna have ya creeping around and scaring her; bringing whores home. Baby don't need to see that shit.

CARL

Ohh ---ooo---oooo, listen to you? (*Long drink*) Just keep baking your shit and maybe I'll take my business elsewhere. Bet ya like that eh?

MAE

Yes I would.

CARL

(staggers)

Ungrateful bitch that ya are.

MAE

Drink taking ya a little hard?

CARL

Shut up! Ain't had a thing to eat all day; give me some of that pie!

(Mae hands him a plate and Carl grabs her wrist hard and stares at her coldly before Mae whips her hand back.)

MAE

Eat ya pie.

CARL

(eats)

At least you and that bitch can do one thing right.

(Carl assaults his pie glaring at her.)

CARL (CONT'D)

(mouth full)

I'm right about her daddy and she's gonna go the same way. (*Chokes, coughs*) And she ain't gonna come near my boy.

MAE

It's a girl, and Haley's gonna be helping me with my baby.

CARL

(another helping of pie)

Don't be smart mouthing me Mae.

MAE

I told ya things are changing.

CARL

(mouth full)

You little -

(Carl rises and storms towards Mae grabbing her hands. Mae remembers Harper's warning and drops her hands sharply then reaches for the knife, thrusting it towards Carl.)

MAE

No! Not this time -

(Carl is completely surprised by this action and stumbles backward; choking on his pie. Carl's panicking, reaching for his throat, trying to breathe.)

MAE (CONT'D)

Carl?

(Carl tries to cough but the food won't dislodge.)

(Harper tears over the fence to help and gets to the door when - )

MAE (CONT'D)

Harper stop! Stay where you are.

(Carl scrambles towards Harper but Mae pushes Carl back pointing the knife at him. Carl falls to his knees, the choking and alcohol taking its toll.)

MAE (CONT'D)

I ain't taking ya life from ya Carl... but I ain't gonna give it back to ya neither!

(Carl's eyes bulge but it's too late, he's out of breath; hits the floor and dies.)

MAE (CONT'D)

Harper, I need ya to call Dr. Jackson, ya hear? *(Beat)* Harper can ya do it?

HARPER

Yes.

(Harper exits.)

(Mae takes a moment and steps outside. Looks up and nods to God.)

LIGHTS FADE.

ACT II - SCENE 14 - BEGINNINGS

LIGHTS UP:

SCENE 14 - BEGINNINGS

Months later.

The atmosphere of the stage has changed, it's brighter and livelier. There is a GATE in the fence that's open and the apple tree is blooming.

Mae is outside with Dr. Jackson and her BABY is nestled in her sleeper around her chest.

DR. JACKSON

She looks to be just fine and healthy Mae. It's common for babies to get a little colicky, but she looks to be over it.

MAE

So it's okay to take her to church this morning?

DR. JACKSON

A little music will do you both some good.

HALEY (O.S.)

(hollering)

C'mon now! Ya know how many orders we got this afternoon?

(Apples roll onto the stage.)

HALEY (O.S.)

Goddamnit! Get your ass up here before they get bruised.

(Haley enters the stage picking up apples while Harper scrambles to keep up with her. Other than the God-awful shirt he's wearing, his face is clean shaven with a thin mustache and his hair is neatly parted. He's rather handsome.)

HALEY

Morning Doc; Mae.

DR. JACKSON/MAE

Morning.

(Haley pops berries into her mouth.)

HALEY

Picked up some berries in town.

MAE

Oh my, Harper, ya shirt...?

(Harper points to Haley, it's her fault.)

HALEY

Oh enough of ya! I took him to get something better, make himself look a little nicer ya know. Get all the girls hollering at him now. He even talked to one!

(Dr. Jackson whistles.)

HARPER

(blushes)

Noooooo.

MAE

(teases)

Well now... *(Whispers)* Go grab another shirt.

(Harper nods and exits into the house.)

MAE

Haley, you're gonna wake the baby with all that hollering.

HALEY

That's because I saw Mrs. Carter in town. Oh, the Reverend's sister wants to order five of those, umm, strumples...?

MAE

Strudels, ya mean?

HALEY

I ain't caring what it's called as long as she's paying for 'em. C'mon we better get going, we're going to miss the service. You coming Doc?

DR. JACKSON

Picking up Adele on the way.

HALEY

Oh it'd be nice to see her again. HARPER! Where you at?

MAE

Shush now!

(Harper comes back down with a new shirt on.)

HALEY

Here, let me take her. I'll tell her a story and she'll be sleeping just fine.

DR. JACKSON

Maybe there'll still be some wine left.

(As they all exit.)

HALEY

Oh you know he's got the good stuff right?

DR. JACKSON

Why do you think I've been treating him all these years?

MAE

You too Doc?

HALEY

Harper is that a new shirt?

MAE

Leave him alone Haley, he looks just fine.

HALEY

Oh, he's gonna get a few whistles now!

HARPER

Noooo.

LIGHTS OUT.